



BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
Matfield Pavilion, The Green, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7JU
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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2023 AT 7PM AT MATFIELD PAVILION

Present: Councillors J. Buttery (Chair) presided, E Akenhead, A Stout, A. Dewdney, C. Churchill, A. Wells, C. Anderson, C. Brooks (Clerk)

In attendance: Cllr Steve McMillan (TWBC), 15 members of the public.

1. To accept apologies for absence

None.

2. To approve Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 4th September 2023 were approved as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chair.

3. To record declarations of interest in any item on the Agenda

None.

4. To adjourn to allow public participation. At the Chairman's discretion, 15 minutes will be set aside for questions from members of the public each one of whom may speak for a maximum of 3 minutes in total relating to items on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. Members of the public are not permitted to participate in the meeting after this agenda item, without prior invitation from the Chairman.

A resident spoke regarding his approach to buy the piece of land that the Council owns behind Matfield toilets.

5. Borough and County Councillor

Cllr McMillan advised that the Local Plan will be submitted to the Full Council in November and to the Inspector in December with the consultation envisaged for January. The number of houses allocated in Capel and Paddock Wood is being reduced and TWBC are also discussing traffic management matters with KCC including the increase in rat runs around Kippings Cross.

6. Chairman's Announcements

- Cllr Buttery confirmed that he would place a wreath at the Brenchley Memorial and Cllr Anderson would place one at the Matfield War memorial on 12th November. A donation equal to the cost of wreaths would be made where they could be re-used from last year.
- Cllr Buttery confirmed that information had been provided by the owners of the Wheelwrights Arms that KCC have agreed to remove the highways rights and that therefore the land previously open to public parking is now private. Confirmation of this is being sought from KCC.
- Cllr Buttery advised that volunteers are being sought to establish a group of local residents to help revamp and look after the Jack Verrall Memorial Gardens on an ongoing basis. A new sign would be considered to ensure residents are aware it is available to everyone to use and enjoy.

7. Planning

1. Planning Applications

22/00757/FULL OS Plot 6860 West Side Of, Maidstone Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent	Erection of 15 no. residential dwellings, including affordable housing provision, additional car parking for Matfield Village Hall, the provision of open and children's play space, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs), new vehicular access and associated works. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE The Parish Council requests that this application be dealt with under Category X of paragraph 4.8d of the Tunbridge Wells Agreement, i.e. decided by TWBC's planning committee if the recommended decision differs from the Parish Council's recommendation. 1. The application includes some land owned by the Parish Council and some owned by the Matfield Village Hall Charity. Yet again, the application form submitted with this revised application fails to show these ownerships, nor has the Parish Council received the necessary formal notification. 2. Since the Outline application was considered, the Brenchley and Matfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) has been made, and Policy H8 deals specifically with this site. It should be noted that, contrary to some comments that have been made, including by the Conservation Officer, this policy does not approve the allocation of the site, but seeks to add distinctive local value to the relevant policy in the Submission Draft Local Plan, which proposes allocation of the site. The Examiner's report on the draft NDP specifically records at paragraph 7.57 that the modification he proposed to the draft NDP policy, and which the Parish Council accepted, was designed "to ensure the policy is consistent with the relevant policy in the neighbourhood plan and does not seek explicitly to allocate the site for development". 3. While noting the efforts made to produce a scheme to comply with the draft Local Plan, and the High Weald AONB housing design guide (together with the covenants on the land), the PC also notes that the proposed layout of the housing has changed substantially from that envisaged in the draft Local Plan and the made NDP, to be much closer to the road, thereby losing much of the proposed landscape buffer on the southwestern boundary and alongside the Maidstone Road. While it is recognised that some loss of the hedge and trees along the
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	Maidstone Road would be required for the access and visibility splays, the proposed design narrows the area for the proposed replacement hedge down so much that it could never grow tall and wide enough to act as a landscape buffer. This landscape buffer is very important as it forms the approach to the village, the Conservation Area and the arcadian area. NDP Policy LE7 is highly relevant. 4. The Parish Council notes that the majority of the dormice on the site are within this landscape buffer. The PC does not consider that the proposed compensation and mitigation for the loss of dormouse, reptile and other wildlife habitat will be adequate, given how long it will take for the proposed new habitat to establish. 5. The proposed post and rail fence shown on the roadside of the proposed new hedge is contrary to the guidance in paragraph 6.117 of the NDP. There appears also to be a discrepancy between the Detailed site plan (boundary treatments and ASHP) drawing ref P(0)152 Rev A which shows a 1.2 metre high picket fence defining the front gardens of the houses fronting the Maidstone Road, and the Proposed Street Scene Sheet 1, which shows a post and rail fence along this boundary (Section A-A). A picket fence at a height of 1 metre would be more appropriate for this site close to the Conservation Area (NDP paragraph 6.103). 6. The Parish Council is concerned about the speed and volume of traffic on the B2160 Maidstone Road at the proposed pedestrian crossing point and vehicular access. Information recently downloaded from the Speed Indicator Device located beside the bus stop near Oakfield Road shows that 12% of vehicles passing the entrance to the village hall are travelling at 35mph or more. The likelihood is that vehicles will be going faster than that as they pass the proposed site entrance and pedestrian crossing point, which are closer to the point where the speed limit changes. 7. Although the application form states that the proposal includes SUDs, there is no indication of where these will be located, and there appears to be no room for them in the proposed layout as shown in the currently submitted plans. NDP Policy D8 Surface water management requires developments to demonstrate how runoff from
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the site can be reduced from its pre-development level. For the reasons given in NDP paragraph 6.70, soakaways are often not effective in Matfield and other measures are likely to be necessary. While the Outline application suggested a new pond to the west of the site to attenuate and store water from the development, this appears to have been omitted from the documents submitted with the Full application. The Maidstone Road outside the site has been subject to flooding, as evidenced by the photograph on page 50 of the NDP, and it is essential that the new development does not worsen this or cause flooding to the houses opposite. Because of the land that would be required for SUDs, which may require a major change to the layout proposed or indeed a reduction in the number of houses that can be accommodated on the site, this is clearly not a matter that can be left to a remaining matters application.

8. The Parish Council does not consider that the proposed low level lighting bollards are necessary in this site for safety or security reasons, as the majority of Matfield village does not have street lighting, and NDP Policy LE8 Dark Skies should apply.
9. The Parish Council is pleased to see that a plan showing the site for the children's playground required under NDP Policy H8 and the draft Local Plan has now been added to the application. The Parish Council would expect this to be surfaced and equipped, and to have a 1 metre high picket fence around it, with a suitable gate, to protect the children from vehicles in the parking area and to prevent entry by dogs.
10. The Parish Council considers that the proposed 12 parking spaces on its triangle of land are too many (8-10 would be more suitable) and that they should be to serve the playground as well as providing some overflow parking for the village hall. While the detailed design of the new parking area could be left to a remaining matters application, it should include a disabled parking space, some landscaping and a close-boarded acoustic fence along the northern boundary to protect the amenity of the neighbouring house and garden.
11. For reasons of safety and amenity the Parish Council would strongly oppose any proposal for a

	link road, other than perhaps for emergency vehicles, running past the playground and the community greenspace to the parking court for the new houses, as mentioned on page 19 of the Design and Access Statement. 12. The Parish Council does not consider the proposed synthetic cladding, UPVC fascia and soffit boards and UPVC windows suitable for an AONB site so close to the Conservation Area. NDP Policy D2 Local architectural style states that materials should respect local architecture. 13. The housing mix appears appropriate, in line with NDP Policy H4, though the Parish Council would have hoped that at least one of the houses might be a bungalow or designed for older residents and people with disabilities, in line with NDP policies H5 and D4. 14. The Parish Council is pleased to see that the proposal includes heat pumps and EV charging points, but would like to see further evidence of compliance with NDP policy D6 Climate change, environmental sustainability and resilience. 15. The plans for affordable houses 2, 3 and 4 appear to show no doors into the ground floor WCs.
23/01820/FULL Penny Farthing Farm Tong Lane, Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells Kent	Installation of pitch-controlled wind turbine and change of use of for dog walking and associated car parking. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE The wind turbine appears to comply with the Brenchley and Matfield NDP policy BE7, Renewable Energy Generation. The Design and Access Statement should be cited among the approved plans, to ensure that it will comply with the description given there, and specifically that the tower will be painted to blend with the treescape and grassland. The Parish Council recognises that a dog exercising area could be a useful facility, assisting local farms and dog owners by taking dogs away from fields with livestock and growing crops. However, the proposed area is unsustainably located in that it is in open AONB countryside a long way away from Brenchley, Lamberhurst and Horsmonden villages. The Parish Council therefore supports CPRE's recommendation that if permission is granted this should be on a temporary basis to establish the success of the enterprise, and that if it fails the site should be returned to agriculture and the parking spaces removed, in order to conserve the AONB landscape.

23/02276/FULL Knockout Print Services Ltd, Unit 2, The Coppice, Petteridge Lane, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7LP	Rear extension including 12 no. PV panels and 2 no. rooflights, removal of rooflight and repositioning of rooflight on original building. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
23/02277/PN14J Knockout Print Services Ltd, Unit 2, The Coppice, Petteridge Lane, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7LP	Prior Notification for the installation of solar panels on the roof of Unit 2 The Coppice. For its prior approval for design and external appearance, in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
23/02279/FULL22 Homebush Green, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7BY	Installation of PVCU orangery to rear of property with sunroof. RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
23/02434/FULL Land West Of Rosemary Cottage, Pralls Lane, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7DX	Construction of detached parking and storage barn with plant room RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE

2. Correspondence regarding 22/00757 – to discuss

The Council discussed an approach for the purchase of the Council's small parcel of land behind Matfield Toilets. The Council responded that given the planning application had not been determined this approach could not be considered at the current time.

3. Regulation 16 Capel Neighbourhood Development Plan Consultation – to discuss response

The Council discussed a draft response and this would be finalised by Cllr Akenhead and submitted by the Clerk by the deadline of 17th October.

Action Clerk

8. Finance

1. Notice of completion of 2022-23 External Audit - for information

The Council noted the completion of the audit process for 2022-23.

2. Draft Budget 2024-25 – to discuss

The Council reviewed the draft budget and it was noted that updated costs from quotes and recent expenditure would be added prior to the second review by the Finance Committee at its meeting of 8th November. Adjustments for expenditure suggestions would be provided by Cllrs to the RFO.

Action All Cllrs

9. Traffic

1. Crossing at Brenchley Primary School

The Council discussed correspondence, forwarded by Greg Clark MP, concerning the road outside Brenchley School. Cllr Churchill had visited the location on 5 separate locations to observe and record the behaviours of traffic and pedestrians. Cllr Churchill advised that the SID data in the location did not show speeding and that the results of the recent ATC were awaited from KCC. A response is also awaited from the School on their travel plan which may alleviate some of the concerns.

A meeting is planned with KCC to discuss the area again.

2. Speedwatch Volunteers

Cllr Churchill advised that only 5 residents have volunteered for Speedwatch and that this was an insufficient number to run sessions safely. It was noted that the speed of traffic through Matfield has increased recently but that in Brenchley it has decreased, based on the SID data. A further promotion will be publicised to attract volunteers.

10. Projects

1. Matfield Pond - update on Phase 2

Richard Groves outlined the progress that has been made on the pond including the moving of as much silt from the bottom of the pond, without damaging the clay liner. This has created banks, covering the bogbean and bulrushes at the edges and these will compact as they dry out and create habitats. More work is being completed on shaping of the island and around the edges and a large number of yellow, white and purple irises and lilies are being added as well as grass and wildflower seed.

2. Post Office – to consider option to purchase

The Council briefly discussed correspondence from Jeremy Richardson, the Landlord of the Post Office, together with a quote costs for legal work from the Council's solicitor CooperBurnett.

The Council discussed issues related to upgrading of energy efficiency and sound insulation as well as maximising the available space with the configuration of the door to the store, this would be fed back to Mr Richardson.

The Council broadly agreed to proceed with this matter in anticipation of a draft legal document to be considered for signature by the Council in due course, which would be subject to Planning Permission and the Council being able to proceed financially.

A questionnaire for residents would be compiled by Cllr Dewdney.

Action Cllr Dewdney

3. Porters Wood Play Area – final update

The Council noted the success of the opening event on 6th September and that there had already been some vandalism to signage but the area was widely well received.

4. Brenchley Recreation Ground Playground refurbishment – to discuss

Cllr Anderson commented that following the Annual RosPA inspection at the Recreation Ground it is suggested that this is a good opportunity to use more of the s.106 from Fernham towards a refurbishment, given that it is losing value over time.

Some of the existing equipment, notably the Burma Bridge and the Swing, are in good condition having been replaced recently, but much of the other equipment was tired and needing frequent attention, although it was still usable.

The Council agreed that a project outline should be prepared so that an allocation of funds from s.106 and possibly the Council's reserves could be properly considered. Cllr Anderson would therefore provide some costed options, including items for older children and adults.

Action Cllr Anderson

11. Cinderhill

1. Treework on boundary with Five Wents property

The Council discussed a quote for felling four trees on its boundary which are deemed unsafe. This will be considerably cheaper to do now, when the contractor can access them via a platform in the neighbour's garden.

RESOLVED to instruct Treeworks to fell four trees at Cinderhill

2. TWBC biodiversity net gain and the PC's lease

Cllr Akenhead advised that recent information from the Forestry Commission suggests that a grant for woodland management linked to bio-diversity net gain should be applied for by TWBC as the land owner,

irrespective of the Parish Council's lease. This is on the understanding that the Parish Council will still be consulted at all stages and KHWP will write the application, and woodland management plan for the PC, if and when the application is successful. The above would be communicated to KHWP and TWBC.

12. Telephone and Broadband Contract – to consider

The Clerk outlined long-standing difficulties with the Council's phone and broadband services and the Council discussed a quote from TecWork, the Council's IT support company, to take over the contract which has a specific functionality requirement and is therefore a specialist service.

The Clerk and RFO had tested the app and it was found to serve the needs of staff and the Council.

RESOLVED to enter into a contract with TecWork for the provision of phone and broadband services for three years

13. Clerk's and RFO's Report

The Clerk advised that the Mailchimp subscription service for the email newsletter has gone live and that several people had already signed up.

1. Correspondence

1. Public Rights of Way stiles.

The Council discussed a suggestion that landowners be encouraged to apply for funding which is available from High Weald to replace stiles with gates to provide greater accessibility on many of the PROWs around the parish. The Council agreed with this important move and Cllr Anderson would work with the Clerk to progress this.

Action Cllr Anderson, Clerk

2. Planting along Maidstone Road

The Council discussed an approach from a resident concerning the planting of a buffer of trees along the approach into Matfield by the Fernham Homes development site. The Council agreed that given the land was in the ownership of the developer, and under a management company for the landscaping aspects, and that there is a large swale behind the newly planted hedge, it was not considered such a request would be successful.

2. Internal Auditor proposal for 3-year agreement

The Council discussed terms for a three-year contract with Mulberry for the provision of Rialtas Year End shutdown and Internal Audit (interim and year end), the Clerk commented that the services thus far had proved thorough and helpful and that the likely cost would be less than that for the current shutdown with RBS.

RESOLVED to enter a 3-year contract with Mulberry for Internal Audit and Year End Shutdown of the Council's Accounts.

3. Accounts payable

2807	HMRC	Tax and NI September 2023	£600.89
2808	C. Brooks	Salary Balance and mileage September 2023	£138.00
2809	Panetta Horn	Salary Balance September 2023	£39.22
2810	The Fence Guru	3 Posts on Matfield Green	£235.00
2811	Business Stream	Waste Water Matfield Toilets 2/6-15/9	£295.99
2812	Business Stream	Waste Water Brenchley Toilets 2/6-15/9	£626.12
2813	JLM Pest Control	Treatment of hornet's nest at Porters Wood	£150.00
2814	Business Stream	Pond Water Standing Charge 1/1-29/4/23	£13.85
2815	BMH	Grant for Use of Car Park year to April 2024	£1,500.00
2816	John Garthwaite	Reimbursement of Electricity for Pond Work	£35.70
2817	John Cooper	Pond works, re EA requirements	£600.00

2818	Complete Weed Control	Japanese Knotweed treatment on Matfield Green	£300.00
2819	David Izzard	JVG September Maintenance	£25.00
2820	Go Home Direct	New Heaters for Pavilion	£2,252.47
2836	Play Safety	Annual Playground inspection – Brenchley Rec	£119.40
2837	K. Twyman	Cleaning Pavilion 17 & 31/8	£30.00
2838	Knockout	Signage for Children's Play area Porters Wood	£96.00
2839	Zurich	Annual Insurance renewal	£3,495.97

Payments by Credit Card

2821	Multicard Fees	Monthly Fees	£3.00
2822	Castle Water	Matfield Toilets Water August	£75.98
2823	Castle Water	Brenchley Toilets Water August	£172.39

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

2824	SO C. Brooks	Salary September 2023	£1843.99
2825	SO Panetta Horn	Salary September 2023	£528.92
2826	DD Smart Pension	September 2023	£822.06
2827	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity September	£150.00
2828	SO Microshade	September data and application service	£179.91
2829	DD Business Stream	September Pavilion water and waste	£43.00
2830	DD Tower	Phone Equipment Leasing Sept/Oct 2023	
		36 month agreement ending December 2024	£30.02
2831	DD CVD	Phone Line rental / Broadband to 30/9/2023	£92.23
2832	DD Smart Pension	September 2023 Pension admin fee	£18.00
2833	DD Npower	Streetlight electricity August 2023	£61.89
2834	SO Churchill	August Toilet Cleaning services	£744.36
2835	SO Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection September 2023	£54.00
2836	SO Capel Groundcare	SIDs battery change/data/movement September 23	£158.50

The RFO having provided invoices for scrutiny the accounts were approved for payment and would be authorised by Cllr Anderson and Cllr Buttery.

14. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

Cllr Buttery had attended the TWBC Parish Chairs meeting online.

15. To be advised of urgent business

16. Date of next meeting:

Policy and Management Committee: Tuesday 24th October 2023, 11.30am, Matfield Pavilion

Full Meeting of the Council, Monday 6th November 2023, 7.00pm, Matfield Pavilion

17. Co-Option – to consider application

At the request of the Chairman, and in accordance with the Co-Option Procedure, members of the public left the meeting.

There was a brief exchange with Vikki Heath, the only applicant for the two vacancies on the Council, to establish her particular interests in the activities of the Council and she was appointed by a show of hands.

The applicant will be notified by the Clerk the day following the meeting. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office will be signed at the earliest opportunity and an induction session arranged.

Action Clerk