

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF ST MARGARETS-AT-CLIFFE

Minutes of the Ordinary Monthly Meeting of the above Parish Council held on Monday 8th January 2024 at 7pm at St Margaret’s Hall.

Present: Cllrs R Simcox (in the chair), P Blake, A Fielding, O Checksfield, B Pearce, N Fulford, T Gilham, A Wheeler, together with Clerk. District Cllrs Richardson and Bates in attendance.

Apologies for absence received from County Councillor Steve Manion.

Public participation:-

Penny Bailey - raised question of van parked at top of Bay Hill for over two weeks. Cllr Simcox confirmed she had written to Highways re this as it had delayed the installation of double yellow lines. Cllr Bates advised that it would be a case, at present, for Kent Police, as the Enforcement Team would only be concerned if a vehicle was parked on double yellow lines (yet to be installed). Cllr Simcox asked of data could be obtained from the Parking Enforcement Team at DDC.

Mr Mick Ludhurst expressed an interest in becoming a new Councillor, now retired after working for Customs and Excise, currently acting as a Magistrate.

1. The minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 11th December 2023, having been circulated to all Councillors, were confirmed as a correct record of the meeting.	
2. No declarations of interest were made on agenda items.	
3. <u>Reports from County and District Councillors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Written report provided by Cllr Bates (attached to minutes).● One of the main issues is the proposal to implement parking charges in rural car parks, including the Reach Road car park, together with year-round charging to be implemented in the Bay car park.● This is due to be considered at the Cabinet Meeting on 15th January; Cllrs Bates and Richardson had only just become aware. It is likely proposal will be passed,● Cllr Simcox stressed that when this came up for consideration before, 208 objections were made. Such implementation would impact strongly on parents taking children to School and particularly to Nursery employees (on minimum wage) who would have to pay £1.80 an hour to park, and this is also likely to be limited to 3 hours maximum time.● Cllr Bates advised PC to send objections to the Portfolio holder C Zosseder at DDC together with the Leader, Cllr Kevin Mills.● Concern was raised at the complete lack of consultation before this proposal; District Cllrs advised that, if approved, the next step would be to apply for a TRO when a formal consultation would ensue.	

Cllr Checksfield made the point that only Ash has a similar geographical layout to St Margaret's where the narrow main road mean there is little choice of where to park.

- Question raised as to whether the first hour could be free if new charging goes ahead. It was proposed that a letter be prepared by tomorrow by PC; to be flagged up on Facebook to local residents, School and Nursery to be alerted to the proposal.
- The point was also made, as before, that the installation of machines with associated costs would be unlikely to see any revenue before five years hence. This point was made on previous consultation,
- PC also to express objections to the proposal for all year charging in The Bay.
- It was noted that STMBCA had approached District Councillors re Highways/traffic issues - Clerk asked to write to the Association requesting that anything so related be routed via the Parish Council.

Cllrs Simcox and Checksfield to deal

Clerk to deal

Cllr Steve Manion - email from Cllr Manion (extract from KCC Leader's 2023 Annual Statement) stating:-

"There are significant challenges we as an authority, like many others across the country, are facing; challenges that, rather than shy away from, we have been very open about and are facing head-on. We are not a council that has been reckless with its finances, far from it, and our sound decisions have given us the best possible chance to stave off what has been coming down the track at us. However, we are not immune to the impacts.

Increased costs and demands on our services have meant we have had to face some very hard budgetary decisions. In Kent we have specific issues, such as travel disruption at our ports, and the response to migration and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Despite what we shoulder, central government funding has fallen far short. There is no doubt that times are exceedingly tough."

4. Clerk Report

- Note that Terry Gilham has yet to appear on DDC website - he confirmed that this had been returned to them. Clerk will check with them.
- PROW responded re Bay Hill path reported and will inspect re overgrown vegetation,
- VAT refund received at £3,684.76.
- Envelope containing promised Play Inspection reports arrived empty and damaged with an apology from Royal Mail. Have chased company for further copies which are promised by the end of the week.
- KGV water meter - no leak apparent following readings. Currently £319 in credit but 5 different transactions showing for 5 December. This relates to last six months, now to be on monthly billing.

Clerk to deal

Clerk to monitor

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contacted Harmers - new cattle grid fabricated and with galvanisers. Will be installed in mid January weather permitting.• Have chased Richard Haynes re Leaf Services and removal of white poplars as agreed - update awaited.• Further email from resident re drain in car park - Cllr Bates has been liaising with Keith Watson and relevant vehicle with equipment awaited for cutting tree roots.• Team Purchase dealt with overgrown kissing gate - cost £50. (Cllr Bates confirmed this has now been added to DDC's cutting programme, going forward).• No invoice received re use of Duke of York room (Cllr Checksfield noted School have only just returned after month's break)• Have requested up-to-date copy of electoral register from DDC - collected. Checked with KALC re provision to ACE re housing needs survey. Clerk to liaise with Tessa O'Sullivan at ACE to deal. Cllr Fulford stressed the need for communication to residents.• Service Level Agreement re Reach Road toilets signed and returned to DDC for 2024-2025.• Missing sign on Reach Road reported (welcome to village sign).• Copy of deeds held in safe and at solicitors included in meeting folder.	Clerk to monitor Clerk to monitor Clerk to deal
<p>5. <u>Planning</u></p> <p>IT WAS RESOLVED to ratify the decision made on objections to the planning application for Neptune, Bay Hill (23/01336) - attached to minutes.</p>	
<p>6. <u>Glebe Field / The Bay Trust</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreed to set up further meeting with the Save Glebe Field Group - suggested for Monday 22nd January at mid-day.• Cllr Fielding will formulate further letter to the Trustees asking for constructive dialogue.	Clerk to check re Hall availability Cllr Fielding to deal
<p>7. <u>Civic Cemetery / Dare Garden of Remembrance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the plan as produced by Mr Peter Holdstock in relation to new burial plots and cremation plots.• The new burial plots are below the path, and above the lower grassed area planted with shrubs; the cremation plots are set in front of current plots.	

8. Finance

(a) The following payments were approved:-

Dover Outreach - charitable donation re raffle	£650.00
Castle Water	£106.86
Shree Sava Ltd - charitable donation re raffle	£750.00
Castle Water	£37.64
4D Security - repairs/upgrade to CCTV	£91.20
Castle Water	£16.74
St Margarets Village Hall - hire charge	£29.70
St Margarets Village Hall - room hire 2024	£252.45
Dover District Council - bin emptying charge	£350.00
Credit card - gift card/ink/licence fee/stamps	£274.49
Dover District Council - toilets (3rd quarter)	£2,015.43
R Purchase - December invoice	£1,390.00
Jane Cook - December salary	£1,477.94
Jane Cook	£20.00
HMRC - Tax/NI	£283.72

Receipts:-

£7,746.17

Orla Checksfield	- £15.00
VAT refund	- £3,684.76
Credit interest	- £75.31

Bank statements for three accounts provided, together with reconciliations which were approved.

Agreed that Cllr Checksfield and Clerk to meet re new spreadsheet management.

(b) Up-to-date spreadsheet considered with ongoing and increased costs examined. IT WAS RESOLVED to set budget for 2024-2025 at £131,600.

(c) IT WAS RESOLVED to increase Precept for 2024-2025 to accommodate new budget - this gives a figure of £28.30 per annum increase for a Band D property, or £2.83 per month. Clerk and Chair to sign and return Precept form.

(d) IT WAS RESOLVED to accept figure from R C Claringbould & Sons Ltd for repair of Kingsdown Road Pavilion at £1500 - £1600.

(e) IT WAS RESOLVED to increase Clerk's salary by 4% with effect from 1 April 2024. IT WAS RESOLVED to allow a lump sum of £2,000 to be applied from PC to NEST Pension.

(f) IT WAS RESOLVED to increase contractor rate by 10% with effect from 1 April 2024, with Cllr Blake to discuss with Mr

Clerk and Cllr Checksfield to set up

Clerk and Chair to deal

Clerk to confirm

Clerk to deal

Clerk to note and Cllr Blake to speak to Mr Purchase

<p>Cllr Checksfield re CSU meeting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cllr Checksfield provided written report of meeting, attended by her and Clerk. Meetings are quarterly with other Councillors to attend next meeting. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">- 6 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email sent by Chair to Neil Barker, KCC Cabinet Member for Transport, re village bus service. Reply awaited. - Cllr Fielding re Ash Grove - advised that there have been changes in tenants at Ash Grove where the PC has not been consulted. Original Section 106 Agreement meant that PC verified original tenants through the Housing Association. - Since the Housing Group has changed, decisions have not come via the PC. Clerk asked to write requesting meeting with East Kent Rural Housing Association to establish the way forward Clerk to check in office files for original agreement. - Cllr Simcox had written to Kent Highways re costs associated with highway plans - reply awaited. 	<p>Clerk to deal</p>
<p>12. <u>Village Maintenance</u></p> <p>A. Playing field inspection undertaken by Cllr Pearce. He will be liaising with maintenance contractor Mr Purchase re ongoing maintenance - nothing major. Reported that guttering at Alexander Pavilion is in poor condition and needs replacing.</p> <p>B. Decision re tennis court signs still pending.</p> <p>C. Land off Sea Street - as advised per Cllr Bates' report.</p> <p>D. Meeting yet to be arranged for volunteers/business community re follow-up from Christmas event.</p> <p>E. Great British Spring Clean Up - Clerk to check with DDC re details. Preferred dated weekend of 23rd/24th March.</p> <p>F. Cllr Blake had been approached by Mr Pyfrom re roads leading to The Front. It was confirmed that this road lies outside that owned by the Parish Council, and is identified as a "private road not maintainable at public expense".</p>	<p>Clerk to deal</p>

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Confirmed:

Chair

8th January 2024

The application for a detached house in this plot on Bay Hill is assessed not only for its merits as a contemporary dwelling but also for its impact on the St Margarets Bay Conservation Area. The proposal would turn a natural woodland site into a large dwelling with residential garden space. The site is extremely steep and the placement of a dwelling and associated amenities here will require radical alteration to the whole plot, significantly changing the landscape appearance. A wide driveway is planned to extend through the length of the plot, taking up further land. A substantial loss of biodiversity appears inevitable.

This is a landscape conservation area so effect on the landscape is a particularly important consideration. The site is also in/adjacent to the Heritage Coast and close to the Kent Downs OANB which surrounds the village. This site has long been an area of mature woodland and vegetation and so contributes to the natural landscape character in this part of the Bay. It is part of a larger woodland area. It is undeveloped land outside the confines, outside the Local Plan allocations which propose substantial housing. It is within the Conservation Area. Consequently the Parish Council objects to any housing development on such land.

The St Margaret's Bay Conservation Area Character Appraisal states:

When assessing planning applications, the local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and its setting. Policies in the Local Development Plan positively encourage development which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas”.

For the Parish Council to support this application it would have to be satisfied that the development would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. When measured against relevant national and local planning policies the application does not appear to meet this requirement.

NPPF policy 174 states:

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

NPPF policy 185 states:

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects..... In doing so they should...

- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

The application does not appear to be compliant with either of these two sections.

Dover Local Plan policy SP4 deals with Residential Windfall Development. It places

several restrictions including:

c In the case of settlements in, adjoining or surrounded by, the Kent Downs AONB or Heritage Coasts, that the proposal complies in the first instance with the primary requirement of conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty

d It would conserve and enhance landscape character and biodiversity and not result in unacceptable intrusion into the open countryside or the loss of, important green spaces within the confines that contribute positively to the existing character of that settlement; Local Plan policy SP13 also emphasises the importance of conserving the landscape and biodiversity and states in section

e All proposals within, or affecting the setting of, the AONB and Heritage Coasts must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty in accordance with the requirements of Policy NE2.

Policy SP14, Enhancing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity, places further requirements on developments to conserve habitats and specifically states in section d

All development must avoid a net loss of biodiversity and will be required to achieve a net gain in biodiversity above the ecological baseline in line with Policy NE1

Policy NE1 specifies the requirement for biodiversity net gain in section 3

All planning applications must be supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and supporting reports with information to demonstrate how at least 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved....

Policy NE2, Landscape Character and Kent Downs AONB, requires that proposals should demonstrate particular regard to the Landscape Character Area and states in section d proposals will be supported if:

The development would enhance the special qualities, distinctive character and tranquillity of the AONB and the Heritage Coasts

Application 23/01336 does not appear to meet this or any of the referenced policies in the Local Plan

In Policy SP4 section 3 it is stated:

New dwellings (both isolated and non-isolated) elsewhere in the countryside outside of settlement boundaries will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances under one or more of the criteria i) to v),

None of the exception criteria then listed in Policy SP4 appear to apply to this application.

In view of the difficulty of reconciling the planning application with relevant sections of national and local planning policies which protect the environment, in the absence of a biodiversity net gain plan or environmental impact assessment, and having regard to the Conservation Area Character Assessment, the Parish Council is concerned about harm to the landscape in the Conservation area and therefore objects to the application.

Firstly we would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year and to hope that you all enjoyed the time with your friends and family. There are only two items concerning the District. The second of which you may wish to include as an additional item to your agenda this evening:

DOVER BENCH STREET CAR PARK

That has now closed permanently as a consequence of the Dover Beacon redevelopment this month.

PROPOSED PARKING CHARGES FOR 2024/25

3.3: The following is an extract from the DDC Cabinet Agenda which will go for approval at their next meeting on 15 th January. It was published late in the afternoon on Friday 5 th January. For access to the complete papers go to Item 8 on this link:

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 15/01/2024 18:00 (dover.gov.uk)

3.3: Car parking provision does not come for free, and the maintenance of the facilities provided are all at a significant cost to the Council. There are several car parks that have no charges but are well used. Some of these car parks also suffer from a low turnover, reducing the availability of spaces for all users. It is suggested that these should have charges introduced to relieve and prevent traffic congestion by the better management of the availability of parking spaces, and to generate income.

The suggested car parks are as follows:

- Borrow Pit, Walmer; Reach Road, St Margarets at Cliffe; High Street, Ash; High Street, Wingham; High Street, Eastry and Victoria Park, Deal.

The parking tariff within these car parks will match the existing tariffs and payments will be cashless only.

- Tides, Deal. There will be a free parking period of 3 hours for Tides users only. Other uses of the car park will be charged at £1.80 per hour.
- St Margarets Bay Car Park charges will apply all year round.

3.4: We have identified an increase in charges for both on and off-street pay & display of 20p per hour.

On the local front there were some issues which we continued to respond to yourselves and residents on and they were as follows:

LOCAL ISSUES

1). VILLAGE CAR PARK FLOODING

We received word from Jane that the drain remained unblocked. We forwarded Jane's email to Keith Watson who said they were still trying to procure the machine to cut out the roots. They will arrange to do it asap. In the meantime, as a short term measure they will arrange for the silt in the drains to be dug out. We have sent a chaser asking whether any activity has since

taken place. He has replied to say that he has just returned from leave and will chase the contractor, Hydro Cleansing, for a date when they plan to undertake the work.

2). UPDATE ON THE LEDGE APPLICATION

The latest details from the DDC website indicate that, on 13 th December, KCC Highways recommended refusal of this application on grounds of Highway safety.

3). UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT AT SEA ST On 07 th December we chased Planning Enforcement for an update on their investigations. On 12th we received a reply to say that the case had been given to Gary Bootes under ref. ENF/23/00398. On 3rd January he wrote to confirm that a breach of planning control had been identified, namely the siting of a shipping container, formation of an access and change of use of the land. He was now in the process of tracing the landowner to resolve the breach of planning control as without prejudice to a formal determination, the unauthorised development is unacceptable in that it is contrary to material planning considerations.

4). ASB ISSUES IN REACH CLOSE

We received a response from the Housing Officer on 13 th December who is actively involved in mediating with the parties involved. She does not believe that the introduction of additional street lighting will resolve the issue. There were further meeting with the residents on 22 nd December and she has asked that she be given time to see whether the actions they are taking will resolve the issues. She will keep us advised.

5). NO.80 BUS SERVICE

Still no response from Louise Sills. We have suggested to Orla that she focus any escalation on KCC and write to the new Cabinet Portfolio holder for Transport, Neil Baker. Steve may also be able to help in this regard.

6). DEVELOPMENT AT 1 VICARAGE LANE

Complaints were passed to us on 19 th December concerning the noise and disturbance caused by the ongoing construction work on this site. The complaint was passed to Planning Enforcement who have logged it as ENF/23/00453 and are investigating. They in turn passed it also to the PRW unit at KCC and to Environmental Crime Unit to address the concerns around noise. The ECU have come back to say that they will not intercede if the construction noise is taking place within guidance hours and they will not take action over traffic noise. Updates from Planning Enforcement and the PRW unit are still awaited.

7). CHURCH LAUREL BUSH

Darran Solley has agreed to have its pruning placed on the winter works programme.

8). RECLAIMING COSTS FOR TREE CLEARANCE ON THE HIGHWAY

Advice is being sought from Roger Walton. No response yet.

9). CHURCH HANDRAIL

DDC Planning have confirmed that Planning Permission will be required to place a handrail down from the church to the High Street.

SMBCA INITIATED

10). REPAIR TO STEPS LEADING TO PILL BOX PAST SOUNDS HOUSE

KCC have agreed to undertake the repair of the steps but need to clear the cliff face to assess the chalk soil to plan for the installation of the new steps. The assumption was that this would be undertaken this year, but a sign has gone up stating that the footpath will be closed until December 2025. We sent an email on 27 th December to KCC asking for clarification.

11). ACCESS TO ST MARGARET'S BAY CAR PARK

There have been complaints from residents about the number of vehicles that park on the verge next to the entrance to the car park in the summer to avoid paying. This creates a bottleneck at the bottom of Bay Hill. Several suggestions have been raised to resolve this issue and these are being considered by Parking Services in conjunction with legal services.