

BREDHURST PARISH COUNCIL



**Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held via Microsoft Teams,
on Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 6.30pm**

Present: Cllr Vanessa Jones (Chair), Cllr Nichola Carr (Vice-Chair), Cllr Steve Bowring, Cllr Claire Sharp, Cllr Anne Brindle (MBC), Bex Ratchford (Clerk)

Public: 5

229. Election of Chair and declaration of acceptance of office

Cllr Jones had stepped down as Chair in September due to an alleged mishandling of a health and safety issue but was re-elected. Cllr Jones signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

230. Election of Vice-Chair and declaration of acceptance of office

Cllr Carr had stepped down as Vice-Chair in September due to an alleged mishandling of a health and safety issue but was re-elected. Cllr Carr signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

231. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Hinder (MBC).

232. Declarations of interests

Cllrs had no interests to declare.

233. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd September 2020

The minutes were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed and dated by the Chair.

234. Cllr resignations

Cllr Merrick, Cllr Till and Cllr Noble have all resigned. They were thanked for their work and input into the council during their time in office. All vacancies have been advertised and MBC informed. Electors have until 23rd October to petition for an election; after this date the positions can be filled by co-option. There has been one expression of interest so far. **Action 1: Clerk to ensure all vacancy notices are on Facebook.**

235. Police briefing

There was no police briefing available.

The meeting adjourned for a short public session but there were no matters raised.

236. Matters arising (for information only)

- a. AP1: remaining items for the Barn still to be purchased. **Action 2: working party to purchase remaining items when appropriate to do so.**
- b. AP2: pensions still to be investigated. **Action 3: Clerk to investigate pensions.**
- c. AP3: play area inspection booked.
- d. AP4: amended risk assessments forwarded and published.
- e. AP5: policies updated and published.

- f. AP6: CCTV policy still to be drafted. **Action 4: Cllr Bowring to draft by next meeting.**
- g. AP7: Accessibility Statement drafted; agenda item 244.
- h. AP8: no bill has been received to date. **Action 5: Clerk to chase.**
- i. AP9: potential grants checked; there are none available to cover loss of income at the present time.
- j. AP10: daily electricity usage was not discussed.
- k. AP11: developer informed regarding tree felling; agenda item 238.
- l. AP12: enquirers informed regarding Barn closure.
- m. AP13: hand sanitiser still to be purchased and signs still to be put up; agenda item 238.
- n. AP14: BVH written to regarding bait boxes; agenda item 240.
- o. AP15: key still to be cut. **Action 6: Cllr Jones to get key cut.**
- p. AP16: comment made regarding tree felling.
- q. AP17: Cllr Carr's details passed on.
- r. AP18: email regarding traffic calming responded to.

237. Report on decisions taken under the COVID-19 scheme of delegation

Decisions made by the clerk with delegated powers according to the COVID-19 scheme of delegation since the last meeting were:

- a. It was **agreed** to engage James Carr to do the hedge cutting throughout the village for another three years, at a cost of £920 for this year. Cllr Carr declared an interest and did not take part in this decision.

238. Barn

The dead beech tree has been removed. The missing furniture has been chased by a previous cllr. Six enquiries have been received about reopening the Barn, most from potential regular hirers. It was **agreed** to keep the Barn closed and to review the situation at the next meeting in November.

239. Grounds maintenance

Due to Barge, the current contractor, ceasing trading, a new contractor is needed. It was **agreed** to ask Barge for recommendations and to get quotes by next meeting. **Action 7: Clerk to contact Barge and get quotes.**

240. Playing field

An email had been received from a resident concerned about rodenticide outside the village hall and stating that she did not deem the field safe to use. A response had been sent within five¹ working days and the village hall committee are aware. Cllr Jones and Cllr Carr felt the public should have been warned of potential rat poison in the vicinity of the field and the response should have been made more quickly. It was **agreed** to write to BVH committee again asking what is being done about the problem and suggesting they look at the storage of rubbish as this could be a factor. **Action 8: Clerk to contact BVH.**

A day's tree work will be done on 24th October. **Action 9: Clerk to publicise as the field will be closed.**

It was suggested that the path next to the church shop needs to be levelled and turfed.

Action 10: cllrs to inspect the area.

Following the resignation of Cllr Merrick, Cllr Bowring will do the weekly play area checks.

¹ This was changed from the draft minute of 'three working days' against the advice and wishes of the clerk.

241. Dog control PSPO signage

Although the new MBC Public Spaces Protection Order requiring dogs to be on leads in unfenced play areas is a borough wide policy, parishes do not have to implement it. It was **agreed** not to include the community field in the new regulations and signage was not therefore needed. **Action 10: Clerk to inform MBC.**

242. Allotment fencing

The fencing around the allotments is in poor repair. A more long-lasting fence was suggested. **Action 11: Cllr Bowring to check the state of the fence.**

243. Website

Cllr Jones felt the new Wix website was not suitable in terms of design or content. The current EIS website provided by KCC is not compliant with the WCAG2.1 standard and will be decommissioned on 1st January 2021. Maidstone KALC will be writing to KCC regarding possible funding and support. It was suggested that a professional website design company could be used, although a significant amount of staff hours have already been spent on creating the new website. It was **agreed** to defer the decision for a month and see what KCC can provide but that the domain name 'bredhurstparishcouncil.org' should be purchased if and when applicable.

244. Accessibility Statement

The draft accessibility statement was **agreed**, but it was noted that it can only be used for the new Wix site as the current site is not compliant with accessibility regulations.

245. Social Media Policy

Due to recent comments on the community Facebook group, it was felt necessary to introduce some group rules and moderation of social media posts. It was **agreed** that Cllr Jones would send suggested rules to the clerk and Cllr Carr would investigate programmes that automatically remove inappropriate words. **Action 12: Cllr Jones to send suggested rules and Cllr Carr to investigate suitable programmes.**

246. Planning

- a. 20/504153 – 3 Blind Lane, Bredhurst – revision to proposed FFL following approval for the development of 4 no. new detached four bed dwelling houses with access and associated parking. It was **agreed** not to comment.
- b. The MBC Local Plan is being revised with a view to approval by MBC as soon as possible. Significant building will be necessary, due to an increased need for housing. MBC is looking at the feasibility of various suggested sites, some of which have already been dismissed. One of the remaining sites is Lidsing, which has a proposal for a garden community of up to 1000 houses. It was noted that the current infrastructure would struggle to cope, but the planned highways improvements on the A229 would help. Borough cllrs are aiming to get the proposed numbers reduced and put plans in place to mitigate and shield the AONB. MBC is working closely with Medway Council to ensure a joined up approach to planning in the area. The proposal will go out to consultation before December and BPC will get a chance to comment.

247. Finance

a. The financial statement and bank reconciliation were reviewed and accepted.

| Account | Balance as of 30/09/20 |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Unity Account | 37,783.46 |

b. The budget report for the second quarter was reviewed. It was requested that the grass cutting at the Barn be included under the Barn heading rather than the grass cutting heading. A fuller narrative and statement of material variances was requested. **Action 13: Clerk to amend and provide narrative and statement of material variances for next meeting.**

c. The external audit has been signed off with no issues raised.

d. Payments were **agreed** as follows:

| No. | Details | Amount | VAT* | Total | Auth |
|-----|--|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 55 | Barge – grounds maintenance (August & Sept) | 483.64 | 96.74 | 580.38 | SB, CS |
| 56 | Playdale – log walk replacement (second half) | 1670.00 | 334.00 | 2004.00 | SB, CS |
| 57 | Savills – field rental (01/10-31/12) | 112.50 | - | 112.50 | SB, CS |
| 58 | Clerk – back pay | 84.24 | - | 84.24 | SB, CS |
| 59 | Clerk – overtime (June-Sept) (agenda item 251) | | | | SB, CS |
| 60 | Clerk – expenses (paper & stamps) | 10.80 | - | 10.80 | SB, CS |
| 61 | Mike Searley – Barn grass cutting (11 th & 26 th Sept) | 35.00 | - | 35.00 | SB, CS |
| 62 | Mona Cleaning – Barn cleaning (September) | 15.00 | - | 15.00 | SB, CS |
| 63 | Rachel Ford – gardener (September) | 60.00 | - | 60.00 | SB, CS |
| 64 | No invoice received to date | - | - | - | - |
| 65 | PKF Littlejohn – external audit | 200.00 | 40.00 | 240.00 | SB, CS |
| 66 | Not necessary – agenda item 241 | - | - | - | - |
| 67 | Appointment Business Machines (printing) | 36.66 | 7.33 | 43.99 | SB, CS |
| 68 | Clerk – wages and office rental (October) | | | | SB, CS |
| D/D | Bytes – Microsoft Office (September) | 8.82 | 1.76 | 10.58 | |
| D/D | Onecom – Barn internet | 23.10 | 4.62 | 27.72 | |

* VAT to be reclaimed.

248. Reports from parish councillors

Cllr Carr attended the Maidstone KALC meeting. Cllr Jones received the art packs from KCC.

Action 14: Clerk to provide list of residents who requested packs to Cllr Jones and inform residents they are available.

249. Reports from borough and county councillors (if present)

Cllr Brindle had given an update under agenda item 246b.

250. Correspondence

All correspondence was noted. A correspondence policy was suggested to cover email acknowledgements, initial responses and fuller responses. **Action 15: Cllr Jones to draft policy.** The use of personal email addresses and equipment was discussed and cllrs were made aware of the GDPR implications of forwarding emails from residents.

a. An email regarding the churchyard boundary was requested to be forwarded. **Action 16: Clerk to forward.**

- b. KALC are providing some short online courses. It was **agreed** that the clerk would attend those on Freedom of Information and Health & Safety. **Action 17: Clerk to book.**
- c. KALC News was requested to be forwarded. **Action 18: Clerk to forward.**
- d. Details of a support payment for those isolating due to Test & Trace was requested to be forwarded. **Action 19: Clerk to forward.**

The meeting adjourned for a short public session but there were no matters raised.

251. Staffing (closed session)

Members of the public left the meeting for this item and the clerk left for the initial discussion. It was **agreed** that the clerk must not exceed her monthly contracted hours. Should overtime be required it must be authorised in advance and details provided as to why the extra hours are required. It was **agreed** to ask the clerk to provide evidence of the extra hours worked so far and to inform the council when within five hours of the total amount due to be worked each month. It was **agreed** to pay 29 hours overtime covering June to September, with Cllr Bowring and Cllr Sharp voting in favour and Cllr Jones and Cllr Carr abstaining.

252. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 10.06pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 4th November 2020** at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....