

A Meeting of the Parish Council was held at The Memorial Hall, The Street, Frittenden on Tuesday 4th March 2025 at 7.30pm.

Present were: Cllr A Staples
Cllr R Vernon
Cllr L Gosbee
Cllr J Tuke
Cllr M Viviers
Cllr S Murray

In attendance: Mrs E Nightingale (Clerk), Cllr S Holden (County)

[Cllr A Staples (Vice-Chairman) chaired the meeting in the absence of Cllr G Lawrence (Chairman)]

PUBLIC FORUM:

None.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr G Lawrence, Cllr A Fairweather (County), Cllr N Warne (County)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct Part 2)

Cllr Staples declared an interest in planning application 25/00371/FULL to be considered under agenda item 14.

3. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR UPDATE

Cllr Holden spoke about the upcoming local government reforms. Kent had not been chosen as one of the first to be reorganised because of the disparity between the existing County Council (Kent County Council) and Unitary Authority (Medway). This means that the elections due to take place in May 2025 will go ahead, but Cllr Holden has decided not to stand. Cllr Staples thanked Cllr Holden for his work in representing Frittenden at County Council level for the past 12 years.

Cllr Holden reported that the KCC budget had been approved which means that there will be a 5% increase in Council Tax.

Cllr Holden continues to press for the proper checking of road closures. The number of closures has now increased to 16,000 a year. 29% of them relate to emergency works carried out by utility companies. If a utility company declares an emergency, it can start work and is only required to notify KCC within 2 hours of doing so. There are now 4 inspectors in place to check that road closure permissions are being adhered to, particularly around the taking down of signs upon completion of works. However, representations have also been made to the House of Commons Select Committee asking for a reassessment of the term “emergency closure” as the feeling is that it is being abused by utility companies. A request has also been made for a review of the level of fines for breaches of road closure permissions as it is felt that the current very low level of fines does not act as a deterrent.

Cllr Holden is trying to get a meeting with the relevant parties about the planned road closures around the Hawkhurst Crossroads. He feels that Borough and Parish Councils should be involved

when decisions are made about such major works, in particular in relation to planning diversionary routes. Cllr Staples raised the state of the verges along Sand Lane caused by it being used as an unofficial diversion around the closure of Cranbrook Road. Cllr Holden asked to be copied in to correspondence with Canham Homes in that regard.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 7TH JANUARY 2025 AND 11TH FEBRUARY 2025

It was proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED** (3 abstentions) that the Minutes from the Council meeting on 7th January 2025 are a true and accurate record of that meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr Tuke, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED** (3 abstentions) that the Minutes from the Council meeting on 11th February 2025 are a true and accurate record of that meeting.

That being so, the Vice Chairman will sign the said Minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Cllr Lawrence had circulated an update on the action points from the last meeting as follows:

Cranbrook Road Closure

Cllr Lawrence had been liaising with the contractor carrying out the works. Progress had been patchy due to inclement weather so the road is unlikely to open before the scheduled date of 24th March 2025.

The Clerk read out correspondence received from a resident of Sand Lane who asked whether Canham Homes would be repairing the damaged verges. It was proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED** by all members present that the Clerk be directed to write to Canham Homes putting them on notice of the damage and inviting them to take steps to remediate that damage and copy Cllr Holden in to that correspondence.

Village Clean Up

This event is on the same day, 5th April 2025, as the Gardening Society Spring Flower Show, but it was hoped that this would not unduly impact on the number of volunteers. Cllr Lawrence will advertise the event once he has received confirmation that there are no issues with that date for the Bell & Jorrocks.

Knoxbridge Farm Change of Use

Cllr Lawrence had intended to attend the planning meeting at which this application was to be discussed, but after a close review of the application and discussions with Cllr Vernon and the Chair of Staplehurst Parish Council (who were supporting the application) he felt that this was unnecessary because (a) the application purported to deal with the concerns previously raised by the Parish Council and (b) it had already been passed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council without revision.

Annual Parish Assembly

Kim Fletcher, Chair of Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council, had kindly agreed to speak at the upcoming Annual Parish Assembly about the Support Our Schools campaign and the lessons learnt from engaging with the various stakeholders during the course of that ongoing campaign.

VE Day Celebrations

Cllr Staples reported that the Historical Society had various events planned and were discussing the same with the Memorial Hall Committee, to include a tea party or tea dance on the Saturday. The church bells would be rung on VE Day itself with the bell ringing timed to end just before the lighting of the beacon at 8:30pm. There would also be a service of commemoration at the Church on the Sunday.

6. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

The Clerk had received 3 quotes which were considered by the Council. It was proposed by Cllr Staples, seconded by Cllr Vernon, and **RESOLVED** by all members present to award the following contracts to Nigel Sestanovic:

CONTRACT 2: To mow the grass and cut the hedge at the War Memorial (a maximum of 16 grass cuts per annum March to November, weather permitting) taking care not to damage any memorial crosses or other memorial items for the sum of £250 per annum.

It was further proposed by Cllr Murray, seconded by Cllr Viviers, and **RESOLVED** by all members present to award the following contracts to Groundscare & General Services Limited:

CONTRACT 1: to mow the Parish Field grass (a maximum of 16 cuts per annum March to November, weather permitting) to include mowing the play area and strimming around the play equipment as necessary, with care being taken not to cause any strimmer damage to the play equipment; to trim under trees and surrounding areas including field edges as necessary, paying particular attention to removing any brambles under the weeping birch; to mow/cut the grass mounds within the Parish Field (a maximum of 8 cuts per annum March to November, weather permitting) for the sum of £250.00 per cut.

CONTRACT 3: to cut the entire length of the Paddock hedges (vertical faces and tops), including the hedge on the road boundary and the hedge between the Paddock and Frittenden House. (a maximum of 2 cuts per annum to take place in May and September, weather permitting, with additional cuts upon request should this be required for the safety of road users) for the sum of £150.00 per cut.

CONTRACT 4: to cut the outer side of the hedge between the Parish Field & Laundry Lane, by hand, and to remove all cuttings, ensuring that the hedge is squared off with no overhang at the top. (2 cuts per annum to take place in May and September, weather permitting) for the sum of £100.00 per cut.

CONTRACT 5: to cut all internal vertical faces and tops of hedges within the Parish Field, to include the hedge behind the tennis court, with all growth around telegraph poles being removed so that the hedges are maintained at a height of no more than 2.5m (measured from the Parish Field side), and to remove all cuttings. (1 cut per annum) for the sum of £350.00 per cut.

7. EASTER FUN RUN

It was proposed by Cllr Staples, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED** by all members present that the Council would put on this event with the organisation of it delegated to Charlotte Hunter. The Clerk reported that a risk assessment had been provided to the Council's insurers, who had confirmed that the event would be covered.

8. DAMAGED BENCH

The bench commemorated the Queen's Coronation and was damaged beyond repair when it was struck by a car which had come off the road. The driver had provided the Clerk with her contact

details and the Clerk had looked into the cost of replacing the bench (retaining the original plaque), which would be in the region of £400 to £500 depending on the size of the bench chosen. If a claim was made under the Parish Council's insurance, it would be required to pay the first £300 in any event and the claim would be recorded on the Council's claim record which might have a negative impact on the quotes received at the upcoming renewal. It was proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Viviers, and **RESOLVED** by all members present that the driver be invited to pay for a replacement bench in the first instance.

Cllr Gosbee kindly offered to arrange for the damaged bench to be removed.

9. HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN & WORKING GROUP

Prior to the meeting Cllr Lawrence had reported that had placed a request for volunteers in the next edition of the Parish Magazine and will also place a smaller notice on the Frittenden Community Facebook page.

10. UNLOCKING AED CABINETS

Cllr Lawrence had also reported that had discussed this with Lance French who understood the concern that unlocking the cabinets would likely lead to the equipment being stolen. However, it was agreed that he will look into extending the list of responsible people who have the code to improve access.

11. SPEEDWATCH

Cllr Staples reported that there had been 6 sessions during which 24 offenders had been recorded out of 221 vehicles, being an offender rate of c.11%. 3 letters had been sent out and the top speed recorded was 46 mph.

12. PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS / EQUIPMENT

Cllr Gosbee confirmed that, other than the playground still being very wet, there were no maintenance issues to report.

13. ROAD REPORT

Cllr Gosbee continued in his efforts to get the road surface between Buckhurst Bridge and the junction with Hareplain Road/Frittenden Road repaired. This had been reported by both Cllr Gosbee and residents on a number of occasions but no action had been taken. Cllr Vernon confirmed that he had recently submitted another report because vehicles coming off the bend were meeting vehicles on the wrong side of the road as they sought to navigate around the potholes and this would inevitably lead to an accident. It was proposed by Cllr Vernon, seconded by Cllr Gosbee, and **RESOLVED** by all members present that the Clerk submit a formal complaint to KCC about Highway's failure to take any action to address this long running issue.

Cllr Vernon also raised the issue of the trench that was forming outside Buckhurst. Cllr Gosbee will request action to resolve that issue.

14. PLANNING

New Applications

As the only application to be considered was one in which Cllr Staples had declared an interest, Cllr Staples removed himself from the room for this agenda item, during which time Cllr Viviers chaired the meeting.

25/00371/FULL	Park Cottage, Cranbrook Road, Frittenden Single storey rear extension Proposed by Cllr Staples, seconded by Cllr Gosbee RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL (Cllr Staples did not vote)
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Outcome of Previous applications

24/02986/FULL	2 Weald View, Cranbrook Road, Frittenden Variation of Condition 2 to planning application 24/01983/FULL – Erection of rear conservatory of smaller dimensions and elevations instead of a single storey rear extension PERMISSION GRANTED
24/03224/FULL	Poundlands Farm, Biddenden Road, Frittenden Proposed ground floor side extension, side porch, flat roof glazed window, internal alterations, new wood burner flue & new retaining external dwarf wall PERMISSION GRANTED

Planning appeals

- None

15. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

- None.

16. FINANCE

- It was proposed by Cllr Tuke, seconded by Cllr Viviers, and **RESOLVED** by all members present to pay the accounts/ as follows:

FRITTENDEN PAYMENTS – MARCH 2025					
Cheque Number	GROSS	VAT	NET	SUPPLIER	DETAILS
BACS	£17.00	Nil	£17.00	Frittenden Memorial Hall	Hall Hire (1 x session + winter surcharge)
BACS	£100.80	£16.80	£84.00	FCC Waste Management Ltd (formerly Urbaser Ltd)	Litterbin Collection (January & February)
BACS	£55.40	Nil	£55.40	Mrs E Nightingale	Clerk's Expenses - March
BACS	£137.55	Nil	£137.55	Mrs E Nightingale	Clerk's Salary – March
BACS	£34.40	Nil	£34.40	HMRC	PAYE
DD	£11.99	£2.00	£9.99	Hugo Fox	Website Hosting fee
DD	tbc	tbc	tbc	Npower	Streetlighting Energy – January
Total	£357.14	£18.80	£338.34		

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:45pm.

Chairman's Signature: _____

Date: _____