



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 4th MARCH 2024, AT 7PM AT MATFIELD PAVILION

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

In attendance: Cllr Steve McMillan (TWBC), 17 members of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

None.

2. To approve Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 5th February 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

Cllr Reynolds declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 on the Agenda as she is a governor at the School.

Cllr Churchill declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 12.4 as she is a member of Brenchley Archives.

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.

Ruth Hoy raised a query concerning the expected timeframe for delivery of the actions agreed to be progressed by KCC, relating to the accident at Standings Cross. Cllr Buttery responded that KCC had already agreed the pedestrian video survey and the Automated Traffic Count and that these were usually fairly quick to be put in place.

She also commented that given the depth of feeling it would be possible to appeal for Crowdfunding whilst residents were engaged with the concerns rather than at a later stage.

A resident suggested that a public meeting on traffic matters would be advantageous and the Clerk responded that this would be possible but it required a stated aim and focus as the Highways Improvement Plan is the formal way for proposals to be pursued.

5. Borough and County Councillor

Cllr McMillan advised that the Ward is now named Rural Tunbridge Wells and that given the four Parishes often have meetings that coincide it would be useful if they could change some dates so that attendance by Ward Cllrs was made possible.

Action Clerk

6. Chairman's Announcements

- Cllr Buttery outlined that five more candidates have declared to be standing for the Ward, it did not appear that any were resident in the Parish of Brenchley and Matfield.
- The Annual Parish Assembly is on Friday 8th March at 7pm, all Councillors were encouraged to attend if possible as it would be the opportunity to accurately gauge the engagement of the community on the Post Office issue.
- Nominations for Parish Council election start 11th March and the last meeting of this Council is Tuesday 2nd April. The first meeting of the New Council is on 13th May.
- There will be a meeting with Clarendon regarding the playground on 7th March, to be attended by Cllr Akenhead and Cllr Anderson. After this the Council would be able to agree whether the proposals for the playground should go ahead.
- KALC are putting together a guide to support Cllrs through the Monitoring Officer process.
- The Wheelwrights Inn sale has now been completed and the Clerk would seek to obtain the information on the new owners.

7. Traffic

1. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) – to consider revision

The Council considered a revised HIP following the meeting with KCC and subsequent information received detailing the actions that would be taken towards the issues at Standings Cross. It was noted that these would be progressed without the requirement for the matter to be listed as number one priority on the HIP.

RESOLVED to adopt the Highways Improvement Plan as drafted and for same to be submitted to KCC.

2. Gedges Hill – impact of South East Water diversion route

Cllr Churchill outlined that during the 2 weeks at Easter and 6 weeks in July and August when the road will be closed South East Water have committed to vigorous diversion signs but this may still result in diverted traffic from the A228 at Colts Hill attempting to get through Matfield. Contact information is available for anyone seeking clarity.

3. Lorry damage at Brenchley War Memorial

The Council considered the recent damage to the land on Brenchley War Memorial, caused by a lorry. Witnesses had provided information and the Clerk had obtained the contact details, with the assistance of the Police, of the haulage company involved. The Clerk had spoken with the company but they had not responded further to the written requests for reimbursement of the costs to repair it. The Council agreed that rather than claim through insurance a “small claim” should be made against the company.

Action RFO/Clerk

8. Planning

1. Planning Applications

24/00103/FULL Kippings Cross Oast, Hastings Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HB
Erection of 7no. stables, together with tack room and wash room (Part-Retrospective)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

It is implied that this building will replace the 11 stables permitted under 19/02279 but there is no mention of any proposal to demolish the 4 stables that appear to have already been constructed under that permission. The new block appears to be considerably larger than the permitted 7 stable block and whereas the previously permitted stables would be wooden buildings tucked up against the hedge and surrounded by other buildings, the new stables would be of very solid construction, would extend the line of building, and the lighting that would no doubt accompany it, further into

the High Weald National Landscape countryside and would reduce the available grazing area still further. The number of horses permitted is already vastly over the one horse per 1 to 1½ acres which is the general guideline recommended by the British Horse Society. No information has been provided on the nature of the business now the site is in new ownership, how many employees it would have and whether there would be any change to the number and nature of vehicles accessing the site. The plans currently being considered for the Kippings Cross roundabout under the emerging Local Plan could make using the entrance to this site from the A21 northbound carriageway more hazardous. Since permission was granted for the development permitted under 19/02279, the Neighbourhood Development Plan has been made and now applies. The proposal appears to conflict with Neighbourhood Development Plan policy BE2 New employment, in that it would harm the rural environment and the amenities of some neighbouring properties, and that the traffic impacts are not demonstrably acceptable. It also conflicts with policies LE1 Conserving and enhancing the AONB, LE6 Biodiversity and LE8 Dark skies.
24/00239/FULL 6 Cinder Hill Wood, Five Wents, Matfield, Kent, TN12 7ED Replacement of bungalow with two-storey dwelling RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE The Parish Council is pleased to see this application which complies with Neighbourhood Development Plan policies H4 housing mix, H5 Housing for older residents and people with disabilities, D1 High Weald AONB and design standards, D2 Local architectural style, D4 Accessibility and flexibility, D6 climate change, environmental responsibility and resilience, LE8 Dark skies.
24/00298/LBC The White House High Street Brenchley, Kent Listed Building Consent - Replacement of rear french doors RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
24/00307/LBC and 24/00306/FULL Town Farm House, High Street, Brenchley, Kent, TN12 7NH Listed Building Consent - Removal of current & restoration of historic frontage, reinstatement of front door & restoration of portico, rebuilding of exterior wall to include 4no. pane bay, removal of cold storage unit & outhouse for installation of doors at rear, remove & refit kitchen, restore internal walls, floor & ceiling, addition of internal vestibule & removal of remaining wall section, radiators extended to front of house, frame & cover sandstone, remove smoke house roof tiles & replace rotten joists & broken tiles RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: NEUTRAL The Parish Council will defer to the Conservation Officer, but questions whether the demolition of the current frontage and the addition of the 4-pane bay would be appropriate, since although the bay would imitate similar features in some buildings of the period, it would not be an original feature but a 21st century addition. There is documentary evidence that before the shop's closure in 2022, it had been a butcher's shop since at least 1890. It would arguably be more authentic and more in keeping with the Conservation Area to retain and restore the existing 19th century frontage
24/00327/FULL Kings Toll Maidstone Road Matfield Kent Change of use to part of building for candle production processes RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE
24/00345/FULL Oakham House, Tong Road, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7HT Single storey side extension and replacement of existing conservatory with pitched roof RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE Previous extensions that had been approved in 2000 and those approved in 2006, amounted to 291m³ which was already more than the suggested maximum 250m³ "modest" increase allowed under Local Plan Policy H11. Application 07/00084 for "minor alterations" to make the extensions even larger was refused with the planning officer describing it as "one step too far in extending the dwelling". Consequently this proposal probably does not comply with Local Plan H11, or Emerging Local Plan H11 and it is questionable whether it complies with NDP D2 Local architectural style, in terms of mass.

However, the proposed extension is relatively small and probably complies with NDP D6 climate change, environmental sustainability and resilience and NDP LE8 Dark skies, as the clay tiled roof would presumably be more energy efficient and would emit less light into the dark skies of the High Weald National Landscape.
24/00346/NMAMD 2 Thistledown, Crittenden Road, Matfield Non-Material Amendment in relation to 22/01105/FULL - Alteration to roof design, addition of rooflights to rear slope of kitchen & extension & front of extension, addition of gable end window to kitchen, addition of windows to rear & left garage elevations RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE The addition of 5 rooflights on the house, plus a large triangular additional window on the house and 2 new windows on the detached garage, and adding a pitched gable roof to part of the house, should not be considered a non-material amendment, given the extent to which the appearance of the buildings would be changed and the effect the changes would have on the dark skies of the High Weald National Landscape.
24/00439/TCA All Saints' Church High Street Brenchley Trees in a Conservation Area Notification: 10no. YEW (T1, T2) - Shape/trim to 7m height & 4m width & remove deadwood; (T3-T10) - Remove 20cm of growth, remove 1m of height to obtain target height of 7m RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE Not only are these trees in the Conservation Area, they form part of the grade 1 listing of All Saints Church: "the path leading to the porch is lined by double row of ancient clipped yews". Records of work to trim the yews in the churchyard are understood to stretch back four centuries. The Parish Council understands that it is over 3 years since they were last trimmed and this is clearly necessary this year. However, it needs to be done with great care. The Parish Council is concerned that the plan to reduce the height from 7metres at the church end on each pair up towards the lych gate to keep the visual look level at the top and avoid a stepped look, may be too radical, but will defer to the expertise of the Tree Officer on this. Careful trimming of the trees would be supported under NDP policy LE3 historic landscapes and heritage assets
24/00443/FULL and 24/00444/LBC Swingle Swangle Cottage, Brenchley Road, Matfield, TN12 7DT Single-storey rear extension with 3 rooflights, alterations to fenestration including repositioning of first floor rear window, replacement ground floor front window RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE The proposal appears to be supported by NDP Policies D1 High Weald AONB and design standards, D2 Local architectural style, LE1 conserving and enhancing the AONB, LE3 Historic landscapes and heritage assets, LE8 Dark skies.

2. Public Consultation on TWBC Response to the Inspector's Initial Findings Letter on the Examination of the New Local Plan – confirmation of submission

The Council noted the submission which has been posted on the website.

9. Scout Hut – request for nursery sub-lease

The Council discussed the continuing negotiations, unknown to the Council, between the Scouts and the providers of the intended new nursery. The Council declined to provide permission for the matter to progress citing mainly concerns about the increase in cars being parked in the vicinity and the proposals being incompatible with the original intent and terms of the 1983 Lease.

The Clerk would pass this information back to the Scouts and the new Lease would be negotiated in the Autumn, it runs out in March 2025.

Action Clerk

10. Projects update

1. Brenchley Recreation Ground refurbishment

Cllr Anderson clarified that, as noted on the original quote from Playdale, the site survey had identified a requirement for levelling groundwork in an extra sum of £875. The Council therefore noted the cost of this element of the project is £21,593.65 instead of £20,718.65. The Clerk would chase receipt of the pre-app permission.

The ground work and fencing work would be completed in the first two weeks of March and the installation of the equipment is proposed from 8th April, a post-installation inspection has been booked and the mowers are aware of the increase in strimming that will be required.

2. Pond

The Council considered the proof of the signage for the pond and two small amendments were agreed, this would link via a QR code to information on the website. Fish movement permission had been received and an agreed date for this would be discussed with Richard Groves, with a Parish Councillor attending.

Some more dye has been added and further consideration is being given to the corner by Hammonds.

Action Cllr Buttery, Clerk

3. Pavilion Storage Facility – to reconfirm specification and costs

Cllr Buttery advised that due to a slight error in the plans and costings for the base the revised details had been requested from Miller Equestrian. This would result in an increase of approximately 10% of the agreed project cost for that element and the Council agreed this amendment, the costs would be drawn from s.106.

The Section 38, Public Notice had been drafted with Kent Courier, and the Pre-app advice is awaited from TWBC prior to the Consultee letter being sent out. The water sewage pipe location has been clarified with Mr Lee (Samega).

11. Public Rights of Way

1. Wheelwright Arms

The Council noted the guidance from the Open Spaces Society and the Clerk advised that 17 evidence forms had been received however the information sought via an FOI from the County Council had not been received (the deadline for this being today 4th March) and the Clerk would chase this up. It was agreed that contact would be made with the new owner of the Wheelwrights.

Action Clerk

2. KCC Stiles Funding

Cllr Reynolds advised that KCC funding varies according to their budget each year and it is also only available for 'authorised' stiles, but determining whether or not a stile is authorised has to be done on a case-by-case basis, by KCC - there is no list as such as there are over 22, 000 stiles in the county. A notice has been published in Roundabout asking landowners to contact the Council so that this process can be facilitated.

12. Clerk's and RFO's Report

The Clerk advised that some ashes and memorial items had been left at the Viewpoint and she would circulate details so that a decision could be made about the removal of items in a sensitive fashion.

The Clerk advised the Council that Cllr Anderson had requested the Council to consider adopting an allowances policy in order for her childcare expenses for attending Council meetings to be reimbursed. The Clerk outlined that this would require a "Parish Basic Allowances" policy to be drafted, in consultation with TWBC's Remuneration Panel, and that such an allowance is only payable to elected members, not co-opted. The Clerk would investigate the matter and provide information to the Policy and Management Committee for their consideration in the first instance.

Action Clerk

1. Correspondence

1. Request to register land at High Street, Brenchley

The Council discussed a request from a resident to register the land outside the Old Vicarage in Brenchley as the land is currently unregistered and therefore the County Council will not undertake repairs, this is causing the owner of the adjacent property considerable concerns as the area floods repeatedly. The Council declined this approach, with the resident being present to discuss the matter, and expressed sympathy for the problems being experienced. It had been suggested that an FOI request be made of KCC to ascertain what maintenance they had undertaken on the area which may demonstrate that they did accept responsibility for it given that Highway Rights normally extend from boundary feature to boundary feature, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. With Highway Rights, the land underneath is "vested" in the highway authority as far as is necessary for the maintenance of the highway, and this includes any drains in it.

2. Request for Streetlights at Porters Wood

The Council considered a request from a resident in Porters Wood for a streetlight to be installed at the end of the footpath leading to Porters Wood field. This was declined, principally due to the lack of space and the cost of such an addition.

2. Allotments

The Clerk outlined that the allotment site now has 6 un-tenanted plots as well as 2 unusable ones and that this would continue to create liabilities on the Council in terms of maintenance, together with a reduction in fee income that is calculated to cover the site costs. Cllr Reynolds had assumed responsibility for the Allotments and would work with the Clerk to consider these issues.

3. Cinderhill Signage – to agree

The Council considered and approved proofs for a prohibitions sign at Cinderhill to be displayed at the Main car parks as well as a noticeboard to be installed for emergency contact information and event notices. Details of these signs and noticeboard would be sent to TWBC for consent according to the terms of the Lease and subsequently for planning permission.

RESOLVED to install signs and Noticeboards at Cinderhill

Action Clerk

4. Horticultural Society – to consider funding request

The Council considered a request for funding of the marquee for the Flower Show. It was noted that there was an intention to consider purchasing a marquee so that community groups could use this, which would be more cost-effective.

RESOLVED to donate a sum of £1000 to the Horticultural Society.

The Council, having previously agreed the donation of £1000 to the Archive agreed that this would be extended to a 3-year donation, with £1000 donated annually until 2026.

5. Closure of John Downer (Brenchley Charities)

The RFO had provided confirmation that The John Downer and associated charities have now been closed with the Charities Commission and the Bank account closed with Barclays. The small balance of approx. £300 transferred to Lynne Butler for onward donation in cash to the two churches of the Parish for use in assisting Parishioners. The payments were to be made that way in order to expedite the bank account closure process following the delay in the churches providing bank account details. Lynne Butler is to obtain a receipt for the donations for the file and she will also write to the benefactors to advise of the Charities closure.

6. Accounts payable

2987	C. Brooks	Clerk's Salary Balance February 2024	£11.70
2988	HMRC	Tax and NI February 2024	£649.81
2989	SO Microshade	Monthly software supply and support to 22/2/24	£194.02
2990	Twyman	Feb Pavilion Cleaning	£30.00
2991	phs	Installation and 1 year service of Urinal Flow Monitors Brenchley £131.57, Matfield £131.57	£263.14
2992	Business Stream	Water charges Matfield Pond 30/10/23 to 29/1/24	£17.78
2993	JP Miles	Bollards at Cinderhill	£3,464.10
2994	Treework	Tree Work at Cinderhill	£1,368.00
2995	BMH	Hire BMH for Annual Parish Assembly	£50.00
3011	David Izzard	Garden work at JVG Feb	£25.00
3012	Capel Groundcare	Repair work at Brenchley War Memorial following	£461.40

Payments by Credit Card February expenditure

2997	Multicard Fees	Credit Card Monthly Fees	£3.00
2997	Amazon	Staple Gun	£10.99
2997	Cloud Next	Annual Hosting service of Website	£179.98

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

2998	SO C. Brooks	Clerk's Salary February 2024	£2021.15
2999	DD Smart Pension	February 2024 Pension Contribution	£788.05
3000	SO Panetta Horn	RFO Salary February 2024	£648.20
3001	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity February 2024 (Rising to £214 from 1.4.24) Credit to be paid of £249.12 on 1.4.24	£115.00
3002	DD Smart Pension	February 2024 Pension admin fee	£26.40
3003	SO Churchill	February Toilet Cleaning services	£744.36
3005	SO Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection Monthly premium January 2024 Brenchley Rec and Porters Wood	£112.80
3006	SO Capel Groundcare	SIDs battery change, data download and movement between pole, Monthly contract January 24	£164.87
3007	DD Firstcom (Tecwork)	Phone services March 2024	£173.00
3009	DD EDF	Brenchley Toilets Electricity	£151.87
3010	DD Everflow	Water at both toilet blocks (22/3 – 21/4)	£487.96

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

13. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

Cllrs Anderson, Churchill and Akenhead had attended a meeting with Voltaia about Bockingfold Solar Farm.

14. To be advised of urgent business

15. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 2nd April 2024, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion – note this is the last Full meeting of the current Council