

KEMSING PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of a Meeting held in the Small Hall, St. Edith Hall, Kemsing,
on Wednesday, 15 June 2011 at 8.00 p.m.**

- PRESENT: Mrs. M. Cole (in the Chair)
Mr. D. Bennett, Mr. B. Buttifant, Mr. G. Croughton, Mr. P. Eaton, Mr. J. Jermain,
Dr. P. Walker, Mrs. R. Wedderburn
- IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. M. Adams (Senior Officer, Kent Fire & Rescue Services)
Mr. S. Appleton (Group Manager, Kent Fire & Rescue Services)
Mr. P. Rice (Station Manager, Kent Fire & Rescue Services)
District Councillor Mr. M. Butler
3 Residents
Candidates for Parish Councillor vacancies (Mrs. S. Dickinson, Mrs. M. Robarts &
Mr. D. Wade)
- APOLOGIES: Mr. Dawes, Mrs. Ross, District Councillor Miss L. Stack

Councillors were reminded to disclose personal and prejudicial interests on matters to be considered at this Meeting.

Mrs. Cole welcomed everybody to the Meeting and introduced the Kent Fire & Rescue Services representatives, who were invited to respond to concerns raised by residents following the devastating fire incident at the Wheatsheaf Public House on Friday, 3 June 2011. Mrs. Cole, who had witnessed the action taken by the Fire Service during the incident, raised the following concerns:

- The crew was unable to open the fire hydrant in front of No. 24 St. Edith Road.
- After various attempts, including considering using water from St. Edith's Well, the crew was finally successful in opening the hydrant at Old Barn Close.
- There is a fire hydrant at Church Lane, why was it not used?
- There are a number of listed buildings and properties with historic interest in this area of the village. Can more fire hydrants be installed?
- Is there a lack of sufficient water in Kemsing?
- The fire was at the rear of the property, yet the fire crew remained at the front of the building.
- What is the current procedure on checking and maintaining hydrants?

Mr. Adams thanked the Parish Council for the opportunity to be able to clarify the concerns raised. During a fire incident, it is common procedure for the Fire Service to attend firstly to the front of a property in order to carry out a standard dynamic risk assessment, to assess if anyone's life is at risk, which is the main focus. Then a risk assessment of the severity of the fire to the structure of the building and any potential hazards follows. On the day of the incident, the wind was blowing from the rear to the front of the property, and it is bad practice to attempt to extinguish the fire from the back. In Mr. Adams' view, the decision taken at the time of the incident was correct. The crew was well resourced in terms of equipment – there was one large jet in the front and one large and a smaller jet at the rear, sufficient to contain the fire. The structural risk was very high : 4 teams of 2 crew entered the building, but had to evacuate the building after part of it collapsed. All the vehicles are equipped with data terminals which are linked to a central data base and the crew was aware that the hydrant at No. 24 St. Edith Road had seized. This hydrant is considered not to be of strategic importance and will subsequently not be repaired. The hydrant at Church Lane could not be used as it was on the same main already used for the access tower. Inspections on hydrants are carried out by Kent Fire & Rescue Services civilian staff and water services personnel. Inspections in Kemsing are due in 2012. Mr. Adams assured the Council that there is sufficient water in Kemsing to deal with incidents. The Seal station is not available 24 hours a day and is only in part-time in use. Mrs. Cole, on behalf of the village, thanked Mr. Adams, Mr. Appleton and Mr. Rice for taking the time to clarify the issues.

1. **MINUTES**

Mrs. Cole proposed:

"To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 May 2011, Ref KPC/05/11."

CARRIED unanimously

2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

(a) Capital projects (Minute 9(a) KPC/05/11)

St. Edith Hall – No further update was available.

Play Areas - See Items 5 (b) and 5 (d) below.

Public car park – No further update was available.

(b) West End – safety issues on footpath (Minute 9(b) KPC/05/11)

Kent Highway Services reported that an on-street parking count had been conducted, but because of the high demand for survey requests, the automatic 7 day survey which provides information on a 24 hour traffic volume, speed and vehicle type, had not yet been carried out. Consequently, the full package of data analysis had not been completed. The plans would be presented to the Parish Council for consultation in late July this year. The footway bollards in front of the shops are to be part funded by the property developer as part of the new development in terms of existing planning and highway obligations. There is no timescale for this work at the present time.

(c) Oxenhill Management Plan (Minute 16 KPC/05/11)

Mr. Bennett reported that the final Management Plan would be available soon. An application for a felling licence for the agreed coppicing is being prepared and it is hoped that a decision would be made towards the end of July. If permission is granted, felling would take place in August. A Meeting would be arranged with the Recreation Grounds Committee to agree on timber extraction methods.

3. **PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCIES**

(a) Co-option for two vacancies

Three residents had expressed their interest in becoming Parish Councillors. Candidates had been invited to the Meeting and asked to introduce themselves.

8.40 p.m. The Meeting was adjourned due to the confidential nature of the business and the Public were excluded.

A secret ballot was held.

8.50 p.m. The Meeting was reconvened and the Public were invited back to the Meeting.

RESOLVED: That Mrs. M. Robarts and Mrs. S. Dickinson be co-opted.

Mrs. Cole thanked Mr. Wade for his interest and Mrs. Robarts and Mrs. Dickinson, after signing the Declarations of acceptance of office, joined the other Members at the table.

(b) Resignation

The Council noted Mr. Rumgay's resignation with regret and recorded its appreciation for his contribution. The Clerk reported that the vacancy would be subject to statutory advertisement procedures.

4. **MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

The following appointments were made:-

Mrs. Dickinson – Finance Committee

Mrs. Robarts – Recreation Grounds and Planning Committees

Mr. Jermain – Downland Management Committee, Churchyard Maintenance Committee

Mr. Eaton – Churchyard Maintenance Committee

Mrs. Cole proposed: *"That the Council does not appoint an Emergency Services Officer."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Standing Orders to be amended.

5. **COMMITTEE AND OFFICER REPORTS**

(a) Planning Committee

Mr. Croughton proposed and Dr. Walker seconded:

"To adopt the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 May, Ref No P/08/2011."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Mr. Croughton proposed and Mrs. Cole seconded:

"To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 May 2011, Ref No P/09/2011."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

(b) Recreation Grounds Committee

A note from Mrs. Ross was circulated at the Meeting. Mrs. Ross asked Members to consider a previous suggestion to fund the play area project to the amount of £100,000 with 50% from the Reserve Fund and the other 50% to be reclaimed through the Precept over a period of say, 10 years.

Mrs. Cole proposed:

"To adopt the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 May 2011, Ref No RG/03/2011."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

The following recommendations were considered:-

Item 3 (c) – *"The Recreation Grounds Committee recommends Wicksteed as being the company with reflects Best Value, variety and quality of equipment."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Item 3 (d) – *"That the Parish Council approve the final agreements."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Item 5 – *"To approve appointment of Mrs. Ross as Recreation Grounds Officer."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

(c) Downland Management Committee

Mr. Bennett proposed and Mrs. Cole seconded:

"To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 June 2011, Ref No DM/02/2011."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Mr. Croughton declared a personal interest in Item 7 (b) DM/02/2011 as being a resident of Pilgrims Way.

The following recommendations were considered:-

Item 7 (b) – *"To recommend to full Council to open a separate Co-operative Bank savings account into which this money be paid for the use of purchasing leisure plots as and when they become available."*

CARRIED 7 in favour, 2 abstentions [Mr. Croughton]

Item 10 – *"To approve Mr. Bennett as Downland Management Officer."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

(d) Finance Committee

Mr. Eaton proposed and Dr. Walker seconded:

"To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 June 2011, Reference No F/120/11."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

The following recommendations were considered:-

Item 7 – *"To recommend to full Council that this Committee endorses the Internal Auditor's recommendation for the Clerk to be made an authorised signatory to the bank accounts, in order to be able to discuss the Council's requirements with the banks."*

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

Item 8 – *“The Finance Committee agrees, in principle, to recommend to full Council to support the play area refurbishment project.”*

Some Councillors expressed concern regarding the future of the village car park and the effect that the recent fire incident at the Wheatsheaf Public House might have. Expressing great reservation in entering into the most expensive contract the Council have had so far, Mr. Bennett felt strongly that the Council’s priorities had been altered in the last few weeks by the event, and that in his opinion, it was the wrong time to enter into such a contract. There is currently great uncertainty, but in the worst case scenario, parking may have to be provided by using part of the Common Field. Mrs. Cole warned that this may not be possible. Such a request would have to be referred to the Charity Commission. Mr. Buttifant and Mr. Eaton echoed Mr. Bennett’s comments.

Mrs. Cole asked Members to bear in mind the time and effort put into this project by the Recreation Grounds Committee Members since 2008 and felt this work could have been avoided if the Council had no intention of funding it in the first place. Mr. Bennett replied that no firm financial data had been submitted by the Recreation Grounds Committee until now. A suggestion was made that only one play area should be refurbished. The Clerk explained that the Council had received a concession rate for refurbish both play areas at the same time, and that by refurbishing only one, this could have an effect on the price.

The Clerk provided details of interest rates on a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan and current interest rates on Deposit accounts received. With this information, Members rejected the suggestion to apply for a PWLB loan.

RESOLVED: Mr. Eaton proposed and Mrs. Cole seconded:

“That the Finance Committee agrees, in principle, to support the play area refurbishment project, however, in the current circumstances, the project is put on hold, subject to clarification from the contractor regarding the pricing structure should the decision be made to refurbish only one play area and further consideration by the Council when receiving this information.”

CARRIED 6 in favour, 1 against {Mr. Bennett}, 3 abstentions {Mr. Buttifant}

(e) Report from Chairman

It was noted that the resurfacing work in Childsbridge Lane, Seal, had been completed. At the Annual Parish Meeting, County Councillor Mr. N. Chard had indicated that he had allocated monies from his Members’ Fund to assist with the resurfacing work. Although strictly not in the Parish of Kemsing, this stretch of road affects Kemsing residents, *and the Council recorded its appreciation to Mr. Chard for his assistance. The Clerk to write to Mr. Chard accordingly.*

A letter from a Sevenoaks resident commending the Parish Council on the excellent condition of the public conveniences, was noted.

The Clerk would thank the Cleaning Contractor for their good work.

An invitation to the Annual General Meeting of the Trustees of Sevenoaks & Swanley Citizens Advice Bureau was noted.

Members were reminded to submit their Declarations of Election Expenses to Sevenoaks District Council as a matter of urgency.

Mrs. Cole drew attention to the forthcoming Sevenoaks District Council’s Performance and Governance Meeting on 28 June. In the report, it is recommended that Sevenoaks District Council closes 4 public conveniences, including the Kemsing public conveniences, “as there is no operational need for the public conveniences and that retaining the conveniences will incur the District Council costs in maintenance, security and business rate liabilities.”

It also stated that “the Community impact of closing these conveniences was considered as part of the budget savings process.” Furthermore, it is proposed that the District Council approaches the freeholders to obtain permission to grant sub-lease of the conveniences to the Parish Council at no cost.

Mr. Croughton recommended that the Council reconsiders its original decision not to take over the car park lease, in light of recent events. The Council may deem the additional charges (maintenance, public liability insurance and business rates) incurred by such a decision, to be worthwhile in the long-term.

Mr. Croughton proposed and Mr. Eaton seconded:

"That the Parish Council discuss the costs and term of leasing the car park and public conveniences with Sevenoaks District Council."

CARRIED 6 in favour, 1 abstention {Mr. Bennett}

Mr. Croughton, Mr. Eaton and the Clerk to attend a meeting with Sevenoaks District Council."

9.50 p.m. Mrs. Wedderburn left the Meeting.

(f) Reports from Councillors

There were no reports received.

6. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC & PRESS**

Referring to the fire incident and the remains of the Wheatsheaf Public House building, Mr. B. Banister asked if the structure can be considered to be safe as residents had witnessed some young people attempting to push through the safety fencing.

District Councillor Mr. Butler would make enquires at the District Council and report back to the Parish Council office.

7. **DONATIONS & SUBSCRIPTIONS**

(a) St. Mary's Church PCC - Donation for the Parish Council's page in The Well magazine

Mrs. Cole proposed:-

"That the Council makes a financial contribution of £250 to St. Mary's Church for the 2011/12 financial year."

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

8. **END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS 2010/11**

The Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2011 and the Annual Governance Statement were approved.

9. **WATERY LANE, KEMSING - CLOSURE**

Essential improvement works to be carried out by Network Rail on the rail bridge would result in the closure of Watery Lane between Monday, 25 July and Sunday, 4 September 2011.

10. **KENT POLICE - Departure of District Commander Adrian Futers**

District Commander Futers has moved to Maidstone to take up another role. Chief Inspector Peter Steenhuis started on 13 June 2011.

11. **ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Mr. Eaton proposed and Dr. Walker seconded:

"To approve the list of payments presented at the meeting (cheques 204246 to 204263 and direct debits dated 04.05.11, 24.05.11 and 31.05.11)".

CARRIED 8 in favour, 2 abstentions

12. **INFORMATION REPORT**

The Information Report was noted.

13. **MATTERS TO BE RAISED AT THE NEXT MEETING & GOOD NEWS**

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

20 July 2011

The Meeting was concluded at 10.05 p.m.