



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRENCHLEY AND MATFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 8th JANUARY 2024, AT 7PM AT MATFIELD PAVILION

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

In attendance: Cllr Steve McMillan (TWBC), Cllr Sarah Hamilton (KCC) (part), 6 members of the public

1. To accept apologies for absence

The Council accepted apologies from Cllr Wells who was unwell.

2. To approve Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 4th December 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

Cllr Anderson declared a pecuniary conflict of interest in planning application 23/03107 and did not participate in the discussion nor vote on the matter.

Cllr Churchill declared a perception of bias interest in planning application 23/03107 due to her role as a Trustee of Brenchley Memorial Hall and did not participate in the discussion nor vote on the matter.

Cllr Churchill declared a perception of bias interest in planning application 23/03181 and did not participate in the discussion nor vote on the matter.

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.

Mr Agnew presented some information and answered queries pertaining to the matter under Agenda item 7.3 below.

5. Borough and County Councillor

Cllr McMillan advised that the amended Local Plan was approved by TWBC in December, with a reduction from around 15k to 10k houses due to the removal of developments in Capel and Paddock Wood. Once the new Local Plan is adopted TWBC would need to start work immediately on a new draft Local Plan and this would lead to a further call for sites.

6. Chairman's Announcements

- Cllr Buttery advised that over £1200 had been collected for charity at the Carols event in Brenchley.
- Richard Groves has been undertaking regular checks on the pond and will provide an update for the February meeting.
- An Annual Parish Assembly is being considered for mid-March (see under item 11.1 below) and this would be used in part to encourage applicants for the Parish Council Elections in May.

7. Planning

1. Planning Applications

Erection of detached dwelling and garage

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE

The Parish Council is highly concerned about the impact of the proposed development on a Greenfield site in the High Weald AONB that lies outside the LBD for the village and is adjacent to the Brenchley conservation area. In terms of the made Neighbourhood Development Plan we consider that the proposal runs contrary to the following policies:

D1 High Weald AONB and design standards We do not consider that a building of this design and materials (eg powder-coated aluminium wall panels) are in keeping with the rural locality and the AONB. Neither are the proposed fenestration for the dwelling (including many picture windows and double height windows to the staircase and 12 skylight windows to the main residence and 3 to the 3-bay garage).

D2 Local architectural style. This policy states that new developments should respect local architecture in siting, style, layout, density, height, mass and materials. The proposed dwelling does not comply with these conditions.

LE1 Conserving and enhancing the AONB and LE3 Historic landscapes and heritage assets

LE1 policy reflects NPP Framework July 2021 (paragraph 176) which states that “great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty... [in] AONB, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The Parish Council does not believe that this proposal would not conserve or enhance the landscape in this position close to the conservation area. LE3 states that new development proposals should conserve and, where possible, enhance the historic environment and assets of the parish. The Parish Council believes that this dwelling will not contribute to conserving or enhancing the historic environment of the parish.

LE4 Valued Views. This policy identified 19 Valued Views in the parish. At 7.6 metres high the view to the church from the Brenchley Memorial Hall playing fields could be compromised (in the design and access drawings the study has a note that “the Church can be seen through a gap in the hedge”). The dwelling would also clearly be seen from the High Weald Landscape Trail (Footpath WT301).

LE7 Trees and Hedges. The site for the proposed development is adjacent to the Brenchley Memorial Hall’s eastern border which comprises a tall and ancient hedge owned by the Memorial Hall charity. Proposed access to this site is through a narrow strip of land with a fairly steep camber towards the existing buildings on the High Street (Birchetts). The Parish Council is concerned that in order to make this access route serviceable, considerable excavation may be required and this would have a negative impact to the hedge and mature trees contained within it. Cutting this important hedge back to provide a visibility splay should also not be contemplated.

LE8 Dark Skies. With the proposed fenestration it is clear that the dwelling will not comply with this policy – if the church and village can be seen from the building then light will be clearly visible from the village and its immediate neighbours.

The Parish Council would also like to note in the Design and Access Statement the proposed access to the dwelling is described as being “previously used as agricultural access”. The Parish Council agrees with the neighbour comments on the planning portal which show that the previous owner of the land did not use this land for access during the 60 years of his ownership nor has it been used as such in the 12 years since the current owner bought the land. Where the strip of land reaches the High Street it is fenced off, and there is no dropped kerb. The approach to the road is relatively steep and visibility splays are compromised by a parking space for 4 Birchetts towards the village centre.

The Parish Council further notes that the site for this proposed development forms part of a larger site that was put forward in the TWBC 2016 call for sites. TWBC deemed the larger site unsuitable for development given its Greenfield status, location within the AONB and the impact on the setting of the historical settlement.

23/03144/FULL Town Farm House, High Street, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 7NH Erection of mobile shepherd's hut for change of use as short term holiday let & use of hut by owner on temporary basis during main house restoration (Retrospective) RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE The proposed development is supported by NDP Policy BE5, small scale tourism, and although it is in an area of parking stress (NDP AM3), following the planning permission granted last year (23/00511/LBC) the owners appear to have cleared space, following the demolition of the concrete garage and other outbuildings, for enough parking to accommodate it together with parking for the house.
23/03181/FULL Broad Oak House, Windmill Hill, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 7NP Proposed greenhouse RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: APPROVE The Parish Council notes that this is a fairly large greenhouse (5.3m by 2.5m) with proposed blinds to the south-facing elevation and provision for lighting. The council recommends an informative that if there is to be more than occasional short duration use of light within the greenhouse, blackout blinds should be installed in the roof to minimise light spillage into the dark skies of the AONB (NDP policy LE8 Dark Skies).
23/01143/PNR APPEAL: APP/M2270/W/23/3331120 Barn & Former Dairy Buildings, Kippings Cross Farm, Hastings Road Change of use of an agricultural building to a flexible use falling within Storage or distribution (Class B8), Hotels (Class C1), Commercial/Business/Service (Class E). For its prior approval to: - Transport and highways impacts - Noise impacts - Contamination risk - Flooding risks RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: REFUSE The Parish Council maintains and reiterates its previously submitted response, as attached, and would mention that the further accident at Kippings Cross last week reinforces our objection to the increased use of the access from the A21 that this development would entail.

2. Meeting with James Chapman (Clarendon Homes) re play area – update

Cllr Buttery provided an update on the meeting attended via Teams attended by himself, Cllr Akenhead, the Clerk and James Chapman to discuss the proposals for play equipment in the event that planning application at Matfield Village Hall is approved. Mr Chapman outlined some of the latest specifications for play equipment, which would be funded in part by Clarendon and in part by the PC, and he would draw up further proposals, which would be made of natural materials.

No decisions were made.

3. Proposed diversion of part of Public Footpath WT302 – to review response submitted

Following Mr Agnew's clarification on a number of points the Council reviewed the information concerning the changes proposed to this footpath.

RESOLVED to approve the proposals for the amendments to WT302.

8. Cooksfield – to consider use

The Council reviewed a brief response from TWBC to the Council's enquiry regarding an application to build social housing on the site. The Council agreed that Cllr Dewdney would draft and circulate a concept proposal for a double storey low cost social housing or 'first-home' unit, which would be in line with the NDP, with a view to obtaining a further pre-app advice from TWBC.

Action Cllr Dewdney

9. PROW at the Wheelwrights – to consider FOI to KCC and application

The Council discussed the continued lack of response from KCC regarding the evidence and process used to remove highways rights from the area in front of the Wheelwrights, as it may provide clarity on whether an application for a PROW would succeed. There are currently 10 completed evidence forms from residents to underpin an application and the Council agreed that further forms would be sought. The Open Spaces Society would be able to review this and provide advice.

Action Cllr Heath, Clerk

RESOLVED to submit an FOI request to KCC to obtain the evidence which resulted in the removal of highways rights over the land to the front of the Wheelwrights in Matfield together with the process by which this was achieved.

10. Traffic

Cllr Churchill mentioned the recent accident near the Standings Cross junction and the Council expressed concern at the matter. It was noted that the Parish Council has repeatedly made applications, including via its Highways Improvement Plan, to make changes to improve road safety but that most of these had not been approved by KCC/Police. Clarification of this would be publicised to residents.

Action Cllr Churchill, Clerk

1. Highways Improvement Plan – to consider revision

The Council discussed the revisions to the HIP and concerns raised with KCC about the effectiveness of the process, given that very little has been achieved since the last HIP, Cllr Churchill would continue to discuss this with Nigel Rowe of KCC.

Some amendments were suggested to the revised HIP which would be further circulated and then published.

Action Cllr Churchill, Clerk

2. Speedwatch Equipment – to consider quotes

Cllr Churchill advised that the current Speedwatch equipment is no longer working and, given the timeframe for ordering and that the cost is comfortably within the budget, this would be progressed without delay. Training for three new volunteers had been completed and more dates will be set up, the Police also undertook two sessions which do seem to make a noticeable difference.

11. Projects

1. Post Office – update on survey results

The Council reviewed the data, collated by Cllr Dewdney, from the survey which closed on 2nd January. 223 responses were received and there appeared to be a common misunderstanding about the possibility of retaining the post office as it is, given the change in funding which many residents appear not to have understood.

Both Cllr Dewdney and Cllr Buttery had had lengthy conversations with Chris and Andy King to ensure that the correct information was being disseminated to residents as many seemed to have inaccurate information about the background of their situation as regards their lease and their own negotiations with the landlord. To clarify this Cllr Buttery would draft a joint statement, which would be agreed with the Kings, for the PC to publish.

Action Cllr Buttery

The Council agreed that part of the Annual Parish Assembly which would take place in Brenchley in mid-March (given that the dates for the election nominations are 11th March to 5th April) would include a public meeting session, closely administrated, to provide information on the options for the premises. This should result in a clearer idea as to what would be achievable, with the input of the residents being paramount to the profitability and longevity of the premises in future. Cllr Buttery and Cllr Dewdney would compile an outline of the process for this element of the public meeting

Action Cllr Buttery, Cllr Dewdney

2. Matfield Pavilion Storage Facility – to consider quotes

Cllr Buttery presented quotes for the proposed storage facility behind Matfield Pavilion, two had been received for both the base groundwork and the shed itself with a further contractor having declined to quote. It was agreed that a window was not required but that a very robust ramp would be needed given the weight of the cricket roller and some minor amendments regarding sizes would be discussed with the contractors. The Clerk would progress the application for the Section 38 Change of surface on common land and obtain confirmation of permitted development. The funding for this project will include an amount from the remaining Fernham s.106.

RESOLVED to instruct Passmores to install the storage facility behind Matfield Pavilion and Miller Equestrian for the base groundwork.

3. Brenchley Recreation Ground refurbishment – to consider quotes

Cllr Anderson advised that quotes had only lately been received for the three separate elements of the project and that these together with some further designs and options would be provided for the Council to consider at the next meeting. There was a brief discussion on the type of equipment for teenage children/young people in particular and Councillors would forward any further comments or suggestions to be incorporated into the plans. There remains an amount of £2670 in s.106 funding as well as a proportion of the remaining amount from the Fernham s.106 as well as a possible grant from Sport England which could support certain parts of the project.

Action Cllr Anderson

12. Scout Hut – to consider use of leased land

The Council discussed an approach regarding use of the leased land in front of the Scout Hut by a nursery, further to the Councils agreement for the Scouts to take back use of the wildflower area.

The Council did not agree to this request, citing concerns about fencing and play equipment being permanently on the area, together with concerns about parking during school hours, and permission remains solely for the use and maintenance of the land by the Scouts as previously resolved.

13. Clerk's and RFO's Report

The Clerk advised that the fence at the Jack Verrall Memorial Gardens had been blown down and this would be repaired as soon as possible.

1. D-Day meeting

Panetta Horn had advised that it had proved difficult to find sufficient volunteers to progress a large event but that some ideas had been discussed to include an event with dancing/music, food and drink and a display of wartime memorabilia at a date around the Fete in July.

The Council discussed the matter more generally and it was agreed that in recognition of the nature of the historical events of the D-Day commemoration the formal beacon lighting event, with the tribute, would be more appropriate rather than a further event and therefore no further plans for a large scale event would be made. It was further noted that the 80th Anniversary of VE Day in May 2025 may provide a more suitable opportunity for celebratory events such as a dance.

2. Utilities update

The RFO had provided a written update on some of the utility matters related to electricity and water supply for the Pavilion and the toilets and also water. She continues to seek the best tariffs for the Council's supplies and is working on further aspects of the light sensors at the toilets.

3. Renewal of Contracts for SIDs and Play Inspections – to approve

Capel GroundCare has provided new contract quotes for these services which run calendar-yearly: The Play inspections have increased by £2 per monthly visit and the SID process has increased by £5 per month. The Council asked the Clerk to express its gratitude to Paul Spedding for his important work in analysis of the SID data every month.

RESOLVED to reappoint Capel GroundCare to provides services for the calendar year 2024 for play inspections at both playgrounds and for the management of Speed Indicator Devices.

4. Accounts payable

The Clerk provided information concerning the movement of funds between the Councils current and deposit accounts.

2938	HMRC	Tax and NI December 2023	£649.81
2939	C. Brooks	Clerk's Salary Balance Dec 2023 and Mileage	£177.16
2940	Panetta Horn	RFO Salary December 2023	£648.20
2941	Tec Works	Set up of new phone services and Dec line Rental	£1242.15
2942	Waste Way	November Bin emptying Brenchley Rec	£38.40
2943	Waste Way	November Bin emptying Porters Wood	£38.40
2944	Amanda Wells	Reimbursement for Brenchley Post Office survey	£24.00
2945	Community Storehouse	Forward of funds raised by ESG at St. Luke's Fair	£112.00
2958	Cloud Next	Annual Hosting of Email Addresses	£179.98
2959	Npower	Brenchley Toilets – Water fees for November	£33.93
2960	Mid Electrical	Installation of Motion Sensors at both Toilet blocks	£230.00
2961	Waste Way	December Bin emptying Brenchley Rec	£19.20
2962	Waste Way	December Bin emptying Porters Wood	£19.20

Payments by Credit Card

2946	Multicard Fees	Credit Card Monthly Fees	£3.00
	Castle Water	Brenchley Toilets – Fine for late payment	£50.00
	Castle Water	Matfield Toilets – Water fees for November	£170.13
	Pimms	Two Christmas Trees for Mat Pav and for JVMG	£140.00
	Npower	Electricity Brenchley Toilet	£68.37
	Just Helping	Tree Collection from Matfield Pavilion	£20.00

Standing Orders and Direct Debits For Information

2947	SO C. Brooks	Clerk's Salary December 2023	£1843.99
2948	DD Smart Pension	December 2023 Pension Contribution	£788.05
2949	DD EDF Energy	Pavilion Electricity December 2023	£239.00
2953	DD Smart Pension	December 2023 Pension admin fee	£26.40
2954	SO Churchill	December Toilet Cleaning services	£744.36
2955	DD Npower	Streetlight electricity November 2023	£120.26
2956	SO Capel Groundcare	Playground Inspection Monthly November 2023	
		Brenchley Rec and Porters Wood	£108.00
2957	SO Capel Groundcare	SIDs battery change, data and move November 23	£158.50

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

14. Meetings attended and reports by Councillors

Cllr Dewdney had attended the TWBC Parish Chairmen's meeting in December 2023.

15. To be advised of urgent business

None.

16. Date of next meeting: Monday 5th February 2024, 7pm, Matfield Pavilion