

WEST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 19th JANUARY 2015 AT THE GOOD INTENT, WEST FARLEIGH

PRESENT: Cllrs B Scott (Chairman), B Merritt, G Martin, L Johnson, C Stockwell, H Swan, Borough Cllr Wilson, PCSO Matt Judges and Mrs A Broadhurst, Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE: There were 11 parishioners present.

Cllr Scott requested, if anyone intended to record the meeting, that they inform the Parish Council.

Public Discussion: A resident spoke about an issue with dog walking, sheep farming and the poor state of some stiles along KM21 from Church Lane to Teston Bridge. It was noted that some dog walkers are cutting away at the fences so that their dogs can get through, however this is resulting in sheep getting out of the field, which is obviously a concern for farmers. A resident commented that the stile which has been fitted near to the cricket field is appalling and this is making dog walkers extremely unhappy (pictures of three stiles along the route were circulated for information). Cllr Scott stated that the damage was probably being caused by dog walkers from outside the village and added that walkers need to remember that they do not have a right of access across fields and, if not careful, the access could be removed if Landowners become unhappy with the situation. Cllr Martin stated that he is a villager and a sheep farmer and he has managed to lamb and ewe proof the area from the Tickled Trout to Mill Lane, and this has worked well. He added that he is concerned that dogs are not being kept under control as is required under The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 s1(2). It was also noted that dog fouling was an issue which is not good for animals or humans. A resident stated that dogs are being kept on a lead and commented that rambles are also using the stiles and it could be dangerous for them. Cllr Martin reminded all present that the work completed to stiles which have been repaired or placed has been completed by members of the Parish Council and only material costs have been charged. He stated that it would be nice to have some help from other residents from time to time. In conclusion it was felt that 3 kissing gates should be installed along KM21 to replace the stiles currently present, Stephen Norman offered to pay for one gate, Roy Plommer offered to pay for 1/3 of another gate and Bernice Brewster & Margaret Zak offered to make a donation of £50.00 towards a gate. Cllr Scott thanked the residents for their kind offers and added that the Parish Council would pay for the three gates to be installed, and this was agreed by all Councillors. The Clerk offered to discuss this further with the Public Rights of Way Officer. **ACTION: Clerk**

A resident informed all present that Cllr Martin is very responsible when farming and moving sheep, keeping them contained at all times and added that he does a fantastic job.

It was also noted that the gate which has been fitted in Kettle Lane works very well and closes on its own.

Cllr Merritt informed all present that he had spoken to Don Goodwin who had given permission for the Sports Club to arrange for sheep to be bought into the field and they had subsequently made the necessary arrangements with the farmer. Cllr Merritt added that Don felt that they would be good for the ground and would help maintain the grass.

Mr Plommer reported that Helen Grant had accompanied him to present the speed limit petition. It had been very positive and Mr Brazier listened and a reply should hopefully be received in the next month.

Numerous highways were mentioned during the public discussion:

- Heath Road (from Coxheath) the sign warning of horses is blocking the site line at the junction **ACTION: Clerk**
- Heath Road – white road markings need reinstating following the recent resurfacing **ACTION: Clerk**
- Lower Road – 40mph sign missing near School House **ACTION: Clerk**
- Lower Road – ‘No Parking’ sign needs reinstating. Cllr Merritt stated he had the sign and the resident offered to arrange to collect and install it.
- 40mph & 20mph signs by The Thatched Cottage – The Clerk explained that this issue had been brought to Kent Highways attention and they are dealing with this.

1. APOLOGIES

Borough Cllr Mortimer, Collins and Cllr J King

2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

Cllr Merritt declared a pecuniary interest in Item 8.3 (Cheques for signature) as he has submitted a Councillor expenses claim form for stationery items.

3. MINUTES of the Meeting held on 17th November 2014

The Minutes of the meeting had been previously distributed and Cllr Stockwell proposed that the minutes were a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Johnson, with all in favour. The Chairman signed off the official copy.

4. POLICE MATTERS

PCSO Judges introduced himself to all present and reported that there were no crimes recorded since the last meeting. He reported on the recent Parish/Police Forum meeting and queried whether the Parish Council would be interested in starting a Lorry Watch scheme. The Clerk reported that the Parish had looked into this before, in conjunction with Teston Parish Council, however it had proven difficult to obtain enough volunteers for the scheme to be successful. Cllr Martin added that many of the drivers can be quite abusive and would prefer to pay the £30 fine rather than having to pay for the extra diesel which would be required to come through the centre of Maidstone. PCSO Judges added that the lorry drivers appear to be using car satnavs rather than the correct HGV ones.

Cllr Merritt commented that PC Shaw used to book drivers regularly but Kent Police does not have enough manpower to allow for an Officer to come out monitoring the bridges. Borough Cllr Wilson reported that East Farleigh Parish Council has commissioned a report from an outside contractor to look at the issues with East Farleigh bridge and the Company has highlighted that lorries need to be stopped and turned back before they reach the bridge. The report offers several different options and suggested that a copy of the report be obtained from the Clerk. It was also noted that Teston Parish Council have been looking into CCTV with warning signs. General discussion then took place regarding Tutsham Farm who regularly has vehicles crossing Teston Bridge as they feel that they have right of way. It was noted that this causes huge problems in the area.

PCSO Judges reported that East Farleigh Parish have had a number of shed break-ins and asked residents to be vigilant.

Cllr Merritt read out a report about the Parish/Police Forum meeting which he had attended with Cllr Scott. He praised PCSO Judges for overseeing the meeting with another PCSO at very short notice, however it was disappointing that Inspector Gaggan-Cook was not present to offer answers to queries raised at the previous meeting. Cllr Scott commented that it is concerning that cuts are always being mentioned with regards to the Police.

5. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATH MATTERS

5.1 Highways Issues in West Farleigh

The Clerk reported the following:

- Sign at junction of Teston Lane and Lower Road is to be replaced by MBC
- Complaints received that the 20mph sign is masked by the 40mph sign less than 10 mtrs away and there is no 20mph sign coming from Ewell Lane are both under investigation
- 30mph sign missing in Charlton Lane – work being programmed

The following forthcoming road closures were also noted:

- **Smiths Hill (B2010)** – 16th February for 1 week
To clear the culvert to try to reduce flooding and to repair potholes. The drainage team are also hoping to complete a full survey of the culvert and drainage lines and complete any additional work required at the same time.
- **Shingle Barn Lane/ Hilltop** – 23rd February for 4 days
For pre-patching

Cllr Johnson reported that the brick ridge on Smiths Hill to Vale House needs to be investigated during the road closure. It is very steep and needs the slope extending as it is currently like a road hump. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Martin also added that he had previously offered to have a soak away installed in the field to help alleviate the flooding at Smiths Hill and the Clerk offered to get the Drainage Team to contact him directly. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Martin stated that the yellow lines towards Teston Bridge need to be reinstated as cars are now parking by the bridge, which is extremely dangerous. The Clerk informed all present that she had made Kent Highways aware of this but would chase them. **ACTION: Clerk**

5.2 Mill Lane

Cllr Scott reported that the sign has now been installed. After brief discussion it was felt that there was nothing further that the Parish Council could do to assist with the issues in Mill Lane at present.

6. RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

6.1 Formal Complaint against MBC

Cllr Scott reported that the Parish Council was not getting anywhere with the formal complaint that has been lodged against Maidstone Borough Council. He added that the enforcement issues in the village are not being rectified satisfactorily and he stated that he was disgusted with the poor performance and incompetence of the Chief Executive and the various Officers involved.

After brief discussion Cllr Scott suggested that a letter be sent to Alison Broom again, copying in The Right Hon. Eric Pickles MP (Secretary of State). Borough Cllr Wilson informed all present that he is speaking with Helen Grant MP who is to meet with Eric Pickles and suggested that he discuss the matter further with her so that she can speak with him directly. All Councillors agreed that this would be agreeable to try to get the matter resolved. **ACTION: Borough Cllr Wilson/Clerk**

6.2 Broadband in West Farleigh

Cllr Swan reported that the broadband service in the village is getting worse and stated that the Government has given BT money to improve the service. Helen Grant MP has received a letter to her query regarding broadband in the area which was very similar to the response received by the Parish Council from the Leader of Kent County Council. Cllr Swan reported that Helen Grant had then complained to BT directly who had subsequently contacted Cllr Swan to say that they were very surprised there was a problem as no complaints had been received from West Farleigh. Councillors all stated that this was untrue as they were all aware of residents that have complained about the poor service. After brief discussion it was agreed that as many residents as possible need to complain to BT and Cllr Swan offered to add a piece to Life-line and the website giving the details of who they would need to complain to within BT. **ACTION: Cllr Swan**

Borough Cllr Wilson added that Ed Vaizey MP has also been complaining about the broadband issues in The Weald area. The Clerk offered to forward the letter received from Kent County Council. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was also noted that businesses in the village also need to complain as an incentive to get better broadband into villages.

6.3 Annual Parish Meeting

After brief discussion it was agreed by all Councillors to follow the same format as last year, with the normal meeting being 1 hour long commencing at 6.30pm and the Annual Parish Meeting taking place afterwards. It was also agreed that refreshments should be provided at a cost of £40.00 as this gave residents the opportunity to discuss any issues with Councillors in an informal manner. The Clerk informed all present that the meeting will be held on Monday 18th May.

ACTION: Clerk

7. MATTERS OF REPORT

7.1 County Councillor's Report

No report circulated.

7.2 Borough Councillor's Report

Borough Cllr Wilson spoke briefly regarding the amendments which are required to the Local Plan.

7.3 Individual Councillor's Reports

Cllr Martin reported that he is to hold a **'Lambing Day' on the 8th March at Smiths Hill Farm from 9.30am**, all are welcome to come along.

Cllr Swan reported that the bulbs that were planting are coming up on the Green.

Cllr Stockwell reported that he has checked the play equipment and there are no issues other than the roundabout being very stiff. General discussion took place as it was noted that this has always been a problem. The Clerk offered to see whether there was anything that could be done to rectify this issue. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Scott reported that the footpath from Tutsham towards Wateringbury is a poor state where tractors have ploughed it up. This could be a health and safety issue and needs investigating further. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Scott warned all dog walkers to be vigilant on the footpath the same footpath as people have been attacked by large dogs in the area. The Dog Warden has been informed and is investigating the matter.

Cllr Scott reported that a resident has raised concerns that the footpath to the north east of Tutsham has been moved. This needs to be inspected by the Public Rights of Way Officer. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Scott reported that a resident was concerned that plant and hoses are being stored on the Wateringbury side of the farm. **ACTION: Clerk**

7.4 Clerk's Reports

Water Pipes in Charlton Lane: The Clerk reported that work is to be completed on the grass going down the green furthest from the pub and, having viewed the site, South East Water are thinking of drilling rather than trenching which causes much less disturbance to the area. South East Water is aware of the Parish Council's concerns with the green being ruined and they have stated that the area will still be able to be used and should reinstate extremely well. South East Water is hoping to commence work mid-March and they anticipate the section on the green will take around 3 weeks.

Concerns were raised at the area included in the work which is highlighted on a sign, which has recently appeared, and states that 'significant work is to be undertaken'. Councillors asked whether a meeting could be arranged with the Officer from MBC as Cllr Merritt highlighted that all of the trees are protected with TPOs. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was noted that this work was a surprise as South East Water had already informed the Clerk in November that no work was scheduled to be completed in West Farleigh.

8. FINANCE

8.1 Budget Monitoring

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31st December 2014 was **Noted**.

8.2 Income received since the last meeting

Actual payments received since the last meeting were:

Co-operative Interest – Direct Plus Account (November)	£ 4.34
Co-operative Interest – Direct Plus Account (December)	£ 3.93
MBC – 2 nd part of Parish Service Scheme Grant	£749.50

8.3 Cheques for signature

It was proposed by Cllr Martin, seconded by Cllr Stockwell **“that the Council approve the following payments”**.

101063 – Mrs A Broadhurst – Nett Salary January	£651.50
101064 – Mr B Merritt – Expenses (Printer Cartridges)	£ 61.57
101065 – Mrs A Broadhurst – Nett salary February (Post-dated)	£624.23

The Clerk reported that post-dated cheque number 101061 had been cancelled as Clerk’s had been awarded a pay rise as of the 1st January 2015.

8.4 Budget and Precept for 2015/2016

The Clerk had previously circulated the budget paperwork to all councillors explaining the effect any increase in precept will have on the annual charge per household. The implications of a cap being introduced for Parish Councils was discussed and it was noted that, if the cap is agreed and Parishes wanted to increase their precept above a 2% rise, this could result in a referendum being called to approve the rise; at an approximate cost of £3,000. The Clerk added that the cost of this referendum would need to be included in the precept increase resulting in an even higher figure being required. Councillors discussed the increasing workload which the Parish Council undertakes and it was felt that the grounds maintenance costs in the village could rise even higher if the current standard is to be maintained in the future. It was also noted that work would be required in the play area at some point and this money would need to be included in the precept rise. Taking all of these points into consideration, Councillors felt that a rise in precept was required to ensure that the Parish Council could continue to offer the current level of service without worrying about the possible risk of a referendum. Cllr Merritt also added that the Parish Council makes several donations during the year to village organisations and he wanted this to continue. All Councillors were in full agreement with this. Taking all of these points into account, Cllr Scott proposed **“that the precept for the forthcoming year be set at £16,000, an increase of £9.56 per Band D household per year”**. This was seconded by Cllr Johnson, with all in favour.

8.5 Revised Financial Regulations

It was proposed by Cllr Martin that the new Financial Regulations be approved by the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr Stockwell, with all in favour. Cllr Scott signed the official copy for the file.

8.6 Letter requesting a donation towards the Yalding Playscheme

It was noted that no children had attended the scheme from West Farleigh in 2014 and, after brief discussion, Councillors felt that money was not available as the Parish Council already donates a large sum each year to groups in the village.

9. PLANNING MATTERS

9.1 Any Planning Applications received before Meeting

The Clerk reported that no applications had been received.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Council meeting will be held on **Monday 16th March 2015 at 7.30pm** at The Good Intent

With no further matters to discuss, the meeting was closed at 9.20pm