

KENTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting 9th May 2018

Present: 7 Parish Councillors (Cllrs Thompson, Blount, Cowell, Appleton, Maguire-Walker and Randall), District/County Cllr Connett and six members of the public.

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Chris Thompson (Parish Council Chairman)

180509.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Peter White
- Frank German

180509.02 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Good evening ladies and gentleman, welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting and thank you for coming. This year we have decided to take a break from the previous few years of having a full evening meeting with refreshments – if you were expecting food and drink, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

This has been my first year as Chairman and I have found it strangely enjoyable. We have had a few troubling issues to sort out, and have also sorted out some long-standing issues. For the former, the most troubling were complaints made by parishioners about the Lockdown Festival, which led us to meeting with Starcross Parish Council to agree our joint concerns and to pass them on to Powderham Estate. The Estate responded by inviting us to a meeting where the programme of events for this year was discussed and assurances given that steps will be taken to minimise the impact on the villages. We will see how that goes – the next event is Let's Rock at the end of June, which we will monitor closely.

For the long-standing issues, we have arranged regular maintenance programmes for the play equipment on the playing field to safeguard those assets, and a regular programme of horticultural maintenance for our grounds, such as the Parish garden next to the Rodean, the East Town Lane land opposite and the car park. We have also completed some needed repairs to the stile from Slittercombe Lane towards Bramley Close and repairs to the roof of the changing room on the hard court.

There are two major achievements I want to mention. Firstly, we have got the two defibrillators installed, at the Victory hall and in the former phone box on the car park (although that still awaits its coat of Post Office red paint), and we have had a session of training on their correct use for interested parishioners. Although I sincerely hope we never need to use them.

Secondly, we have had the lych gate at the cemetery refurbished, which was a major expenditure this year because we needed to engage a highly competent carpenter working with seasoned oak. I think he has done an excellent job, of which the village should be proud.

An on-going project that councillors and parishioners are working on is the Kenton Neighbourhood Plan. This has turned out to be a hugely more complicated job than any of us thought, but we are making progress and have recently appointed a consultant who will bring our work together into a document which is acceptable to Teignbridge District Council. When we have this draft plan, we will ensure that it is available as widely as possible for comments from parishioners.

Now I want to look briefly at some of the issues we will deal with this coming year. First and foremost are the repairs to the stream wall on Brook Path, where there has been significant undercutting of the foundations with a serious risk of collapse and possible flooding. We have been very fortunate in that the Environment Agency has given funding to cover the costs of repair, so no additional cost should fall upon the Parish. We expect the work to commence on 14th May for 5 weeks, during which time the top part of Brook Path will be closed – we are sorry for this inconvenience. The contractor will have a compound in the Chi car park for equipment storage and has asked for a part of the village car park to be reserved for equipment and workers' parking. Again, we are sorry for this inconvenience.

Secondly, we have received requests from South Town residents for repairs or replacement of their bus shelters. We will be looking at options for this and have already secured a grant from Cllr Alan Connett towards the costs.

Thirdly, we will continue to enhance the appearance of the cemetery by repairing the condition of the gravel paths, which are in a very poor state. The sharp-eyed amongst you will have noted an increase in the parish precept in this year's council tax demand, which is intended for this purpose.

So, that is a summary of our work this year and I hope you are satisfied with it and continue to support our endeavours.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support and assistance, our Parish Clerk, Suzanna, for her excellent administration and advice, and also those parishioners who have contributed to our work in so many ways.

Thank you, and I will now call on Suzanna for her financial report.

180509.03 FINANCE REPORT

This is a very brief snapshot of the Parish Council's finances for 2017/18.

The Parish Council's total income for 2017/18 was just over £30,000. Half of this was made up of the precept and council tax support grant, 30% from grants (including a Neighbourhood Plan grant of over £4,000), 11% from cemetery fees, 5% from VAT refunded from last year and the remaining 4% from the allotments lease and bank interest.

The level of expenditure paralleled income at just under £30,000. As well as the usual budgeted running costs, the Parish Council purchased and installed two defibrillators (one of which was donated by a parishioner) and, with the help of grant funding, has made significant repairs to the cemetery lych gate. £1,300 has also been spent on maintenance of parish assets such as the car park, the parish garden and land on East Town Lane. The accounts also include expenditure of £6,500 on the Neighbourhood Plan this year which, whilst funded almost in its entirety by grants, still shows in the Parish Council's accounts as the authorised body.

The Parish Council is carrying forward a balance of just over £30,000. Over 40% (£12,500) of this is being held in reserve for hard court resurfacing, repairs to Brook Path and footpath maintenance. The balance provides the Parish Council with a healthy level of general reserves. However, in order to be able to provide the level of services required in the parish, to maintain this healthy level of reserves and enable the Parish Council to carry out larger projects such as improvements to the cemetery paths and replacement of the bus shelters in South Town, a decision was taken to increase the precept for 2018/19. It was therefore agreed to increase the total budget requirement from £15,037 in 2017/18 to £19,129. The Parish Council element of the

council tax for a band D property in Kenton has therefore increased from £31.90 to £39.50. However, this is still significantly lower than neighbouring parishes.

The Parish Council is required to publish certain information on its website as part of the new audit framework. This includes the end of year accounts, annual governance statement and internal audit report so anyone wishing to drill down further into the accounts can have a look under the finance section of the Parish Council's website. The accounts for 2017/18 will be published on the site once they have been approved by the Parish Council in May's meeting.

180509.04 OPEN FORUM AND QUESTIONS

- It was clarified that grant funding had been obtained for the cost of the consultant employed to work on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Has any progress been made with Powderham with regard to the allotments lease?
- A question was asked about the amount the Parish Council has increased its precept over the last 10 years and how such an increase is justified. Cllr Connett responded by stating that the Parish Council had been bold and courageous – it had bought the village car park from Teignbridge so as to retain free parking for parishioners, it had bought land from TDC on East Town Lane to secure its future, it has replaced two of the bus shelters in the centre of the village, extended the park and improved its equipment and made repairs to the cemetery lych gate. The cost of maintaining parish assets is significant and rises each year. A fund is also set aside for when the hard court needs resurfacing and repairs to Brook Path. It is fortunate that imminent works to Brook Path to rebuild a section of the retaining wall will be funded by a grant from the Environment Agency. The cost of the project is around £100,000. As Brook Path is the responsibility of the Parish Council, it is very fortunate that this grant has been obtained as the burden of repair would have fallen to the Parish Council.
- In the Settlement Boundary Review it is proposed to include parts of Higher Down. What does this mean? The Chairman advised that TDC is proposing to include a number of parcels of land so that they fall within the parish boundary whereas previously they were not included.
- How does the Parish Council plan to alert the parish about the two defibrillators? The Parish Council has included information in the newsletter but agreed that this could be repeated. A sign could be erected and social media was almost an option.
- Review of parish trees (as referenced in previous minutes) – how is the Parish Council progressing? A map is being obtained on which trees for which the Parish Council is responsible for can be identified and then inspected.
- A concern was raised about the dangers of the A379 and a question asked about whether the dimensions of the road are acceptable? The Chairman advised that the Parish Council is not qualified to answer this. Comments were made about traffic and speed control. Cllr Connett advised that the Parish Council spent ten years lobbying for traffic lights at South Town and a new pavement. He also advised that he was persuaded to leave the speed camera in South Town in situ. Cllr Appleton commented that the Parish Council has commented on issues surrounding the A379 when responding to planning applications. It was observed by a member of the public that the Parish Council should be campaigning with other Parish Councils to make the A379 safer.

180509.05 CLOSE

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.41pm.

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Cllr Chris Thompson
Chairman