

## WEST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017 AT THE GOOD INTENT, WEST FARLEIGH

**PRESENT:** Cllrs B Scott (Chairman), Cllrs M Merritt, G Martin, L Johnson, J Morgan, H Swan, C Stockwell and Mrs A Broadhurst (Clerk).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Three parishioners were present.

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

#### **PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

A resident stated that, since moving to West Farleigh, they had seen the removal of the freighter service, paths not being swept (particularly in Charlton Lane), the bin collection is now fortnightly, dog bins have been removed and roads are always icy in bad weather; yet the Council Tax still rises. Cllr Merritt responded that he has been trying to tackle the winter road issue for the past 11 years and has been told that it is Government Law that only registered roads will be gritted. Cllr Martin reported that he had gritted some of Charlton Lane to try to keep the bus service operating. Cllr Merritt stated that the grit bin by Gaulston Bunglows had been filled before the bad weather and he had intended to grit the pavement but this had already been done. He added that residents had also used the grit to clear their driveways. It was noted that Kent Highways only supply the salt for clearing the roads. The resident stated that they had only used some salt to assist a lady with a young child and that there were no signs to say that the salt cannot be used by residents. There was further discussion and the Clerk offered to clarify with Kent Highways why they do not grit Charlton Lane, she added that, in the past, they have always stated that they only grit A and B roads (Charlton Lane is classed as a C road). She also added that she will see if it is possible for the Parish Council to pay for this to be gritted in bad weather (and what the cost would be).

**ACTION: Clerk**

Concerns were raised at the speed of vehicles driven by MBC staff who come out to the village to collect bulky waste items. The Clerk asked that if a registration number cannot be recorded, that the time and place be noted so that this can be investigated by MBC. Cllr Scott reported that all MBC vehicles should be fitted with tracking devices and Cllr Martin added that, if the vehicles are over 3.5t, they should also be fitted with tachographs.

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Community Warden A McKinley, PCSO P Gardner, Borough Cllrs B Mortimer, E Fermor and R Webb

#### **2. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS**

Cllr Merritt declared an interest in Agenda Item 8.3 (Finance – Cheques to be signed) as he had submitted an expenses claim form.

#### **3. MINUTES of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016**

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

#### **4. REPORTS FROM THE POLICE & COMMUNITY WARDEN**

The Clerk informed all present that an email had been received from Kent Police stating that there has been a change to the areas covered by the PCSOs. New recruits are starting around March time and West Farleigh will then be covered by one of these. Until then, PCSO Gardner will be covering the area but it was too short notice to be able to attend this evening (the email had been circulated over the weekend). The Clerk reported that there had been four crimes since the meeting in November. These were two burglaries other than a dwelling, one criminal damage and a one theft from a motor vehicle.

Cllr Martin stated that there had been 2 quad bikes and a scrambler bike stolen from Tutsham Farm and asked why these were not included in the crime figures. The Clerk responded that she would contact the PCSO to find out. **ACTION: Clerk**

Councillors also asked that the Clerk found out what the criminal damage was on The Green. **ACTION: Clerk**

#### **5. HIGHWAYS AND FOOTPATH MATTERS**

##### **5.1 Highways Issues in West Farleigh**

Cllr Martin reported that the drains in Smiths Hill are blocked again. This has been particularly dangerous during the recent bad weather as the water has turned to ice. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Martin stated that the drain clearance, which had recently been completed in Teston Lane, had been completed to a very good standard.

It was noted that the road works along Lower Road, by Kettle Lane, are for BT Infinity to be fitted.

Cllr Merritt raised concerns with the traffic signals in place on Lower Road, to allow the wall at Court Lodge to be repaired. One morning the lights had been out of action but a workman was still working down a ditch. Cllr Merritt had had to deal with oncoming traffic (due to the failure of the lights) and this could have been disastrous if a car had swerved out of the way towards where the man was working. Cllr Merritt had spoken with him to highlight his concerns and he had been informed that the batteries had been stolen out of the lights. He subsequently contacted Anvil Plant Hire who stated that it would cost £460 to fit two secure batteries and double that for the ones that are padlocked in place.

## 5.2 Teston Lane

Cllr Scott reported that progressing with this project was not going well. Cllr Mortimer had met with Network Rail who had confirmed they will not allow any traffic signals to be fitted, as they could be a safety issue close to the barriers. He had then spoken to the Police Crime Commissioner who has promised to get Kent Police to prosecute oversized vehicle drivers on both Teston and East Farleigh Bridge. It was noted that the Police will no longer accept photographic evidence as these can be photoshopped; the offence must be recorded by them. Cllr Martin asked whether blank camera type boxes could be placed on either side of the bridge but Cllr Scott raised concerns as to how vehicles would manage to turn around, after they have driven into Teston Lane, due to there being no warning signs in the surrounding roads.

## 5.3 Speedwatch

Cllr Stockwell reported that 3 volunteers have come forward to assist. Once the better weather arrives he will arrange the loan of kit and sort out Risk Assessments, Cllr Scott asked that he contact the Speedwatch Co-ordinator before commencing. Cllr Stockwell also reported that he has spoken to both Teston and Coxheath Parishes, who have Speedwatch groups in place and they have offered to come along to begin with to assist the volunteers.

## 6. RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

### 6.1 Play Area

Roundabout in the Play Area: Cllr Scott reported that the roundabout had been removed and had been sold for £200. The Rotabounce has been installed, however this appears to be rather stiff. It was also noted that the new safety flooring that has been installed is not to the required standard. No preparation was completed before it was laid and there is nothing to stop the grass from pushing the surface up. Cllr Merritt stated that the Parish Council should be requesting an extended guarantee on the flooring. The Clerk stated that she had viewed the flooring before the meeting and she has concerns that the flooring and grass are at different heights which could be a trip hazard. Cllr Scott stated that he did not want the final invoice to be paid and that he wanted the Area Manager to come out for a site visit to discuss the concerns.

**ACTION: Clerk**

### 6.2 Grounds Maintenance Contract 2017-2020

The Clerk reported that she has contacted three companies to tender for the work, however there has not been any response from two. Mrs Broadhurst stated that she would be contacting both Companies this week and had another two that she can contact if they decline to quote.

**ACTION: Clerk**

## 7 MATTERS OF REPORT

### 7.1 County Councillor's Report

No report provided.

### 7.2 Borough Councillor's Report

No reports provided.

### 7.3 Individual Councillor's Reports

Cllr Swan asked if the defibrillator signs have been completed and Cllr Merritt stated that he has purchased vinyl stickers with the location of the defib. unit and these will be reinstated once the weather has improved.

Cllr Swan asked whether the litter picking volunteers could be asked to pick up the leaf fall around the village. The Clerk stated that, as the work that they do is not overseen by the Parish Council, if there was an accident whilst the work was being completed, the Council would be liable. She clarified that she did not think that this would be appropriate and that any issue for pedestrians should be reported to MBC for them to send a team out. Councillors were in agreement with this. It was queried how often the street sweeper should come to the village, as no one present at the meeting could remember ever seeing one and the Clerk stated that she would contact MBC to find out how often it visits the village and what roads are covers.

**ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Morgan stated that, whilst the new play equipment would be an asset to the play area, there was nothing for the older generation in the village. The Clerk stated that some gym equipment could be the next project for the Parish Council and Cllr Stockwell offered to progress with contacting Companies to see what is available.

**ACTION: Cllr Stockwell**

The Clerk reminded all present that there may be the opportunity for up to £10,000 match funding from MBC this year, if West Farleigh's play area is designated as a strategic site. The Clerk stated that she will alert Councillors when further information is circulated by MBC.

**ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Merritt reported that, with Cllr Johnson, he had purchased the new tree with the voucher awarded to the village in the Kent Men of the Trees competition last Autumn. They have purchased a Wild Service, which is also known as a Chequer tree. As the village has now lost the Chequers Pub, it is hoped that this can be planted near to the pub site, if Stephen Norman agrees. Cllr Merritt stated that rabbit fencing had also been purchased to protect the tree when it is planted.

Cllr Martin reported that he has chased the contractor who will be completing the vegetation clearance in Charlton Lane. Cllr Martin informed all present that Lambing Day is now confirmed as Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March (10.00am-4.00pm). He asked whether a banner could be purchased so that people are aware that the refreshments are being organised by the Parish Council. After brief discussion, it was agreed that the banner would need eyelets so that it could be hung from the marquee and simply needed to say 'West Farleigh Parish Council', Cllr Merritt stated that he would arrange this with Iden Signs. **ACTION: Cllr Merritt**

Concerns were raised with the trotting horses which have been seen around the village travelling at excessive speeds with carriages attached. There appears to be a very aggressive man overseeing the horses around Charlton Lane and Lower Road. The Clerk offered to make the PCSO aware of this issue. **ACTION: Clerk**

#### 7.4 Clerk's Reports

- Website: The Clerk reported that she has been on a training course to try to understand how the website works, ahead of the old EIS site migrating to WordPress. This new system is not proving as easy to work with as the old one and the Clerk hopes that the site moves across better than has been seen at other Parishes.
- Local Council Tax Support (LCTS): Councillors noted that it has been confirmed that the additional payment that the Parish Council had received for the past three years will not be given for the next financial year.
- Parish Services Scheme Payment (PSS): The PSS payment for the forthcoming year has had an uplift for inflation on the Grounds Maintenance expenditure and MBC have removed any payment towards Noticeboards. However, even with the 'uplift' it was noted that the Parish Council will see the annual payment reduce from £1,499 to £956. The Clerk reported that she had written to the Borough Councillors and the Chairman of KALC to ask them to consider this issue further. The MBC budget for PSS payments appears to have been fixed as it was for last year but the payment to the Parish Council has been reduced. It was also noted that all figures currently supplied by MBC have yet to be formally approved and so could still change (including the Tax Base figure for 2017/18). The Clerk added that she is waiting to see whether a full list of awards to all Parishes is circulated to Clerks.
- Actions with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) Membership Renewal: The annual renewal for ACRK is due and the Parish Council had joined this association to obtain assistance with getting a Local Needs Housing Survey completed with a view of having them assist us, if a need was identified. As this project will now not progress, the Clerk felt there was no need for the membership to be renewed. If a further project became apparent in the future, the Parish Council could always re-join. All Councillors were in agreement with this.

## 10 FINANCE

### 10.1 Budget Monitoring

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 was **Noted**.

### 10.2 Income received since the last meeting

Co-operative Interest – Direct Plus Account (November) £ 2.10

The Clerk reported that, as no interest had been paid during December, she had contacted the bank and had been informed that interest is now only being paid on savings accounts and not business ones. She added that, even with this in mind, The Co-operative were still much more reliable to bank with than others available and they are always extremely helpful over the phone.

### 10.3 Cheques for signature

It was proposed by Cllr Martin, seconded by Cllr Morgan "that the Council approve the following payments".

101145 - Mrs A Broadhurst – Nett Salary for January	£654.99
101146 – Mr B Merritt – Expenses (Cartridges and tool hire)	£168.45
101147 – Mrs A Broadhurst – Expenses (Office 365 & McAfee renewal & Cartridges)	£171.98
101148 – Mrs A Broadhurst – Nett Salary for February (Post-dated)	£654.79

### 10.4 Budget and Precept for 2017/18

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 consultation for the possible cap to Parish Council precepts, and the subsequent outcome, were discussed. It was noted the precept rises will be monitored by Central Government and, if there was a future 2% cap (possibly 2018/19), this would result in the Parish Council only being able to increase the precept by approximately £500 a year without holding a referendum (which would then increase the precept further due to the cost of this exercise).

This would result in projects being put on hold for years waiting to accrue the necessary funds. The Clerk suggested that the £5,000 recently used for the purchase of the Rota Bounce be replaced from the general reserves for future work to the area and Councillors were in agreement with this. It was noted that, with the loss of the Local Council Support payment and the decrease in Parish Service Scheme payment, the Council has a substantially reduced income for the forthcoming financial year. Whilst Councillors were aware that the Support payment was not guaranteed, it had been nice to hold this income in reserves. After a long discussion regarding the effect on residents of any increases to the precept, it was noted that the Parish Council wants to increase the work completed around the village to make up for the cutbacks seen from MBC and Kent Highways. Taking all points raised into consideration, Cllr Martin proposed **“that the precept for the forthcoming year be set at £21,000, an annual increase of £14.41 per Band D household per year”**. This was seconded by Cllr Morgan, with all in favour.

**11. PLANNING MATTERS**

**11.1 Any planning applications received before the meeting**

No applications had been received.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next full Council meeting will be held on **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 7.30pm** at The Good Intent.

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