

KEMSING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk's Office, St. Edith Hall

Kemsing

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
held in the Main Hall, St Edith Hall, Kemsing
on Wednesday 18 June 2003 at 8.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr A C Andrews (in the Chair)
Messrs D V Bennett, P Burfield, B D Buttifant, G R Croughton, R J Dawes, P M H Kendall, P Miles, A Waters, M Williams, Mrs M Cole, Mrs W Ross

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Allen (for the first part of the Meeting)
Andrew Smith, The Rural Housing Trust (for the first part)
Alison Thompson, The Rural Housing Trust (for the first part)
Mr I Fraser (for Item 2(b))
Mrs L M Drage, Parish Clerk

APOLOGIES: Mrs J Course, District Councillor

Mr Andrews presented recently retired Parish Councillor Mr John Allen, with a print of Kemsing, as a token of thanks for his years of service to the Parish. Councillors joined Mr Andrews in warm applause in recognition of Mr Allen's hard work and of his role as Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Mr Andrews welcomed Andrew Smith, Regional Programme Manager and Alison Thompson, Area Programme Manager, from The Rural Housing Trust to the Meeting. Mr Andrews reminded Members that the subject of Affordable Housing had been discussed by the Planning Committee and three Members had attended seminars organised by Sevenoaks District Council (S.D.C.). Nevertheless, Mr Andrews emphasised that consideration given thus far to Affordable Housing was at the initial stage.

Mr Smith addressed Members and described the history, objectives and achievements of the Trust over the last twenty-seven years. Initially the Trust had been formed to provide homes for retired agricultural workers but had expanded to meet housing needs for all in the rural community by providing small, affordable housing schemes.

Mr Smith referred to the scheme of seven homes recently completed at Eynsford, initiated by Eynsford Parish Council and to which the council had remained committed over a period of five years from start to finish. Mr Smith said that in general, schemes take between two and fourteen years to come to fruition.

At this point Mr Smith ran through the sequence of events that would take place after initial contact had been received from a council. The Trust would undertake a Housing Needs Survey whereby every household in the parish would receive a form together with a stamped addressed

envelope, delivered by the council. This delivery being the only commitment undertaken by the council at this stage. The Trust would then analyse the survey and forward the results to the council. Mr Smith said that the council might decide to hold an open meeting in the village before the Housing Needs Survey was carried out or alternatively report to a village meeting on the results of the Survey. Mr Smith emphasised that this survey had to be done in the first instance to show that a need had been proven.

Mr Smith explained that the majority of Affordable Housing schemes are built on Exception Sites i.e. land that ordinarily would not get planning consent, likely to be outside the settlement boundary and therefore inexpensive. At this stage the Trust would involve the local authority planning officer in identifying possible sites and would work with the landowner together with the Trust's own development team. Sketch layouts would be produced and comments invited from both the parish council and local authority. Mr Smith said that by this stage dealings between the parties should be open and transparent and input invited from parishioners with a village information day held on a Saturday or one weekday afternoon and evening.

The next step would be a Register of Housing Need comprising those who want and need an affordable home and who have a strong local connection to the parish, who have been resident in the parish for at least five years, or have lived previously in the parish for at least five years and similarly those who work within the parish. The Register is drawn up by the Trust and it is at this stage that the parish council is invited by the Trust to use its local knowledge to check the list to ensure applicants have the necessary connection to the Parish. The applicants are then interviewed and are processed using a points allocation system, and again the council is invited to satisfy itself on the validity of each application.

Mr Smith talked briefly about the work of the English Rural Housing Association, a partner in the scheme, which bids for government funding and offers rented or shared ownership. Later, in response to a question from Mr Andrews, Mr Smith said that at no stage is there any cost to the council (apart from the cost of delivering the Housing Needs Survey, that is if it chose to post out the document).

With reference to a question from Mr Andrews, Mr Smith informed Members that there would be no 'Right to Buy'. Houses would remain an asset for the village in perpetuity. Mr Smith said it was his understanding that although the Conservative opposition party is proposing to extend the Right to Buy should it return to government, rural housing schemes would be exempt. Mr Smith emphasised that the council would remain involved throughout the life of the project, not just at the initial stages.

Mr Andrews asked about Article 4 with regard to extensions and modifications to the buildings and Mr Smith stated that extensions are not allowed unless there are very special circumstances, as in the case perhaps of a severely disabled person who required ground floor living accommodation. Again, the matter would be discussed with the council as it would be a material change to the scheme and in any event would be the subject of a planning application. Mr Smith said that such cases are very rare.

Mr Dawes spoke about the difficulties experienced by the primary school in Kemsing in recruiting teachers and asked whether there had to be a local connection in such circumstances. Mr Smith said that it could be argued that someone working full-time in the parish would qualify as a Key Worker.

In response to a question on funding, Mr Smith advised that the government had shelved local authority housing grants and that funding is a problem across the board. At this point Mr Smith said that in parishes of over 4,000, a Rural Needs Scheme could not be done and if Kemsing fell

into this category a Key Worker Scheme or Shared Ownership Scheme aimed at people of reasonable means, would apply.

Mr Smith said it very much depended on whether cheap land could be found and said again that because no government funding would be involved, Right to Buy would not apply. Mr Smith said that a home would be owned on a fifty-fifty basis and it would follow that any increase in value would be split fifty-fifty. The property would be on a leasehold basis and a ground rent of £250.00 per year payable. Mr Smith said the owner would be responsible for maintenance and from experience the Trust had found that a property is generally well maintained by the owner to ensure its value does not drop.

Mr Smith said that the sale of the first shared ownership property would fund subsequent building work. Mr Smith said that if an owner under the Shared Ownership Scheme wished to sell his 50% equity in the property, an independent valuation of the house would be sought (not through an estate agent), and again the process of vetting applicants, involving the parish council, would begin once more.

Mr Kendall asked how people could be removed from the Key Worker or Shared Ownership Scheme if it was found they had slipped through the vetting process and in fact did not qualify. Mr Smith said he did not know the answer but thought it would be difficult unless the tenancy agreement had been broken.

Mr Andrews thanked both Mr Smith and Ms Thompson for coming along to talk to the Parish Council about Affordable Housing and said the meeting had been most useful.

Declarations of Interest in the Register

No new Declarations were made

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 May 2003, reference KPC/5/03, having been circulated previously, were approved by those in attendance at the May Meeting, and signed.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) The St Edith Hall Lease with The St Edith Club (see Minute 8(a))

Mr Andrews advised Members that he and Mr Kendall had met with a solicitor from Messrs Knocker & Foskett in order to clarify certain matters with regard to this very complex situation.

(b) Kemsing Lawn Tennis Club (Minute 8(b))

Members noted that a Draft Lease (copies if required available from the Clerk) had been received from Mr R Leathers of Knocker & Foskett and the Chairman and Clerk would be clarifying a number of points with Mr Leathers before the matter could be put to Members. Mr Andrews felt it was important that the Lease should be flexible enough to take into account any future changes to the Club's membership and prosperity and in so doing allow future Council Members the option of reviewing the peppercorn rent proposed.

Mr Fraser, having been invited to address the Meeting, expressed concern on behalf of the Club, at the possibility of the Club being charged full market rent which if applied, could place the Club's future in jeopardy. However, Mr Fraser acknowledged the difficulties that could arise and said he understood the Council's concerns. Mr Fraser confirmed to the Meeting that the Club operated an open membership and would be happy for the Council to have sight of its annual accounts.

Members noted that the anticipated costs for drafting and finalising the Lease indicated by Knocker & Foskett at £300.00 to £400.00 + V.A.T. and Stamp Duty of £5.00 had been advised to Kemsing Lawn Tennis Club.

- (c) Youth Drop-In Evening (Minute 8(d))
The Clerk advised that the first Evening had taken place in the Main Car Park on 28 May together with a second Evening at Dynes Parade on 4 June 2003. Although attendance was reported as 20 visitors (of whom 5 were young people) on 28 May and a lower attendance on 4 June, the work of the Detached Youth Project (with the support of the Parish Council) was promoted by posters and flyers distributed widely throughout the Village, bringing about a greater awareness of efforts being made to engage with Young People in Kemsing.
- Mrs Ross asked where the posters and flyers had been distributed and the Clerk listed the various locations including the Sir Mark Collet Pavilion, local businesses in the vicinity of the Well, and at West End and Dynes Parade, the Church, Heritage Centre, Kemsing Library, and on Parish Noticeboards. Flyers had been forwarded to the local Scout Group for distribution to its membership and to P.C. Jackie Allen, District Councillors and individuals who had expressed an interest.
- (d) Closed Circuit Television (Minute 8(f))
Members noted that this matter is due to be discussed at the July Council Meeting.
- (e) Chairman's Evening (ref Minute 8(h))
Mr Andrews reported that although he had hoped to present the framed print of Kemsing to Mr John Allen prior to the date of the Meeting, he had been unable to do so. However, he was pleased to have had the opportunity earlier in the evening.
- (f) Affordable Housing (Minute 8(j))
There was further discussion about the information given to Members by representatives from The Rural Housing Trust at the beginning of the Meeting.

Mr Croughton proposed and Mr Waters seconded:

That the Council should seek a sample of the Housing Needs Survey form and the Application Form with a view to asking The Rural Housing Trust to conduct their initial survey.

Mr Croughton commented that how far the Council decided to go would be dependant on the results of the Survey, which the Parish Council would be committed to delivering.

Mr Bennett felt that affordable housing was more suited to smaller village communities than Kemsing where a high proportion of parishioners had not lived in the village many years. Mr Bennett felt that should a scheme go ahead it was likely to be small site and could create resentment.

Mr Dawes felt there was a responsibility to provide accommodation for key workers but wondered where suitable land could be found. Mr Kendall thought the idea of the Key Worker scheme was attractive.

Mr Andrews reminded the Meeting that any approach to Affordable Housing would have to be done in stages and noted that under Section 106 the Council had some power and input into the matter.

CARRIED – 11 in favour, 1 abstention (Mr Bennett asked to be recorded as having Abstained)

Mr Andrews invited those Members interested in attending the S.D.C. Housing Needs Study day, on 4 July 2003 at Argyle Road, details of which had previously been circulated, to contact the Clerk.

- (g) Register of Members Interests (Minute 9(b))
Members noted that the Deputy Clerk had forwarded the completed forms to the Monitoring Officer at S.D.C., for which an acknowledgement had been received.
- (h) Signatories to the Bank Account (Minute 11)
The Clerk had been advised by the Co-operative Bank that identification and proof of address requirements are no longer applicable for parish councils and a Change of Signatories form was circulated to both re-elected and new Members for signature. The Clerk undertook to obtain Mr Davies' signature and submit the form to the Bank together with the Outgoing Signatories section already signed by Mrs Westaway, Mr Allen and Mr Downey.
- (i) Training for New Councillors (Minute 17)
Members noted that a provisional booking had been made for Mrs Ross and Messrs Burfield, Miles and Williams to attend on Saturday 19 July 2003 at Harrietsham. K.A.P.C. had advised that Course Details and a Booking Form would be available shortly.
- (j) Parish Newsletter (Minute 18(d)(i))
It was noted that the Deputy Clerk would be liaising with Councillors concerning distribution areas and had circulated a note seeking suggestions for content. The Clerk advised that the Village Tidiness Officer would submit a report with news of a proposed Spring Clean Exercise for February 2004, and it is proposed that attention should also be drawn to current problem areas such as bonfires, dog waste and light pollution.

Mr Buttifant agreed to write an outline for an article on the need for trimming overhanging trees and hedges to avoid obstruction of the footways. Mr Croughton confirmed that he would submit a piece on the restoration of the Sunday train service between Otford and Sevenoaks, and the hourly Victoria-Bromley-Otford-Sevenoaks service from September 2003.

The Clerk advised that Mrs Palmer hoped to get the Newsletter to the printer by the end of July.

- (k) Renewal of the Parish Map (Minute 18(d)(iv))
Members noted that information had been forwarded by the Clerk to Kent County Council and news on the new Map is awaited.

3. **BUSINESS REQUIRED BY STATUTE**

- (a) Annual Return for the Year ending 31.3.03 (Minute 8(e))
The Clerk drew attention to the requirement to complete Box 5 of Section 2 and asked Members to consider whether the Council could answer 'Yes' to the question as to whether an assessment of the risks facing the council had been dealt with correctly. Members felt this matter had been considered and had been dealt with properly.

The Chairman proposed:

That the Council Approves Section 1 – The Statement of Accounts, and Section 2 – Statement of Assurance, of the Annual Return, previously circulated to Members

CARRIED – unanimously

The Clerk confirmed that the necessary Certification information would be forwarded with the Annual Return together with bank reconciliations and additional information requested as part of the 5% sample, to the Audit Commission before the end of June 2003. The Council noted that there are no 'Significant Variances' (between last year 2001/2002 and this year 2002/2003) in the statement of accounts.

4. **THE ST EDITH HALL STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2003**

Members considered the copy of the Statement, previously circulated. Mr Bennett asked for a small correction to be made changing 'Halifax Building Society' to 'Halifax plc' and queried the Hall Telephone cost at £338.00 when it should be line charges only. Mrs Cole reported that the figure included the Hall Cottage telephone although arrangements were in hand to change the rental to a residential basis.

The Chairman proposed:

The Council is asked to receive The St Edith Hall Statement of Financial Activities Year Ended 31 March 2003

CARRIED - unanimous

5. **DONATIONS AND GRANTS**

Mr Andrews invited Members to consider this matter. Mr Andrews said his main concerns were centred not on the Subscriptions paid by the Council which are to assist in the efficient running of the Council, nor the element which bought in services for the Village e.g. the service of a youth worker, but on the grants awarded to various bodies such as registered charities and to clubs and organisations within the Village who approach the Council for assistance. Mr Andrews expressed disquiet at the fact that the Parish Council raises a precept and then decides which charity the Council should support. Mr Andrews felt a distinction should be made between precept money and interest money from capital.

There was a good deal of discussion. Mr Bennett felt there was no distinction between precept and interest money and that it was all 'public money'. However, he felt there was a distinction between giving to outside charities i.e. Kent Air Ambulance, and to Village organisations. Mr Dawes felt the capital monies together with the interest received, should be ring fenced for purchase of land only. Mr Waters felt it was important to grant aid those organisations that are open to all, and Mr Kendall stated that those awarded a grant could not expect one every year.

6. **FUNDING FOR THE CHURCH YOUTH WORKER**

Mr Bennett, Mr Croughton and Mr Waters declared a Personal Interest

Members noted that this matter was discussed, at the request of Mr Waters, at the Finance Committee Meeting held 10.6.03.

Mr Kendall proposed and Mr Bennett seconded:

That the Council approves the Finance Committee's Recommendation that a Grant of £2,000 be awarded for the current financial year with an undertaking to look favourably upon making a similar grant in the two succeeding years, taking inflation into account.

CARRIED – 9 in favour, 3 abstentions

7. **LEISURE PLOTS – PURCHASE OF THE REMAINDER LAND**

It was noted that a Report on Title together with associated documents had been received from the Legal Section of S.D.C. and was being considered by the Clerk together with Mr Bennett and Mr Kendall from the Downland Management Committee. It was confirmed that a number of points required clarification and careful consideration before the matter could be put to Members in its final form. Mr Kendall said he had spoken with The Crown Estate with regard to a concern on achieving 'Good Title' and had been advised that for Yalepalm to be re-incorporated would be both complex and expensive.

8. **HOSPICE IN THE WEALD TREE OF LIGHT EVENT**

The Clerk reminded Members that this fundraising idea had been supported by the Council in 2002 but there had been insufficient time to hold the Event. The Clerk ran through the various

stages of the Event which would be administered by the Hospice, and advised Members that a meeting had been held with Revd Nigel Ashworth with regard to possible involvement by the Church should the Council wish to support the Tree of Light Event. The Clerk advised Members of Revd Ashworth's concerns with regard to what is already a busy time of year and also that Christmas should celebrate the birth of Christ. Revd Ashworth had expressed reservations about the idea of raising money by remembering the dead.

Mr Croughton felt the Event deserved support as those in Kemsing not involved with the church and who would like to remember loved ones in this way, might appreciate the Council's efforts in supporting the Hospice. In addition, Mr Croughton felt that the Hospice had been treated badly by government. Generally, it was felt there was already fundraising support for the Charity from others such as Mrs Joyce Course and the Council decided not to take the matter further.

9. COMMITTEE & OFFICER REPORTS

Members agreed to consider the following:

(a) Recreation Grounds Committee

The Council approved the Committee's Recommendation for Recreation Grounds Committee Officers for 2003/2004.

The Council approved the Minutes of the Meeting held 21 May 2003, ref. RG/07/2003
Carried – 9 in favour, 3 abstentions (due to insufficient time to read)

(b) Highways Committee

The Council approved the Committee's Recommendation for Highways Officers for 2003/2004.

The Clerk was asked to supply a copy of the S.D.C. Litter Bin collection schedule to Mrs Liz Garrett, the Village Tidiness Officer.

There was some discussion concerning the Committee's Recommendation to provide a Dog Bin at Greenlands Road. Concern was expressed that this could be setting a precedent. Mr Croughton said the Committee had been satisfied that the case was strong enough and that future approaches would be considered on merit. The Clerk advised that although the Deputy Clerk had been told by a resident that the S.D.C. operative had complained about the use of the litter bin for such purposes, no complaint had been received from S.D.C. direct to the Parish Office.

Mrs Cole proposed and Mr Andrews seconded:

That the matter of the Recommendation under Item 4(f) should be considered separately
Carried – unanimously

Mr Buttifant proposed and Mr Croughton seconded:

That the Council provides a bin on the north side of Greenlands Road to the east of the bus shelter.

Carried – 6 in favour, five against, 1 abstention

The Council approved the Minutes of the Meeting held 4 June 2003, ref. H/12/03
(excluding Item 4(f)).

Carried – 11 in favour, 1 abstention

(c) Any other Reports by Officers

- (i) Mr Buttifant informed Members that buff coloured high friction surfacing work would take place at Dynes Crossroads the following day with the aim of drawing attention to the junction and to provide higher skid resistance. The Parish Office had been advised that work should take one day to complete and there would be a four way Stop/Go system or manned temporary lights.

- (ii) Mr Buttifant asked that a letter of thanks be sent from the Council to Kemsing Scouts for the work that had been done along the Jubilee Footpath. Mr Buttifant said the Highways Committee planned to ask the Scouts to maintain the footpath on a regular basis throughout the year.

It was agreed that a brief letter of thanks should be sent to the Scout Group but that maintenance of the Jubilee Footpath should be referred back to the Highways Committee.

- (iii) Mr Andrews advised the Meeting of an incident, to which the Police had been called, in the Church Lane car park near the Common Field, involving youngsters playing with a road roller left on site
- (iv) The Clerk drew attention to an article which had appeared in the Sevenoaks Chronicle in May 2003 concerning a Young Person in the Community Award presented to Miss Michelle Freeman who lives in Kemsing. The Council asked the Clerk to send a letter of congratulations to Miss Freeman.
- (v) The Clerk informed Members about the success of Operation Cubit in Kemsing. Nineteen untaxed vehicles had been removed from the Village and the Clerk was asked to send a letter of thanks to P.C. Jackie Allen.

The Clerk also took the opportunity of updating the Council with regard to an abandoned Citroen Xantia in the Main Car Park. The Parish Office had been advised that it was not possible to remove the vehicle because although not displaying a road tax disc, it is recorded at the D.V.L.A. as being taxed until January 2004. Members noted that PC Jackie Allen is actively pursuing the matter and would be liaising with the Deputy Clerk.

10. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

No Members of the Public were present.

11. **INFORMATION REPORT**

The Information Report, previously circulated, was received by the Council.

12. **ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

The Council approved:

- (a) Accounts already settled on 14.5.03 voucher nos. 43 - 64
- (b) Accounts paid, voucher nos. 65, 67 - 82
- (c) To note receipts, voucher nos. 26 - 42, 66

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

Mr Dawes commented on how good the Well Area is looking following the appointment of the new Contractor and he was joined by Mr Andrews who said the safety surfacing at the Play Area along Church Lane had been cleaned and the Play Area as a whole is looking magnificent. The Clerk said that now the period for second bird hatchings had finished, the hedging around the Well Area would be cut the following week by B & G.

Mr Dawes drew attention to the Quiz Night to be held on 4 July 2003 at The St Edith Hall in aid of the Hospice in the Weald.

Mr Buttifant reported that Mr Jim McIntyre had cleaned the Village Sign.

Matters to be raised in the future:

Parish Office Storage Systems – c/f July 2003 (lmd)
 St Edith's Road/West End – c/f July 2003 (BB)
 Closed Circuit Television – July 2003

Leisure Plots – July 2003 (DB/PK)
Christmas Lights – August 2003 (lmd)
Possible future development of St Edith Hall – October 2003

14. **DATES OF MEETINGS**

23 June	Planning
7 July	Planning
16 July	PARISH COUNCIL

The Meeting closed at 10.20 p.m.

Linda Drage
Parish Clerk

/lmd
4.7.03