|  |
| --- |
| Minutes of the meeting of the Riverhead Parish Council held in Riverhead Village Hall at 19.30 hours on Monday, 16th December 2019. |
| **1. PRESENT:**Mrs Collins (Chairman), Mr Himsworth (Vice Chairman), Mrs Kennett (Vice Chairman), Mr Colnet, Mr Denton, Mrs Stewart, Mrs Hooper, Mr Carmichael and Mrs BrownAlso present: Cllr Bayley, SDC and Mrs Penollar (Clerk) |
| **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**Cllrs Stewart & Brown declared an interest Section 5.b.i), Cllr Denton in 5.e.ii) in respect of the Scout Group and Cllr Himsworth section 6.i). |
| 3. MINUTES:The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18th November 2019 had previously been circulated and were approved and signed.  |
| 4. REPORTS BY DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLORS:* Cllr Bayley reported that the District Development Committee would likely to be discussing the Abbeyfield application in January and that Cllr Chard KCC was seeking clarification of the original planning conditions in respect of parking for Riverhead Infants’ School.
* Cllr Collins thanked Cllr Bayley for her help in Riverhead this year and for judging the Christmas window displays.
 |
| **5. MATTERS FOR REPORT****a. Action points outstanding since previous meeting*** Riverhead Parish Council banner to be replaced before next use
* Contact West Kent Housing to discuss improved parking at Churchfields
* Change primary user for online banking
* Risk assessment for Communications

**b. Highways**1. **Chipstead Lane**
* The comments received on Chipstead Lane survey have been reviewed again and despite the reservations and objections received that have resulted in Kent Highways deciding not to continue with the proposal, it is apparent that pretty much all the respondents with objections would support some other change.
* Kent Highways have suggested a number of alternatives. The residents driving the campaign for change will be asked to either amend the current proposal to address the residents’ concerns or consider the alternatives suggested by Kent Highways. It was agreed that the list of all the comments received both for support and objections are sent to these residents without the personal contact details to help amend or change the proposal. If the residents then wish another survey to be sent out, Riverhead Parish Council can review the results to decide whether it can support the proposal or not and will invite Cllr Chard, KCC and & Kent Highways to meet with the Parish Council and the campaigning residents to discuss how this can be taken forward to the Joint Transportation Board.
1. **Other matters for report**
* **Street lights**
* The Brittains Lane street light column has been replaced, but the contractors are still waiting for the road closure permit to be issued for Shoreham Lane. A repair has been carried out to a Cranmer Road streetlight.
* **Footpaths and pavements**
* Cllr Stewart has reported to Kent Highways the recent damage to the remaining bollards on The Square at the bottom of Chipstead Lane.
* **Street furniture**
* An additional charge of £44+VAT was agreed to provide channelling to the new Shoreham Lane name plate to allow it to be fixed to the existing posts**.**
* It was agreed to instruct the electrician who investigated the problem with the lights at The Heights to start removing the lights one by one at the cost of £120 to try and identify the location of the fault preventing the lights working.
* Cllr Brown provided an update for the refurbishment of the fountain at The Heights. Given the expensive water features suitable for use in public areas would not be guaranteed for more than 5 years and would still need much maintenance, it was decided to progress with the option to plant out the fountain and include lighting, but not to have a water feature anymore. The budget will be reduced accordingly and Cllr Brown will prepare a design with suitable plants.
* A quote to water the planters in the central reservation for £20+VAT per month was discussed with consideration to the risk to Councillors and the Clerk carrying out the watering on a voluntary basis. Clerk was instructed to raise the appointment of the contractor as a notified item next month to commence watering in April 2020.
* The insurer for the lorry that damaged the planter in the summer of the central reservation has paid £250 compensation towards replacing it. In respect of the second accident which no one witnessed, it was noted that past experience has shown it is very difficult to claim the money from an individual without involving legal action and agreed not to pursue a claim.
* Cllr Kennett and the Clerk volunteered to remove the damaged planter
* The clerk will arrange for new planters to be fitted and planted out once the weather warms up a bit.
* **Traffic and local parking**
* Cllr Stewart reported that only one speedwatch session could be carried out this month due to the weather, but that 25 cars speeding northbound were reported to Kent Police as a result of the session held on Amherst Hill.
* Miller and Carter have offered 12 free parking spaces to local businesses for 2020.
* **Local business and services**
* Oakwood Beauty was chosen as the winner of the Christmas window displays with Batchelors and VIP as runners up. All other shops have been thanked for participating with mince pies.
* Unfortunately the bridal shop is closing and so there will be a vacancy on Riverhead again.
* There has been no success in identifying a location for a post office franchise in either Riverhead or Dunton Green.
* A car was stolen from Barnfield Road in the middle of a night and digger stolen from Bullfinch Lane. There was also an attempted theft on Chipstead Lane.

**c. Village Hall*** The following weekly and monthly checks were carried out:
* Hall emergency lighting
* The warning beeper on the fire alarm system was tested and found to sound.
* The alarm in the disabled toilet was functioning.
* First aid box was checked.
* The fire exit is clear.
* The defibrillator battery was “OK” and heated box is in working order.
* A visual inspection of all fire extinguishers has also been carried out this month.
* The outside patio lights have been already been replaced and the faulty heater in the hall has been investigated and it was agreed to instruct the electrician to supply and install a matching heater at the cost of £330.00 as soon as possible before the pre-school restart in January.
* A local roofing contractor will try to identify and repair the source of the leak around the roof light this week.
* The floor contractor will visit the hall this week to touch up a couple large scratches.

**d. Parkland*** Following Cllr Himsworth’s 2 hours visit with a tree surgeon in the Parkland, several trees needing safety work carried out were identified. A quote for £990+VAT to carry out the work was received and reviewed by the Parkland sub-committee. Clerk was asked to instruct the tree surgeon to complete the work as soon as possible.
* Another tree surgeon has quoted £660 to carry out tree surgery along the stream to mitigate encroachment of branches over residents’ gardens and increase light levels. However given this is not urgent and there are not enough Parkland budget funds to carry out this work, it was agreed to defer this work until April.
* There were 5 volunteers at the recent working party, who helped clear leaves over the newly seeded areas.

**e. Allotments & Open Spaces**1. Allotment Contract
* The draft contract distributed last month was discussed and it was confirmed that the Council has a duty to provide allotments and the provisions to remove a plot holder who does not use the allotment properly have not been changed. However it could take up to 2 years to get vacant possession of the site instead of 1 year, should the Council wish to remove the plot holders on any other grounds. It was agreed to see if a volunteer with legal experience could be found to review the draft agreement.
* Since the agreement was drafted, the Open Spaces sub-committee have prepared a budget for 2020/21 and as it is apparent that the cost of providing a water supply is increasing due to the water rates and usage, an increased in rent is proposed from £3.00 to £3.50 per rod is being suggested. The maximum any one plot holder will pay is £6.20 per year. It was agreed to prepare a notice to go to the plot holders to explain the proposed increase and to ask for their comments before it is approved as part of the budget process at the next Council meeting.
1. Other matters to report
* Cllr Collins attended the Allotment Associations AGM in November and the feedback was that plot holders are very supportive of the Parish Council and what it does.
* There are 3 vacancies on Broadmead and one person on the waiting list for a site at Macartney.
* The Scout Group have discussed the draft lease agreement and asked for a few more changes. Cllr Carmichael summarised the status and confirmed that the main change being asked for is not to be responsible for removing the buildings the Scout Group have put up if they vacate the land. The Scouts have confirmed that there were no buildings on the site when they first took it over. Cllr Carmichael offered to continue to negotiate on this issue.
* It was agreed formal legal advice rather than relying on volunteer advice for the Parish Council would be sought at the time that the head office for The Scout Association becomes involved, given the commitment of potentially 50 years on this long lease.
* There are still some outstanding allotment rents to follow up.
* Cllr Collins will meet shortly with a tree surgeon at both allotment sites to gauge any urgent tree surgery that needs to be carried out.

**f. Communications**1. The draft Media Policy distributed last month was discussed and there were no changes to be made. Clerk was asked to publish the Media Policy as final and put it on the website. Cllr Hooper will prepare a separate Social Media Policy.
2. Other matters to report
* There were no breaches in GDPR reported
* It has been confirmed that the Hugo Fox website designer does offer its package free to a Parish Council and Hugo Fox have stated that it complies with the accessibility requirements that come into force next year. The Clerk was instructed to order it and asked to work out over the next month whether setting up pages on it can be done by a young local adult looking for pocket money or if more professional experience is required for budget purposes. The current provider will charge £995+vat if the Parish Council commit by 31 January to use its accessibility compliant website with a subsequent yearly charge of £675 pa.
 |
| **6. FINANCE**1. Review and approve invoices for payment
* The list of payments is in your pack and total £2,881.20. The large amount over £500 is to Streetlights for the replacement of the most urgent lamp post on Brittains Lane and is as per quoted. It was also agreed to settle additional bills expected shortly in respect of the photocopier contract and the electrical work for the Village Hall. All payments were approved.
* It was agreed to pay £75 thank you to a local resident who keeps The Heights and other areas clean throughout the year to be funded from the Chairmans budget. This resident is the only person nominated so far for the KALC award, which he received in the past.
* The Clerk was instructed to purchase a Christmas gift this year for the Village Hall caretaker.
1. **Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting and review of draft budget**
* The minutes and draft budget were distributed to be reviewed during the next month.
* Major new items in the budget include a provision to fund a 3rd employee to carry out the hall booking function, given that the Clerk is averaging 1 ½ hours overtime a week and is unlikely to get the opportunity to take this as time off in lieu as permitted by her contract before the end of the year.
* In respect of future projects on which the Council has a choice, the budget includes replacing a leaning street light post on St Mary’s Drive before it becomes urgent, refurbishing the fountain, providing new planters on both Aisher Way and Chipstead Lane/The Square, moving the Village Hall memorial. These main projects are budgeted to be funded from the precept. A new Parkland project to increase diversity is also partially budgeted to be funded from the precept. It was agreed that the leaning lamp post on St Mary’s Drive should be monitored, but not funded until it becomes urgent as the damage was done a number of years ago and it is still stable.
* Additionally Kent Highways have informed the Clerk that its best estimate of the cost of new and replacement railings in cast iron will be £7,500. It is hoped that this will be paid for out of CIL receipts rather than the precept, but the Clerk is still waiting for confirmation from SDC. She has also asked if the new planters can be funded from CIL.
* The major expenses where there is no choice include the repair to the roof light and blind and the provision of a website to comply with accessibility. If the repair this week does not work, the cost to replace the window and blind will exceed the £5,000 budget to be funded by the precept, but it is proposed to use the Village Hall reserve fund and spread the cost over future precepts so residents who are will have the benefit of the repairs are paying for them.
* SDC have advised a slightly lower calculation of tax base than last year, which will mean the precept will fall if it is decided to keep the Council tax charge to residents the same. Whilst there has been a very small increase in the number of properties in Riverhead between 2019/20 and 2020/21, more discounts and exemptions have been granted resulting in a reduction in the tax base.
* Since the Finance Committees review, some outstanding questions have been answered and the draft budget updated has been distributed. A deficit is forecast if every project is included and the precept is not increased. The Clerk was asked to revise budget further to reduce the provision for refurbishing the fountain, remove the provision to replace a lamp post and to increase the provision for a 3rd employee to the cost of the Clerks rate. The revised summary to forecast a surplus or deficit if any will be distributed by email. Reserves (excluding CIL) are already forecast as being reduced this current year by an unbudgeted £4,756.
1. **Matters to report**
* Income received is £8,749 and includes receipts for the Parkland grant and compensation for the damaged planter.
* The telephone/broadband contract was renewed for a 2 year fixed term contract at £39.50+VAT, but BT have made lots of mistakes and are still trying to rectify the issues.
* It was agreed to reimburse the 5 traders providing electricity for the Christmas lights to more than just their own shop after the Clerk confirmed that the £30 each paid historically will still cover the actual cost of the electricity usage despite the increase in cost of electricity.
 |
| **6. PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT*** Planning applications reviewed in the month were:

SE/19/02124/FUL - 1 Uplands Close, TN13 3BP Amended ConsultationKCC/SE/0239/2019 - Riverhead Infants’ School, Worships Hill, TN13 2ASSE/19/03167/FUL - Unit E Ryedale Court, TN13 2DNSE/19/03272/HOUSE and 03273/LBCALT - Minerva House, 54 London Road, TN13 2DJSE/19/02844/HOUSE - Elmwood, 9 St Mary’s Drive, TN13 2AR Amended consultation -.SE/19/03358/HOUSE - 6 Marlborough Crescent, TN13 2HP* Planning permission was granted for 28 Uplands Way and 19 Lyndhurst Drive
* Tree work in the conservation area is to be carried out at Glebe House, Shoreham Lane.
 |
| **7. CORRESPONDENCE*** A list of general correspondence was distributed and councillors reminded to ask the Clerk if interested in seeing any item.
* Cllr Stewart attended the recent KALC Sevenoaks meeting and found it very informative. The meetings next year are Feb 21st, June 5th, Sept 4 Nov 20th and the Clerk will forward the agendas when available.
 |
| **8. CLERK’S OFFICE*** The Seniors Coffee morning is this Thursday rather than the last Thursday of the month. The November coffee morning was even better attended than the previous ones.
* The Christmas event was very well attended despite the rain and it was obvious residents appreciated being able to sit down. Lots of positive feedback has been received. The Clerk has received suggestions that the event stays at the Village Hall but should make an effort to go outside for the countdown. It was also suggested the microphone should be used. There were lots of comments on social media too.
* Cllr Hooper was thanked for decorating the Parish Council’s contribution to the Christmas Tree Festival. The Church was very pleased with both the number of trees and the number of visitors.
* Cllr Carmichael has checked with Riverhead Library and it has confirmed that it does keep its file on Riverhead up to date. He is now in touch with a Sevenoaks library employee by email to track down the out of date Riverhead file.
* At the recent KALC Sevenoaks meeting, it was reported that it would be useful for Parish Councillors to attend safeguarding training. There were no areas identified where this was essential for Riverhead Parish Council and Cllr Collins reported she is up to date with this training. Clerk will keep an eye out for such training which may be available through Sevenoaks District Council.
* Clerk was asked to inform St Mary’s Church that the proposed VE Day 75 event at The Bullfinch was preferred on the Saturday afternoon of the bank holiday weekend in case it does progress with its proposal to arrange a street party with Dunton Green and Tesco.
* Cllr Denton reported that he does propose to investigate the history of the WWII names from the war memorials for those known to reside or attend church in Riverhead. It was suggested that Amherst School be asked to help.
* Three quotes have been received in respect of moving the war memorial and it is hoped to progress this so that it can be moved in time for VE Day.
* Office open hours will be reduced during the festive period due to the bank holiday.
* Cllr Carmichael resigned from the Parish Council, but offered to continue to assist with the completion of the Scout site lease agreement. He was thanked for all his hard work.
 |

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm