

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BROOK PARISH COUNCIL
ON 16th NOVEMBER 2023 HELD IN BROOK AND HINXHILL VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr S Betty (Chair) Cllr A Betty
Cllr Jessop
The Clerk

		To be actioned by
1.	To receive and approve apologies for absence.	
	There were no apologies for absence.	
2.	To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.	
	There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2023	
	The minutes were signed as a true record.	
4.	To discuss matters arising from the above minutes not covered by the agenda.	
	The swathes for butterflies have now been cut. It was noted that dog poo bags are now being disposed of appropriately. The defibrillator training has been organised and scheduled to take place on 18/11.	
5.	To receive reports from the Borough Councillor	
	Cllr Betty had provided a report which was circulated to all. This is available as an appendix to these minutes.	
6.	Public Session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item	
	There were no members of public in attendance.	
7.	Play area – update and agree next steps	
	The Clerk and Cllr Betty reported that they had met with Wicksteed and the Clerk has a quotation for £38,338.55. Cllr Betty will contact Mark Hanton regarding a mock-up. The Parish Council is very appreciative for the planting that has taken place on the plot of land nearest the Village Hall. The Parish Council will review the woodland walk plans in the Spring. The Parish Council will apply for a Ward Members Grant for up to £750 towards a couple of benches.	
8.	Financial matters:	
	a) To note/authorise the following: i. To note the Parish Council’s financial position. The Parish Council has £11,027.66 in the bank ii. To authorise any payments Payments were approved for the Clerk, HMRC, Clerks expenses and website. iii. Budget for 2024/25	

	<p>The Parish Council agreed the budget for 2024/25</p> <p>iv. Agree precept for 2024/25</p> <p>The Parish Council agreed to precept for £13,500.</p>	
10.	To consider any changes to the Risk Assessment	
	The Parish Council considered the Risk Assessment and there were no changes to note.	
11.	Salt bag for winter and disposal of same	
	The salt bag has been ordered but not yet been received.	
12.	Communications	
	The Gmail accounts have been provided to all Councillors.	
13.	Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters	
	<p>No planning report had been received.</p> <p>The Planning Committee now comprises Cllr P Penberthy, Cllr F Penberthy and Cllr Jessop.</p> <p>One application has been received.</p>	
14.	To receive the KALC Report	
	The Parish Council received the KALC Report from Cllr S Betty is attached as an Appendix to the minutes.	
15.	To receive any updates on Highways/Environment.	
	There was nothing to note this meeting.	
16.	To receive a Caretaker Report	
	There was nothing further to note.	
17.	Any Other Business (for information purposes only):	
	<p>The Clerk is to circulate the S106 information to the Planning Lead.</p> <p>The Christmas lights will be installed mid-December.</p> <p>The defibrillator has been checked.</p> <p>The Village Hall is looking at installing a new Disabled Access friendly door. The Wi-Fi at the Hall is a work in progress.</p> <p>The Clerk will investigate the ACV listing with Darren McBride as it is understood that the freehold for the Honest Miller has been acquired.</p>	
18.	Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.	
	<p>Thursday 18th January 2024</p> <p>Thursday 21st March 2024</p> <p>Thursday 23rd May 2024</p>	

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX A

WARD MEMBERS REPORT TO BROOK PARISH COUNCIL NOVEMBER 2023

STODMARSH UPDATE

As widely reported, the Government's proposed amendments to the emerging Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill were defeated in the House of Lords. It is unlikely there will now be enough parliamentary time for the Government to introduce a new bill to address the issue.

It was never appropriate for government agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, together with the water companies to simply pass this issue onto local authorities to resolve.

A new bill would have been welcomed because the nutrient neutrality issue should have always been an issue for the highest levels of Government, with the key bodies responsible for water quality being accountable and delivering the solution.

Accordingly, the Council is now pausing work on progressing strategic wetland mitigation schemes within the borough with immediate effect because it cannot be expected to invest significant sums of money at its own risk.

BRING BACK EUROSTAR CAMPAIGN

A local petition has been set up by residents to bring back Eurostar services to Kent and is currently at over 35,000 signatures. Ashford Borough Council is promoting this to residents via Ashford For You magazine, the Council website and social media channels. If residents would like Eurostar stopping at Ashford International station again, please sign the online petition.

Petition · Bring back Eurostar train services to Kent · Change.org

If you would like to get more involved, share any information or help in any way please email: info@bringbackeurotrains.com.

RECYCLING OF ELECTRICAL ITEMS

Ashford Borough Council is running six community electrical repair, reuse or recycle events 'E-Cycle Revival', across the borough.

This is made possible due to funding from Material Focus; Ashford Borough Council has been chosen as one of over 40 projects allocated a portion of £2.5 million, to encourage Ashford borough residents to recycle their electricals. The first event took place in Wye on 14th October with other events being announced in rural locations around the borough soon.

If residents have electrical items in need of repair, they can contact the Repair Café at Singleton Environment Centre which is organised by and for residents. They can take almost any item suitable for repair, putting it back together again for reuse, with the aim of reducing waste and maintaining repair skills. If residents would like to find out more, please visit their Facebook page @RepairCafeAshford or head to their website:

<https://www.singletonenvironmentcentre.org.uk/join-in/repair-cafe-ashford/> Alternatively working but unwanted items can be donated to the Pilgrims Hospice.

KCC WINTER HIGHWAYS UPDATE

We are now entering the winter period for 2023-24 and I would like remind residents about the KCC Highways & Transportation's winter service provisions. This year the season runs from the 20th October 2023 to 19th April 2024. Information can be found on the KCC website below:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/winter-service>

The website will provide useful information on:

- Salt Bins (including locations)
- Gritting Routes
- How and when KCC salt the roads
- Clearing snow in the community
- The latest weather updates

- How KCC deal with rural roads with help from the local farmers
- Tips on Winter Driving

Please also have a look at the Direct Gov Snow Code web site below, which you may find has some useful information and hints:

<https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>

KCC also work closely with local farmers and provide them with the necessary equipment in order to clear country lanes and act as extra resources during a snow emergency. The website also provides information on all aspects of highway management, such as tree policy, information on road works and planned works, crash and casualty data. It also allows faults to be reported online at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>

Cllr Simon Betty

Ward Member for Bircholt

Appendix B

Cllrs S and A Betty attended the meeting which was held at Ashford Borough Council Civic Centre. It is considered that the following topics of discussion are relevant to Brook.

1. Kent Police. The Kent Police representative was unable to attend the meeting owing to sickness. However, the Chair provided a broad update of recent developments. Kent Police are still keen to promote “My Community Voice” as the principle means of communication on reporting and hearing about criminal activity. The Kent PCC, Matthew Scott, is intending to stand for re-election in 2024. All officers in the new ward teams have received training in neighbourhood policing and Continuing Professional Development is being introduced to ensure the training is kept up to date. Kent police will be attending fewer mental health related cases but will not be totally withdrawing.

2. ACRK. The Chair of Ashford KALC reported that an application has been made to the Charity Commission to create a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to replace the former Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). However, this has been rejected because the application was not in a compliant form but will be re-submitted and new Trustees are being lined up. The former Trustees are likely to be liable for the debts of the former organisation and will have to bear these costs.

3. Planning Update. Simon Cole, Head of ABC Planning, updated the meeting on various issues as follows.

Call for Sites – this covers the inclusion of sites for all uses e.g. nutrient neutrality, solar farms etc and not just residential for inclusion in the new local plan to 2041. The closing date is 20th November and consultation events will take place in early 2024 to provide residents with relevant information.

ARCUS Parish Subscription Option - following ward level search options, it is intended to roll out a similar function for parish level application searches and is inviting parish councils to volunteer to help with testing.

Comments on Planning Applications – extending the statutory consultation period in which parish councils may comment on planning applications will now have to be agreed with case officers and not left open ended which it is at present. Parish Councils need to put procedures in place to return comments as soon as possible because officers are bound to determine applications within an 8 week period. Any delay could mean that planning officers are unable to take comments into account.

Website Improvements – the planning pages on the ABC website are being updated and when ready KALC will be asked to set up a user group in the New Year to test it.

Stodmarsh – any new legislation to deal with nutrient neutrality is unlikely. In the meantime, the Council is pausing its own nutrient neutrality mitigation measures but small-scale mitigation schemes will still be considered.

Section 106 Agreements – work is ongoing to ensure that sums from appropriate pots are being spent. The work will also make it easier for parishes to apply for s106 funding.

Enforcement – the Council has embarked on a corporate review of enforcement functions. The review is likely to concentrate on administration functions rather than professional functions. It is intended that administration functions can be shared between the various departments. The Planning Team is currently recruiting for a new senior enforcement officer.

4. Ashford Volunteer Centre. Beth Peal the CEO of AVC gave a presentation. She said that parish councillors are acknowledged as being key volunteers. AVC helps to run volunteer projects through the Borough e.g. the Volunteer Car Scheme that provides an essential service for users, not just for hospital visits but for other appointments as well. The befriending scheme is also an important part of their work and can put lonely residents in touch with volunteers with common interests. AVC also helps community groups to find volunteers, helps groups with applications for funding and to spread information on behalf of various groups.

5. Publication Scheme. The Chair raised the issue of the publication scheme and encouraged all parish councils to undertake a review of their websites and contact details to ensure they comply with Information Commissioner Office demands. Non-compliance could breach FOI rules.

The next meeting will be held on 4th January 2024 at 7pm.