

The Minutes of the Meeting of Upchurch Parish Council held in Upchurch Village Hall on 7th July 2022

Present: Cllr Tyrone Ripley (Chairman); Cllr Pam Denny (Vice Chair), Cllr Ernie Berntsen, Cllr Helen Boakes, Cllr John Bodycomb, Cllr Alan Horton, Cllr Gerry Lewin, Cllr Gary Rosewell and Cllr Neil Sheppard; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk).

Also present were Ward Councillor Richard Palmer and eleven members of the public.

Cllr Ripley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

34. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from County Councillor Mike Baldock (holiday); apology accepted.

35. Declarations of interest

Cllr Denny declared an interest in item 38.iii as a relative of the applicant.

36. Minutes of the meeting on 9th June 2022

Cllr Lewin **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2022, as a true record; **SECONDED** by Cllr Rosewell: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Ripley duly signed the minutes as a true record.

Public Time

The meeting was adjourned for the Public Time

Concern was raised at the meeting regarding speeding traffic in the village. The Parish Council is aware that the issue was a concern to residents and after clarification it was agreed to discuss the item as part of the scheduled agenda item and that due to the level of interest the Chair agreed that it would be appropriate for residents to ask their questions and make points during that item.

A resident, on behalf of neighbours, thanked the Council for its support regarding the proposed planning application at Burntwick and also thanked SBCllr Horton and SBCllr Palmer for their support. The resident also supported concerns raised about speeding traffic in the village.

SBCllr Horton said that he and SBCllr Palmer gives considerations on planning applications if appropriate and present views on the validity of an application.

Cllr Rosewell said he had attended the Swale Planning Committee meeting on behalf of the Parish Council to give a report.

SBCllr Palmer said there is a site visit on Monday 11 July at 10am.

Cllr Horton said that they will be able to talk at the site visit and make representations and the Planning Committee will then make a decision, no further comments can be made at that meeting.

The meeting was reconvened.

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37. Correspondence

Cllr Ripley said PCSO Lorraine Holmes was unable to attend the meeting and had submitted a report, she has suggested making Poot Lane a designated Quiet Lane.

Cllr Horton said PCSO Holmes has also tried to undertake speed checks in The Street but had been unsuccessful due to the parked cars.

Cllr Boakes reported that members of Upchurch Horticultural Society had raised with her the Best Kept Garden Competition although feel it is too late this year.

Cllr Ripley said this can be considered for 2023.

38. Planning

i) To receive an update on planning matters

Cllr Rosewell said the site meeting for Burntwick will take place on 11 July at 10am.

ii) Ref: 22/502002/FULL

Address: 81 Forge Lane Upchurch Sittingbourne Kent ME9 7AD

Proposal: Alteration and erection of a rear and side single storey extensions to existing outbuilding to provide 2no. lodges to be used as Bed and Breakfast.

Councillors considered the application and noted there were no objections on the planning portal. There is an issue with the site being on a sharp bend; concern was raised about the footpath; there needs to be designated parking on site; it could benefit local tourism; it could be positive for the village with a small uplift in the local economy.

Councillors **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to support the application providing there is sufficient parking for residents.

iii) Ref: 22/502282/FULL

Address: Land North Of Horsham Lane Upchurch Kent ME9 7AP

Proposal: Demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of new building with a primary use as a flower school and additional use as a multi-purpose space for hire/the community together with associated access, parking and landscaping.

Cllr Denny did not take part in the discussion or vote on this item.

Councillors considered the application and noted there were no objections on the planning portal. The area is fronted by the car park of The Brown Jug; it is a Sui Generis application; how much traffic is expected?; there needs to be more information regarding "for hire to the community"; small business owners should be encouraged.

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to support the application.

iv) Ref: 22/502411/FULL

Address: Breach Farm Cottage Breach Lane Upchurch Sittingbourne Kent ME9 7PE

Proposal: Erection of a part two storey, part single storey rear extension. Removal of garage door and replace with window, and changes to fenestration.

Councillors considered the application and noted there were no comments on the planning portal.

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to support the application subject to the views of neighbours being taken into account.

Cllr Lewin said that the planning tracker shows some interesting decisions made by Swale Borough Council and the Parish Council needs to take note of this.

To be discussed at Planning Committee meeting on 20 July.

39. General Purposes Committee

Cllr Ripley said the Committee had not met in June

40. Allotments

Cllr Bodycomb said there was nothing to report.

41. Finance

i) To receive finance report

No comments were made.

ii) Independent Internal Auditor's report

Cllr Ripley said the Independent Internal Auditor had found that VAT is being accurately recorded; regular bank reconciliations have been recommended and this will be carried out going forward; the auditor raised that there are too many columns on the spreadsheet and this should be condensed; more detail needs to be in the explanation of variances on the Annual Return; he disagrees with the auditor's comment about insurance claims netting off the cost of assets.

Cllr Horton said the auditors are saying different things.

Cllr Lewin said it is how the Council looks at it that is important, the Council will continue with its previous decision.

iii) Cheques for approval and signature

Payee	Reason	Amount
St John's College	Rent	£681.50
Mr L Robbins	Internal audit	£180.00
Lindsay & Co	Removal of hedge behind Bishops Lane	£90.00
Landscape Services	Compost bin emptying	£96.74
Mr D Kew <i>Chq no 3000020</i>	Wheelie bins and waste bags	£38.00
Staff	Salary	£625.37
HMRC	PAYE & NI	£72.69
Administration	Expenses	£39.25
Mr T Honeyman	Litter picking and expenses- June	£133.00
EDF	Street lighting electricity	£1,095.29
Upchurch Village Hall	Hall hire	£38.00

It was **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to make the payments.

42. Paddock and Recreation Ground

i) To consider quotations to cut back hedge at Paddock/ Chaffes Lane

Councillors considered the quotations and **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the quotation from CR & SJ Bearup for £200 to cut back the hedge.

Cllr Horton said the hedge needs to be cut back as a matter of urgency due to Health and Safety issues.

ii) To consider quotation for play area inspection

Councillors **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the quotation from Safeplay Playground Services Ltd for £280 for two inspection per year per site.

Cllr Denny said the undergrowth in The Paddock behind Bradshaw Close needs to be cut. Consideration is being given to the best way forward regarding the Woodland Trail. The oak tree at the Recreation ground was growing well but the leaves have gone brown, it is being watered everyday to try to revive it. The commemoration plaque has been broken and the top of the watering pipe is broken.

ACTION: Cllr Denny to seek advice from Majestic Trees.

Cllr Ripley thanked Cllr Denny and her husband for watering the oak tree.

Cllr Denny said the hedge has been cut back behind Bishops Lane.

Cllr Ripley said a dead tree near Bradshaw Close was flagged up in the tree survey.

ACTION: Clerk to request contractor to remove the tree.

Cllr Boakes said the Chaffes Lane side of the Recreation Ground is very overgrown.

ACTION: Clerk to check to see if road verge is cut.

43. Burial Ground and Churchyard

Cllr Boakes said a grave had floral tributes spilling onto nearby plots.

Cllr Denny said she will check to ensure that the items are put into correct bins when taken off. The bank needs to be grassed over.

Cllr Horton reported that he will arrange for the clock to be serviced.

44. Highways and Street Lighting

Cllr Berntsen reported that the light in Windmill Hill is permanently on, it was a latent defect with the installation concerning the signal and will be rectified by the contractor by 23 July at no cost to the Council. They will install an additional controller. Progress is being made regarding the maintenance agreement, there will be another meeting on Wednesday with the contractor to finalise the agreement. EDF has said the contract was closed two years ago and a request for the overpayment to be repaid has been made. If the account was closed the rate cannot increase. If no resolution can be found, the matter will be reported to Ofgem.

Cllr Ripley thanked Cllr Berntsen for his work on the street lighting.

Cllr Horton who manages the Parish Highways Improvement Plan (HIP), outlined the current plan objectives and priorities and gave a full update on the actions to date, which are outlined below.

PARISH HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Cllr Horton reported that following the Parish Highways Improvement Plan consultation in 2019, the following objectives and priorities have been worked on by the Parish Council with support from both Swale Borough Council and KCC Highways where appropriate.

The Parish Council has painted 30 mph roundels and SLOW signs in Horsham Lane and anecdotal feedback from residents was that it had made a difference; following that success SLOW signs were painted either side of crosier Court and further feedback was that had improved matters further. Speed checks were not carried out in 2020 and 2021 because of the pandemic and the combination of lockdowns and home working would not have given a true comparison. Cllr Horton indicated in his view a 20mph zone would take two to three years minimum to achieve, this assessment was confirmed by Cllr Palmer who said it had taken Newington 7 years to secure theirs. Cllr Horton stated he thought that if supported by residents, the Parish Council would have to fund the scheme as there were not accident statistics to justify it as was the case in Newington. The point was made that most often speed checks have found that it is people from the village who are most often exceeding the limit and whilst it was not a pleasant message it was clear that residents must take responsibility and lead by example.

The number one priority on the Parish Highways Improvement Plan was the Oak Lane narrowing just north of the junction with Wallbridge Lane- a chicane and priority signs are to be installed by the developer of 116 Oak Lane. Priority will be for those leaving the village. While waiting for this work to be carried out, the Council has installed roundels and SLOW signs in Horsham Lane, Forge Lane and Oak Lane, they have been painted on the road twice. The chicanes in Oak Lane are expected to have a significant impact on Oak Lane, in particular as vehicles entering the village will give way to those leaving.

Oak Lane junction with A2 – Residents expressed concern that vehicles from Sittingbourne when seeing a queue into Rainham make a quick decision to turn into Oak Lane, often cutting the corner, and across the front of vehicles waiting to exit oak lane. This is a KCC Highways issue, and with little crash statistics to justify costs, the cost, which would be significant given it is a primary route junction would fall to the Parish, that said, the Council may wish to pursue this.

Residents have repeatedly expressed concern regarding speeding vehicles in Horsham Lane, both into and leaving the village. 30mph speed- roundels have been painted and a speed survey carried out (2019) found the vehicles to be within normal tolerances for a 30mph limit but would exceed the tolerances for a 20mph limit without physical mitigations being installed. The roundels were repainted in 2021 and SLOW painted on the carriageway to reinforce the message, the most recent additions being either side of the Crosier Court junction.

Vehicles parking in The Street opposite Horsham Lane- this means vehicles travelling from Lower Halstow toward the Lower Rainham Road often are forced around parked vehicles onto the wrong side of the road, and from there sweep into Horsham Lane across the front of vehicles waiting to turn right. A plan has been submitted to restrict parking outside the terrace houses and to allow them appropriate parking to remove the island by The Crown for and create a dedicated residents area for those houses. It is an expensive project and there are no accident statistics to justify the changes. Swale Borough Council and KCC Highways have visited the site with Cllr Horton to assess options including if a ghost island could be justified there but again it is very expensive with no statistics to support the costs.

Vehicles entering the village from Lower Halstow are controlled by a pair of speed cushions either side of the school. The ownership of the streetlamp over the speed cushion at the end of Church Farm Road is disputed with KCC Highways, this has been long running and remains unresolved.

A traffic survey in Horsham Lane has been planned but then at KCC's recommendation postponed until after the works in oak lane are completed.

The Parish Council resolved to undertake a simultaneous traffic speed survey straight away. Proposed Cllr Horton, seconded Chair agreed unanimously

SBCllr Palmer and SBCllr Horton agreed to contribute to the cost through their Swale Borough Council Member Grant Scheme.

ACTION 1: Clerk to request speed surveys.

ACTION 2: Clerk to apply for £300 grant from each Ward member for speed surveys.

The Parish Council has engaged with the school to enforce parking, the school staggered start times during Covid significantly mitigated the problem. A walking bus to school has been explored. Cllr Horton made it clear that it is not the school's responsibility to keep the road clear, although he acknowledged the significant work the Head and staff put in to do so.

He made the point that it is often thoughtless drivers to park inconsiderately that cause the congestion.

Church Farm Road junction with Chaffes Lane - at the Forge Lane end of Church Farm Road is a speed cushion and corner protection provided by wooden posts, following feedback from residents the Parish Council requested posts at the Chaffes Lane end of Church Farm Road to protect that junction in a similar way and also remove parked cars from the apex of the 'blind bend' in Chaffes Lane and make it safer. KCC Highways has approved the work, this was delayed due to Covid, and staff changes within the Highways team. It has been agreed to install three sets of posts, two at the corners of the junction and the third at the apex of the bend. KCC Highways has agreed to fund the work, and to support those measures, the Parish Council has to keep the hedge at The Paddock cut back and the houses on the corner must do the same. There will be advance warning signs of the bend and SLOW signs to slow down the traffic.

Kent Terrace/ Woods Edge Canterbury Lane- The plans for the Four Gun Field development clearly showed a ramp from Kent Terrace, however steps were installed. After lobbying, a ramp with hand rails has now been installed. A bin for the play area at this site is being arranged.

Holywell Lane- the verges are overgrown and pedestrians are forced to walk in the road. This is a KCC Highways and local landowner issue not a Parish Council issue. KCC Highways has a maintenance scheme.

The most recent resident concern is speeding in The Street and northward past the houses to Poot Lane and Wetham Green – The roads outside the built-up area of the village are country lanes where the national speed limit applies (60mph). There are few accidents and they are not serious enough to support a reduction of speed. The PCSO has suggested that Poot Lane could become a designated Quiet Lane, however, it may be that the road (given it is a loop) is too busy to be considered. The accepted standard for a quiet lane is clear:

Quiet Lanes are nationally recognised designations of single-track road where visitors and locals can enjoy the natural surroundings and use them for activities such as cycling, horse-riding, jogging and walking.

Cllr Horton stated Quiet Lanes are usually obvious and often have two-wheel tracks either side of a grassy/mossy ridge where vehicles do not disturb the centre of the road, in his opinion whilst it would be a benefit Poot Lane and the route around Wetham Green clearly does not qualify.

The PCSO has tried to carry out speed checks in The Street but was unable to do so because of parked cars.

Residents at the meeting sought views on the implementation of a 20mph zone for the village. Cllr Horton responded there would need to be an informal consultation, however the 2019 Parish Highways Improvement Plan consultation did not show support for the idea. A speed survey is required and if there is public support the Parish Council can then apply to KCC Highways to see if a 20mph zone can be achieved without mitigation, such as speed bumps or chicanes. Should mitigations be required there is then often resident objections as they do not want cars and busses riding the bumps outside their homes day and night. The current trend nationally appears to be moving away from schemes that require mitigations as they appear to increase pollution with cars braking hard and accelerating away. Once a scheme has been designed a formal consultation is then conducted by KCC Highways, which can produce significant objections, then a traffic regulation order is drawn up and the scheme installed. It is highly unlikely the scheme and any mitigation measures would be paid

for by KCC Highways as there does not appear to be accident statistic justification for the change.

Finally a resident raised concern about the sight line and need to walk into the road to go around a house in Horsham Lane opposite the end of the church-yard.

The Parish Council resolved to seek a reduction in the hedge height and a cut back with the house owner and agreed that it would be appropriate to support the work from Parish Funds once only to establish the correct line, after which it was hoped the residents would keep the area cut back for the benefit of all.

Proposed Cllr Horton, seconded Chair, agreed unanimously

Cllr Ripley thanked Cllr Horton for his work on highways matters and for his report.

45. Footpaths

There was nothing to report.

46. Environment

i) To receive an update

Cllr Ripley said the bags for the Tikspak have been ordered, they are not currently in stock with the supplier.

ii) To consider quotations for litter bin

Cllr Ripley said the Council is still waiting to hear from Swale Borough Council for a quotation.

Cllr Horton **PROPOSED** that if the quotation is less than £800 it be accepted: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY.**

iii) To consider quotation to refurbish and re-site the notice board

Councillors considered the quotation and considered a new notice board might be an alternative option.

ACTION: Cllr Sheppard to get a quotation.

Cllr Denny reported that the corner by the allotments is overgrown.

47. Reports from representatives

i) Village Hall Representative

Cllr Lewin said that all is well. Consideration is being given to further refurbishment work to rectify the roof at the end.

ii) Defibrillator

Cllr Sheppard reported that the alarm on the box at Beckenham Park keeps going off and the manager has been given the code. This will be monitored. A light has been installed over the defibrillator.

ACTION: Clerk to order pads.

iii) KALC

Cllr Ripley said communications from KALC have been circulated.

iv) Police Liaison Officer

PCSO Lorraine Holmes was unable to attend the meeting and sent the following report:

Crimes of note (09/06/22 – 04/07/22):

- No Burglary offences reported
- No Vehicle Crime offences reported

- No Criminal Damage offences reported
- No Fraud offences reported

Anti-social behaviour and other incidents of note:

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Other items of note:

- I will be holding a drop-in surgery at Snaffles Equestrian shop on Thursday 21st July between 3pm-4pm.

Updates of previous reported issues-:

- I have attempted to conduct speed checks on two separate occasions in The Street/Poot Lane but unfortunately there have been cars parked on the pavement obstructing my view.

48. Matters arising

Cllr Ripley said that this is the Clerk's last meeting and thanked her for her years of service and wished her success for the future.

Cllr Horton asked if the Tikspak vinyls are being replaced.

ACTION: Cllr Sheppard to get quotation.

Cllr Sheppard asked what the budget to replace the street name plates is.

Cllr Horton said £14,000 and the project will be done over two financial years.

ACTION: Cllr Sheppard to get quotation.

Cllr Lewin suggested using the village logo - agreed

49. Date of next meeting Thursday 1st September 2022 at 7.30pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.32pm