

SOUTHFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of SOUTHFLEET PARISH held on Monday 20th March 2017 at 8.00pm in Southfleet Village Hall, Dale Road, Southfleet.

PRESENT: Cllr N Salway, Chairman, Cllr I Brown Vice Chairman, Cllr P Tester, Cllr S Carter, Cllr L Tomkins, Jackie Hardinges, Clerk and six residents of the Parish.

The Chairman welcomed residents and introduced the Members of the Parish Council

MINUTES: The minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 21st March 2016 were considered. The Minutes were moved and seconded to be a true record.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

ENVIRONMENT

The parish is looking good with the bulbs blooming. There is a problem with parking on verges and fly tipping. The PC entered the Men of Trees competition, we didn't win a prize, however was praised on the report. We would like to thank the litter pickers who go out in all weathers to keep the parish tidy.

HIGHWAYS

Congestion in the rural lanes continues to be a problem. The Highways Agency recently consulted on an A2 Bean Junction/Ebbsfleet improvement scheme which would result in 3 years of works. The PC responded with concerns of diversion of the traffic through Southfleet, noise, air pollution, artificial lighting and compensation. A good winter with no problems, however drainage and potholes continue to be an issue.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

KCC is the Authority responsible for Footpaths; however there is a small budget to work with. There is a leaflet available on "dos and don'ts" if residents would like a copy.

PLANNING AND THE GREEN BELT

The "easing of planning regulations" in 2015 has made it very difficult for Dartford Planning Officers. The PC responds to every planning application consultation and reports areas of concern to the Dartford Enforcement Officers with particular regard to Listed buildings, Conservations areas and the Metropolitan Green Belt, which we have a lot of. We are doing the best we can.

EBBSFLEET GARDEN CITY

There have been rumors the scheme was being dropped, however this is untrue; the design has become more design led with greener amenity areas. Existing plans are being implemented and plans are being drawn up for Brownfield sites. Traffic will have an impact on Southfleet which we will continue to monitor.

PARAMOUNT

There is no longer a scheme for a Water Theme Park; this area will now be used for more car parking. There have been changes in Directorship and a new Chief Executive appointed who will focus the plans and submit a planning application in 2019 with a view to opening in 2022. This will also have an impact on Southfleet roads.

PRECEPT

Over many years the Parish Council policy is to be strict with financial housekeeping. We have avoided expensive schemes that require ongoing maintenance and only donate to local causes i.e Sedley's School, the Southfleet Village Hall and Groups that help others in the parish. Under recent government arrangements we receive modest sums through the new Community Infrastructure Levy; and DBC's Capacity Building Fund where we can bid for a limited sum to enhance the Parish. In the forthcoming years the PC has decided to

seek funds for signs one or two hamlets to keep their names alive; and for the supply of bollards to protect verges and amenity spaces. You will notice from your Council bill the sum to SPC is very modest. None of the Councillors take an allowance.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT – Arriva 489 and 475/474

There has been improvements to the 474/475 Bluewater service, but time keeping and non running problems with the 489 – Gravesend to New Ash Green service are being pursued with Arriva. Buses are important to parishes in a rural location; children need to get to school and commuters to stations. A possible late 474/475 service to Bluewater may be taken forward.

ALLOTMENTS

24 plots and some plots available: Rent is £12 from 1st October. Sedleys School has a plot run by a number of parents and are we are pleased with their progress. At the moment negotiation of renewal of a 3 year lease is taking place.

WAR MEMORIALS

In 1914-1918 there was a cottage to house the district nurse (Memorial Cottage in Red Street). With the coming of the NHS, things changed and the cottage was sold by KCC. During refurbishment the name plaque was taken off and broken. Plans for granite cross with names from both wars did not materialise, though in 1955 the Parish Council provided a Book of Remembrance which is in the Church.

The Parish Council placed a WWI Replacement on Memorial Cottage in 2015 and in January 2016 a WWII plaque at Sedleys School.

STEWARDSHIP

This is our report to you on our actions on your behalf for the past year.

Q. Drainage Scheme in Park Corner Road. Any update

A. The PC is aware of the proposal and awaits confirmation of the start date.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

The financial statement given is in line with the figures which will be submitted for the audit, with however we do have a more detailed breakdown of individual items available.

Last financial year the Parish Council was yet again strict with its housekeeping and did not incur any routine un-necessary costs.

Income: In addition to the Precept and allotment rental income, we received £3383 from the DBC Capacity Building fund to purchase signs for Betham, Southfleet, Railway Cottages and the WWII Plaque. We also received the new Community Infrastructure Levy payment from DBC for new house builds which replaced section 106 totalling £3372. This money will be used within 5 years on projects in the parish which could include Highways schemes. We are going to save this money and together with any future payments put forward suggestions for its use.

The expenditure includes as usual The Clerks salary, insurance, hire of the Village Hall, Membership of Associations, donations, audit fees, stationery, publications and bulbs to enhance the parish. Councillors do not claim any allowances.

In the next financial year we are hoping to apply for the DBC Capacity Building fund grant to pay for a sign for Highcross/Westwood area and possible bollards to protect the bulbs on vulnerable Highways land.

To date after chasing from this Council a design scheme has been submitted for the Section 106 agreement from the development at Hook Place Farm of £24,000 to spend on traffic calming in the Hook Green area. We hope this will be implemented in the next few months.

There was an internal and external audit this year and District Audit were satisfied that procedures are being carried out in accordance with current regulations. The Audit Notice was displayed on the noticeboard following the legal requirements; and there were no requests to study the accounts from residents. All our procedures are in accordance with the law, as our Minutes and audit results show.

The Parish Council is very mindful of the economic climate, and agreed only a 1% increase on last year's precept. This equates to each household paying an average of £17 per year towards the Parish Council precept. You will notice on your council tax bills, your parish part of the tax has gone down; this is due to the increase in the number of houses in the parish. This will be monitored in future years.

There were no questions and it was proposed and seconded to adopt the financial statement.

SOUTHFLEET MEMORIAL FUND

In 1956 the Trust sold Memorial Cottage and the profits were used to set up the Southfleet Memorial fund (formerly the Memorial Sick Poor Fund). There are 5 Trustees and strict confidentiality is maintained concerning all applications to the fund. 18 donations had been made in 2016/17. The accounts are available to view.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Q. Traffic in New Barn Road: Complaint of increase in traffic due to the Boot Fair and also Pinden lorry movements.

A. The matter of the Boot fairs is being pursued with DBC and The Chairman will contact Pinden to remind them the regulations regarding lorry movements applicable in the planning consent.

Q. Footpaths: Resident's observations of signs erected on North Kent Farmland with details of the official PROW's and complaint of aggressive attitudes of workers to walkers.

A. "Rights to roam" were discussed and the PC will follow up resident's concerns with the Leaseholder of the land. Other footpaths were also affected which will be reported to the Landowner.

Q Footpath Maps. Does the PC have a copy?

A. the PC holds an official map, however advised residents to access the KCC Footpaths website for detailed information.

Q. Problems with individual Internet and phone signal. Is this a general problem in the parish?

A. A new Broadband box was fitted in Red Street 2 years ago and the general speed has increased for residents, however individual issues should be reported to the resident's internet and phone provider.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming, and their support of the PC's work.