

PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
28th APRIL 2016
AT IGHTHAM VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllr R Chartres (Chair), Tom Tugendhat MP MBE, County Cllr Mrs Valerie Dagger, Borough Cllr Mr Robin Betts, and 40 parishioners including eight Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and by introducing Tom Tugendhat our local MP.

Tom opened the meeting by saying that it was a privilege to represent Ightham as it exemplified many of the challenges that he is engaged with at Westminster. The first challenge is broadband, where half of the village is served well and the other half struggles. If the focus of every decision is based on urban areas, that are generally well served, then Ightham represents an area that requires assistance.

Another area of concern is schooling. The Secretary of State has an ideal that every primary school should become an Academy. This is easier to achieve in an urban area where a local good head teacher can oversee a few local schools. This system does not work so well in rural areas where schools are further apart.

These are 2 areas where a lack of understanding between rural and urban areas has affected Government policy.

Tom urged Parishioners to write to him with their issues as communication is essential in enabling him to take forward the message to Westminster. The more letters received, demonstrates greater strength of feeling and will help to carry the message forward.

A couple of questions were raised about how an Academy can work. Tom suggested that people write in to say why the system won't work and come up with alternative solutions, one suggestion being that the County itself becomes a Trust.

A Parishioner raised the question of Government targets to provide broadband in the majority of areas. Unfortunately it seems as though rural areas fall into the small percentage of areas that won't benefit. Urban areas are easier to fix. Ed Vaizey has set minimum targets for rural areas as well but they are for very slow speeds (around 5mb).

Tom also said that BT marketing is misleading and has written to Advertising Standards. Other rival companies are put off by BT advertising, this is anti-competitive practice. When BT controls 80% of the market, more competition is required to raise the standard of service.

The Chairman thanked Tom for his presentation. We will endeavor to pass on information about broadband speeds from Ightham in the hope that the service can be improved.

MINUTES of the meeting held on 30th April 2015 were agreed. Copies were available for Parishioners.

THE CHAIRMAN said that there was a petition online and also in hard copy, to improve road safety of the junction at A25 and Oldbury Lane. This was available for people to sign.

Cllr Chartres presented Jean Stirk with a KALC Award for the publication of The Ightham History Project. He then gave his report to the meeting which was also circulated:

This is my first Report as Chairman. I start by thanking our MP Tom Tugendhat, MBE, County Councillor, Valerie Dagger and Borough Councillor, Robin Betts for their wise counsel and support during the last year and to congratulate both Tom and Robin on being elected last May.

The last year has seen many projects come to fruition after necessarily being a long time in their planning. Phase 1 of the new play area in the Recreation Ground has been well received by our children and the recently completed Phase 2 with even more enthusiasm.

The car park has been well used and already at capacity. Planning Permission has been granted recently for the extension, creation of a seating area and for discrete non spill lighting on the footpath to the Ightham Primary School. The works are currently at the tender stage and it is hoped to complete the scheme this summer.

The Parish Council part funded the much needed Ightham Primary School replacement classrooms, library and new toilet facilities. These were officially opened by Paul Carter, CBE, Leader of KCC on 12th February.

The opportunity was taken whilst these works were on site next door to replace the time expired septic tank with a connection of the Scout Hut and SKIPS onto mains drainage. The Parish Council owns these buildings and the works were part funded by a Grant from the Borough Council. A replacement of the Recreation Ground derelict west boundary

timber close boarded fence, together with the removal of the trees overhanging the Ightham Tennis Club courts, has been completed.

The Scouts continue to progress the project to provide a new pavilion on the Recreation Ground that will be shared by Ightham Football Club. The Parish Council has funded the professional and survey fees in obtaining the Planning Permission. It will also fund the demolition and replacement of the existing dated Ightham Football Club changing facilities. Currently, a contractor has been approached to value engineer the entire project to ensure the most cost effective solution. The Ightham Cricket Club pavilion is a building worth conserving. The Ightham Parish Council is funding the Planning Application for its refurbishment and the provision of a much needed secure grounds maintenance equipment and mower store.

The Parish Council is responsible for keeping the various open spaces in the village tidy together with the public graveyard at Saint Peter's Church. The resurfacing of the churchyard pathway has been completed recently to improve disabled access. Tree works were carried out in Old Lane following gale damage to keep it open primarily for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians.

The interior of the Village Hall, for which the Ightham Parish Councillors are the Trustees, has been redecorated, rotted windows replaced with double glazed units and the roof repaired. In addition, the kitchen has been completely refurbished with commercial dishwasher facilities. An excellent example of village life in Ightham was the Open Garden event, raising over £5,000 for the Hospice in the Weald and one that the Parish Council is pleased to support.

The informative and definitive history of our village, "Ightham at the crossroads" written and compiled by Jean Stirk and David Williams with photos by Mary Allwood has been published and the 600 copies sold out! The Parish Council was pleased to underwrite the project and to support the formation of a Trust to distribute the surplus as Grants to worthy village applicants. In addition, the Parish Council has had its records catalogued and the lower office facilities in this hall converted as a suitable environmentally controlled area to store properly both these Parish Records and the materials gathered during the Ightham history project.

The opportunity has also been taken to ensure that all land owned by the Ightham Parish Council is registered at HM Land registry. For the record, the leases for both Ightham Tennis Club and SKIPS have been formalised.

Potholes that have been reported by this Council, KCC Highways has repaired. The condition of our road surfaces is not excellent but they are better than those of neighbouring Parishes. Much of this is due to the diligence of our Parish Clerk, Sarah Huseyin, in chasing KCC Highways. The long awaited drainage works outside Raspitt Hill on Coach Road has been completed and it is hoped that surface water flooding will not occur in future during torrential downpours.

Road Safety is a priority. Currently, there is an online Petition on the KCC website we encourage you to support this. This is for the construction of a roundabout at the notorious accident black spot on the A25 Ightham Bypass at its junction with Oldbury Lane and Sevenoaks Road.

I had a meeting with the responsible officers at KCC to discuss the road safety issues in Ightham. They would examine the possibility of creating a central refuge to protect west bound cars making a right turn into the entrance to the Recreation Ground.

They were supportive of a 20mph speed limit outside Ightham Primary School in Oldbury Lane. An unexpected consequence of school car parking in the Recreation ground has been an increase in speed on an uncongested Oldbury Lane!

A written Petition with over 100 residents' signatures has been prepared to extend the 30mph speed limit on Fen Pond Road where there are no footways and blind bends to the village boundary sign beyond Fen Meadow. This will require a Traffic Order and once approved will take KCC a number of months to confirm. Ightham Parish Council will fund the repositioning of the signage. I must remind Cllr. Councillor Dagger that she agreed to part fund an interactive traffic calming sign on Bates Hill, which has similar problems to Fen Pond Road, here at the last Annual Meeting!

The Parish Council made a submission to the Call for Sites that will form a part of the TMBC Local Plan that will inform planning policy for the next thirty years. This took due regard of the results of the Local housing Needs Survey that was jointly funded by Circle Housing Association and the Parish Council. The results were published in the Parish Magazine last summer.

The Parish celebrated the Queen's 90th Birthday by participating in the Beacon fires, words of Thanksgiving from the Rector, Tim Hatwell, and fireworks. Thanks are due to Cllr. Penny Cracknell and her husband for the loan of a field for the occasion.

Broadband and BT Openreach has taken up much of the Council's time. The lack of information, misinformation and the lack of any progress has been lamentable. I would like to thank Tom Tugendhat for raising the issue on the floor of the House of Commons. Since then there has been considerable activity by BT Openreach and the Parish Council is undertaking a survey, with your support. It would appear that speeds have increased from around 1mb/s to over 70mb/s for those subscribers who are totally committed to BT – interesting competition fairness implications. The lack of speed is affecting local house sales and is infuriating those many residents of Ightham who work in the 24/7 world.

There has been a reduction in Planning Applications this year. They continue to be of a high standard and the Parish Council has supported the vast majority.

In anticipation of the cessation of Grant Funding from TMBC, Ightham Parish Council decided to increase the Parish Precept this year by the same amount as to cover the expected shortfall. In future years there is unlikely to be any funding from outside to maintain the village and the public graveyard at Saint Peter's Church. TMBC is scheduled to confirm this

course of action following the consultation documents to the Parishes just published. It should be remembered that the Parish Precept is levied in the village and only spent on our community projects.

We have received mild rebuke recently that the Ightham Parish Council does not publicise its achievements enough! I trust that this Report helps to address this?

The Ightham Parish Council tries to keep all residents informed of the upcoming business and decisions taken. The Agenda and Minutes are published on the dedicated website and posted on the Parish Noticeboards. A monthly meetings summary is printed at the back of the Ightham Parish Magazine and I am writing a twice annual summary of key issues in the Magazine. In addition, articles of an explanatory nature of the function and working of the Parish Council have been placed in the magazine.

It has been a busy year. I conclude in thanking all members of the Parish Council for their hard work in support of our residents and to our Parish Clerk, Sarah Huseyin, for her diligence in ensuring that all our business is conducted properly and is in order.

Cllr Chartres gave thanks to Cllr Dagger and Cllr Betts for their support and also to Cllr Cracknell for the use of her field during the Queens Birthday celebrations. Cllr Chartres presented Cllr Cracknell with a bottle of wine.

FINANCIAL REPORT An Income and Expenditure Account for 2013/2014 was circulated at the meeting.

COUNTY REPORT

Cllr Dagger was presented with a petition for Traffic Calming in Fen Pond Road. She said that there was enough money in the members fund to help to solve the problem and would be meeting with the Highways Manager to discuss a plan of action.

Cllr Dagger gave her report on the last year which is attached.

BOROUGH REPORT

Cllr Betts said that there was a recurring problem of lack of funding and that recent cuts are quite severe. The Council are facing cuts of £1.9 million which is 10% of the core budget. The aim is to preserve services and there are ways and means of reducing costs and creating funds.

With regard to flooding, Raspit Hill which has flooded since 2013, has finally been fixed.

The new 3G pitch Facility in Borough Green and Wrotham is available for use by all neighbouring Villages.

A new lottery fund has been announced by TMBC, this is a Community Lottery to help fund local organisations and charities. Maximum funding grant is £25k.

Cllr Betts recently ran the London Marathon and raised £8,500 for Child Bereavement UK, this charity offers support to everyone in the Parish.

REPORTS FROM PARISH ORGANISATIONS Reports were received from various village organisations on their activities over the past year. Highlights Below:

Ightham Mote: Bernadette Gillow reported that Ightham Mote had 140,000 visitors in 2015. Last year saw the formal return to the National Trust of the Farm Tenancy. The Antiques Roadshow is coming to Ightham Mote on 16th June which will be a profile raising event.

St Peters Church – Rev Tim Hatwell gave thanks for his warm welcome into the Village. He reported that the first record of a church in Ightham dates back to 1122. He gave thanks to the Parish Council for recent funding of the path to the Church.

Ightham Primary School – Hugh Stirk, Chair of Governors, reported that the school is close to its maximum headcount with 210 pupils. This is significant as funding runs to £3k per head. Numbers have risen from 150 6/7 years ago. Academically, results are on a par with national standards and 15 year 6 children passed 11 plus which is a very high percentage. The turnover in staff has had little impact on the schools results. The school is aiming for fully outstanding at the next Ofsted inspection. The building project has now been completed and the new classrooms opened in January 2016. Hugh thanked the Parish Council and Community for their financial contributions.

Ightham District Gardens Club - Phil Barlass gave thanks to Penny Cracknell, Paula Price and Ightham Mote for the event last year. Membership has remained steady and costs £10.

Scouts – Jamie gave thanks for the KALC Award which was presented to him at the Scout AGM In September. The Scouts now have around 80 members and 10 members of staff. The School used the Scout Hut as a classroom last year. The textile Bank in the lower Village Hall car park is a source of funding although funding has been reduced to £150 per ton. The paper recycling bin has now been reinstated. The major fund raising event, Party in the Car Park, will be held on 18th June. Jason Murray, the newly elected Chairman, gave an update on the new Scout Hut. The Scouts are working with advisors on planning and as initial cost estimates were very high they are looking at ways to scale back the size and cost of the project. They now have an estimate which is much more in line with what is achievable. The Scouts already have around £100k towards funding the new scout hut. They are investigating further sources of funding and are looking at fundraising ideas, any new ideas would be welcome, they envisage that it will be a community wide project. The Scouts gave thanks to the Parish Council for their support.

Ightham Cricket Club – Haven't had their most successful season being relegated to the second division. In May the cricket ground will be used for junior cricket on a Saturday morning. The pavilion needs some refurbishment and the club will work with the Parish Council during the current season.

Ightham History Project – The book was launched last year and each of the 650 copies has been sold. The authors will consider reproduction if it can be done at a reasonable price. Jean Stirk gave thanks to her co-author, David Williams and to Mary Allwood for her photography. An archive is being set up in the lower village hall and will be opened for 2 hours once a month. Jean said that they are interested in new events as it will help to continue the story. The project was set up to provide a wide ranging history of Ightham. Surplus funds from the sale of the book will help to fund community projects, one being the supply of a dehumidifier for the Village Hall. Details of funding opportunities will appear in the Parish Magazine.

The WI – The WI have had a busy year with some interesting talks. Last year was the 100th anniversary and 2 members were invited to Buckingham Palace. They will be providing teas at Ightham Mote for the Antiques Road Show and are anticipating serving around 5000 teas.

Ightham Open Gardens – Gill Averill said that the success of the Ightham Gardens 2015 was due to all involved and gave special thanks to the Parish Council especially for the refurbishment of the Village Hall kitchen. The brochure for 2016 Open Gardens has become available and the event will take place in July 2016 with 3 new gardens being involved. It is hope that the Primary school will also participate. Gill also gave thanks to the WI.

AOB

Blocked drains on A227 and Fen Pond Road, Cllr Dagger said that she would investigate.
Cllr Chartes said that the level of litter throughout the village was a disgrace.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting, which closed at 10.02 pm