Draft minutes of the 121st Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill

**held in the Village Hall on Tuesday April 9th 2014**

**at 6pm**

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**Present:-** Simon Bass (chair), Jane Bass (recording secretary), Rosina Gunn (vice chairman), Jeremy Leigh Pemberton, Virginia Leigh Pemberton, Valerie Hemsley-Flint, Joan Lewis, Hilary Nightingale, David Hill, Sandra Beatty, Kevin Shilling, Patrick Phillips, Rosemary Smith, Susan Smith, Beryl Gibbard,

**In attendance:-** Cllr Jenny Whittle, Kent County Council, Cllr Daphne Parvin, Maidstone Borough Council, Police Sergeant Colin Whitfield, PCSO Dave Rowley.

No apologies had been received.

**1. Choice of Chairman for 2014/2015**

Sandra Beatty proposed, and Joan Lewis seconded the proposal that Simon Bass be chairman for the year and there being no other proposal, this was supported unanimously by the meeting.

**2. Choice of Vice-Chairman**

The chairman asked if anyone was interested as standing as vice-chairman. He explained that the duties were not onerous but that it would be helpful to have a deputy to assist if the need arose. Rosina Gunn volunteered that she would be prepared to take the role on. This was proposed by Joan Lewis and seconded by Sandra Beatty. The proposal was approved unanimously.

**3. The Parish meeting**

The chairman then welcomed our visitors, Cllrs Jenny Whittle of Kent County Council and Daphne Parvin of the Maidstone Borough Council, Police Sergeant Colin Whitfield and PCSO Dave Rowley from Kent Police.(see item 10 below). He said how much it was appreciated that such busy people should take time to attend the meeting and proposed that the agenda was revised slightly so that after the formalities were over, the police would follow so that they were able to return to their duties.

**4. Minutes of the 120th Meeting held on April 9th 2013**

Draft minutes had been circulated to those attending the meeting in 2013 and the chairman stated that there had been no amendments requested. Copies of the minutes were made available in the hall and the meeting authorised the chairman to sign them as a correct record.

**5. Updates by Kent Police and Neighbourhood Watch matters**

The chairman invited Police Sergeant Whitfield to address the meeting.

# Police Sergeant Whitfield said that there was nothing alarming to report but that villagers should remain vigilant, especially in respect of sheds and their security. Many such incidents appeared to be opportunistic with gardens and larger estates (such as Torry Hill) being at risk. Another area of risk was that of thefts from vans and he reminded workmen to ensure that their vans were locked up.

# The area was policed by a Sergeant based at Maidstone with constables and PCSO’s in support. Police Community Support Officer Siobhán de Búrca Ousby was now on maternity leave, having given birth only last week. Whilst she is on maternity leave, cover will be provided from Harrietsham and Lenham with PCSO Dave Rowley in the lead.

# The team are up in Wormshill regularly. Police Sergeant Whitfield was a constable in Stockbury and the North Downs in the early 1990’s and retains an affection for the area. He may be out and about in the early hours of the morning, especially if there has been a report of poaching.

# In June, Kent Police will be restructured and there will be one system covering the 999 response system and local policing. There may be better 24hr cover arrangements than at present as well, as currently cover is only from 02:00 weekdays and 05:00 at the weekends.

Mr Hill also asked if the local phone number would change? Police Sergeant Whitfield asked that people use the 101 number as this would ensure that the call was properly recorded.

David Hill reminded the meeting about the issue of heating oil thefts which had been asked in the previous year and asked if there had been any prosecutions. Police Sergeant Whitfield responded that he was not aware of any local oil thefts successfully prosecuted but there certainly had been elsewhere. There had also been commercial thefts elsewhere as well, such as chip shop oil. Eastern Europeans tended to be the culprits and old style Land Rover Defenders tended to be used in carrying out the thefts. One had recently been recovered burnt out at Lenham. The long wheel base versions were preferred as if the middle seats were removed there was a void which could be replaced with a tank. The oil would be stolen using the tank, it was then drained down and the vehicle set on fire.

Jeremy Leigh Pemberton asked what happened to the oil? If sales could they be stopped, thefts might no longer take place.

Police Sergeant Whitfield said that the evidence was that the oil was either used by those undertaking the thefts or was sold in their own community or to people that they know. He added that oil and gas bottles had also been stolen from caravans, particularly during the floods.

The chairman asked if anyone was aware of anything locally that had happened in the last year? The police can’t do anything if it is not reported.

Patrick Phillips then updated the meeting with regards to Neighbourhood Watch. He said he doesn’t have many email addresses to circulate any incidents so if people wanted the information, could they contact him. Turning to thefts, especially of oil, people could help foil these if they grew prickly bushes such as hawthorn around oil tanks or attached monitors to the tanks with an alarm that was triggered if there was a sudden fall in the oil level.

David Hill felt that prevention was the wrong direction to follow and that what we wanted was for the criminals to be caught. Prevention won’t deter the determined thief. It was good that there appeared to be no thefts this year but people shouldn’t need to protect their property.

Patrick Phillips pointed out that the police would help if asked, for example, he had asked them to patrol the area during the memorial service to Lord Kingsdown as the Torry Hill area would be fairly empty at that that time. They had agreed to do this.

The chairmen pointed out that the police do have finite resources and that individuals do have their part to play in the policing.

Virginia Leigh Pemberton had noticed a lot more police cars in the last 6 – 12 months. CW added that his team knows he expects them to cover the area. Currently, once a month there is a joint vehicle check with Sittingbourne which includes road checks.

Patrick Phillips mentioned that he had received just the previous Friday details of an article from [www.kentpolice.uk/spring](http://www.kentpolice.uk/spring) on ‘Stay safe in the spring’. He also mentioned the Victims Charter and 10 things that the police have introduced as a ‘Citizens Charter’.

He also mentioned ‘KSAR’ – Kent Search and Rescue’. They are land based but over the previous year had been contacted 72 times. They were aimed at missing persons and Patrick wanted to make people aware of their services and that they were also fundraising.

The chairman then thanked the police for attending and for responding so patiently; they then left the meeting for other duties.

**6. Parish Accounts**

The chairman reminded the meeting that it was an ‘Annual Parish Meeting’ rather than a formal parish council since as soon as a precept was levied, it would also be necessary to have the accounts audited. This would incur otherwise avoidable expenditure. As Wormshill is a relatively small village with no obvious reason at present to raise a precept it had previously been agreed to remain in our current position and he saw no reason to change that at present. The chairman stated that he would be returning the short form, as required, for the year ended March 31st 2014 to the Audit Commission; the short form declaring that there had been no income and no expenditure during the year. The balance in the bank (Santander) was unchanged at £504.93. The meeting supported the position of remaining a Parish Meeting rather than becoming a Council and approved the action of the chairman as regards the accounts.

**7 Village website**

The Chairman explained that Kent County Council had provided a facility to enable each parish or annual parish meeting to have its own village website. He had therefore set up a site for Wormshill. This could be found by searching ‘Wormshill Village meeting’ or via a link from the Wormshill site on Wikipedia.

He had set up various pages which he hoped would be useful for the village such as providing details of village events, contact details for the village hall, links to planning applications, freighter visit dates and links to other local sites that might be of interest. It would also contain details of annual parish meeting minutes etc. It had space for a gallery of local pictures and he would be pleased to add any good pictures to it.

It was suggested that an additional page could be added for Neighbourhood watch.

Jeremy Leigh Pemberton commented that he thought that this was an excellent facility which had been done very quickly. Patrick Phillips added that the Wikipedia site had largely been put together by John and Richard Gibbard in 2007/8 and that their work on this should be recognised. Beryl Gibbard was actually at the village meeting.

Cllr Daphne Parvin suggested that we included the email addresses and phone numbers for herself and Cllr Whittle.

**8. Wormshill Charities**

The Chairman reminded the meeting of the two village charities and their purposes.

The Poor’s Land Charity is 'for the benefit of the Parish of Wormshill'. It meets its objectives through making a Christmas gift to elderly residents of the Parish.

The Mary and Harriett Shornden charity is 'for the children of persons resident in the Parish of Wormshill’. It meets its objectives through the provision of educational materials or support to children and young people who are residents of the village. It has done this in the past by providing dictionaries to those moving from primary to secondary education but would be prepared to consider other possibilities such as providing a fountain pen or something else that would be both useful as well as a memento as long as they are consistent with the charity's objects.

The trustees aim to maintain a list of those they believe eligible for both charities but are always happy to receive new applications which they will consider at their next meeting.

There were six trustees, himself by virtue of being the Chairman of the annual Parish Meeting, and which was subject to the endorsement of this meeting. The previous Chair, Jeremy Leigh Pemberton, Hilary Nightingale, Nicola Billing. Ima Rix and Kevin Shilling. Bill de Leyser had stood down at in November 2013.

If there were any volunteers to be a trustee then the Chairman welcomed them to contact himself. The trustees meet twice a year and it is not very time consuming. There are two impending vacancies as Hilary Nightingale and Jeremy Leigh Pemberton will be standing down at the next meeting in November.

The accounts were circulated to the meeting and the Chairman took people through the main points.

***Poor’s Land Charity***

This had received dividends on its investments of £332.56 in the year to 31 December 2013 but only spent £18.15 on books so had a surplus of £314.41 for the year, which was held in the current account. The total book value of the charity was £5,567.99 of which £5,000 was held in the Charity Official Investment Fund managed by CCLA. The market value of these funds was £7,191.

***Mary and Harriett Shornden charity***

This had received dividends on its investments of £321.97 in the year to 31 December 2013 but had spent £400.00 on books so had a small deficit of £78.03 for the year. The total book value of the charity was £4,137.49 of which £3,846.66 was held in the Charity Official Investment Fund. The market value of these funds was £6,962.

Sandra Beatty proposed the endorsement of the Chairman as the chair of the trustees which was seconded by Rosina Gunn.

Jeremy Leigh Pemberton commented that the Poor’s Land had bought a book for anyone reaching the age of 11 as a gift on behalf of the village, not because the recipient can’t afford it but because it was a gift that hopefully they may appreciate more as they got older.

Approval of the accounts was proposed by Jeremy Leigh Pemberton, seconded by Sandra Beatty and approved by the meeting. The chairman stated that the accounts had been audited by the Hon. Auditor Mr Jimmy West FCA and he thanked Mr West *in absentia* for kindly undertaking this.

Valerie Hemsley-Flint asked if the Poor’s Land charity would offer money towards apprenticeships or further education. She stated that this had been a possibility when she was a trustee. The chairman said that the trustees would be pleased to consider such applications in addition to giving a book at age 11. Ms Hemsley-Flint commented that the age for receiving a dictionary had been 16 and was pleased to see that it was now 11. She added that the Harrietsham charity was giving help such as tools for apprenticeships or books at age 18.

**9. Village Hall Management Committee**

Joan Lewis said that the committee had lost half of its members the previous summer but that with new members filling the gaps it had continued. Improvements and maintenance were continuing and the committee were aiming to hold regular events at least once a month. A Beetle Drive had been run as well as a film night, which had been very successful. The committee were always open to new ideas as the village hall was run for the benefit for the whole community.

It was planned to hold a village fete on September 6th and the Parochial Church Council have also offered to help as this coincides with the Patronal Festival for St Giles Church. Further details would be provided in due course.

The Village Hall AGM would be the following evening.

A Spring Supper was planned for 26th April.

The meeting was reminded that the Parish Meeting was entitled to appoint two members and as Sandra Beatty and Joan Lewis said that they were happy to continue the meeting duly confirmed their membership, following a proposal by Jeremy Leigh Pemberton.

**10. Planning**

The chairman reported that there had been only one planning application during the year, being at Saywell Farm.

He commented that as the Village Meeting, unlike a Parish Council, has no democratic mandate it was inappropriate to respond to Maidstone Borough Council (as the planning authority) on individual applications as there was no proper means of gauging villagers views. Instead, he commented that villages could respond to MBC via the planning portal.

Should however there be a proposal which was clearly contentious for the village, then he would be happy to arrange a meeting and gauge comments to feed back to MBC. He was also happy to meet villagers who did have concerns and suggest what they might do to have those concerns heard, in particular contacting Cllr Daphne Parvin.

**11. Roads, road sweeping and highway matters**

## Cllr Jenny Whittle started by setting out the current position generally from KCC’s viewpoint as highways authority. She stated that there had been a huge amount of floodwater at places such as Headcorn, Smarden and Yalding. They had only recently been able to get the highways teams out. The county have allocated an extra £9m for repair works but this is only a small percentage of what is needed. Overall they have around 5,000 miles of roadway and 4,000 miles of pavement to look after. They are concentrating on the safety critical works first and will then move onto other work, although any safety critical works clearly need to take priority.

Patrick Phillips asked if it was possible to look on the system to see what work was being done when. Cllr Whittle said that the roads were overseen by ‘highways stewards’ who should be able update the system although this would only say when work had been done (or not), it did not say when work would be done.

## He also asked if the ruts and potholes at the edges of the road, where people had gone off the edge off the tarmac, could be filled. Cllr Whittle responded that potholes were the first priority but that verges also needed to be repaired as they would otherwise cause further damage.

Hilary Nightingale commented that people didn’t want the roads widened any further, in what was a rural community.

The chair noted that there was a link to the Kent Highways ‘portal’ on the village website so villagers could use that to report damage and monitor its completion. Valerie Hemsley-Flint added that she had reported damaged verges recently. KCC had told her that normally they would seek to rebuild verges with soil so as to not lead to road widening but that in some circumstances they would use rubble and bricks over which they would lay tarmac. She said that this had been done but only with loose tarmac. She also commented on a deep drainage ditch just beyond Norwood Farm where there were only reflector posts, not a barrier. The previous barrier had rusted away. The county had commented that they could not put up a barrier at present as there had not been enough accidents but she felt that this was a risk area as the ditch had been dug to drain the road, which tended to freeze if the ditch silted up.

Cllr Whittle asked about the circumstances and promised to follow it up if Miss Helmsley-Flint would contact her.

The chairman noted that it was encouraging that the county had returned Miss Helmsley-Flint’s phone calls.

Cllr Whittle then updated villagers about the minibus service to Sittingbourne. The county had had to find £80m of savings and the members grant had been cut from £35k to £25k. Her division of the county covered 15 parishes. A charge of £1 had had to be introduced to maintain the service which had had been cut so that it no longer ran on Saturday. However, it was still running with the finances such that members contributions kept it going for three days and passengers the fourth day. Her contribution was £3,700 and the bulk of the passengers came from Wormshill, Frinsted and Milstead. It had been a challenge as other councillors had questioned its value. Unfortunately Freedom passes cannot be used as it is not a scheduled route.

## Moving on to road sweeping, which was a Borough responsibility, Cllr Parvin commented that she had not had any complaints so asked if all were happy. Sue Smith had rang John Edwards who had stated that the large orange road sweeper ran through the village to be followed by the small sweepers. The latter only sweep where there are kerbs outside a property. The large sweeper was said to go through every 5 weeks although David Hill thought it was only every 12 weeks.

Cllr Parvin stated that the sweeping contract was now run by Biffa who sent the large sweeper though every 13 weeks and the small one every 5 weeks. The latter ran through to the cottages at the end of Bottom Pond Road. The contract covered Maidstone, Ashford and Swale Boroughs.

David Hill commented that road sweeping was an ongoing problem and that as we paid our rates we expected the service to be provided. Cllr Parvin asked that if there were any problems or complaints, that she was contacted.

## David Hill added that there was between 2’ and 2’ 6” of rubbish at the side of the road and that people had skidded as a consequence. This had come from top dressing. Cllr Parvin promised to ring the cabinet member responsible for the schedule and again asked that people contact her if work that was supposed to happen was not happening. Mr Hill asked for confirmation of the area to be swept and this would be followed up.

## Valerie Hemsley-Flint commented that Jeremy and Virginia Leigh Pemberton had collected two bags of rubbish recently. The chairman commented that in Headcorn, they had had six monthly village clean-up’ mornings and wondered if there would be interest in organising these? Cllr Parvin said that the Borough would supply materials to assist if such an event was organised. Beryl Gibbard commented that individual property owners could pick up the rubbish outside their houses.

Valerie Hemsley-Flint said that today, both road sweepers had gone through the village. She added that the pavement outside the church had been scraped but asked why the part outside the old rectory had not been done. Hilary Nightingale commented that this part was a death trap in winter.

David Hill wanted to thank John Edwards for repairing the signs and replacing the village name signs.

Hilary Nightingale commented that the Bedmonton sign pointed to Sittingbourne and that the Sittingbourne arm is missing. It was unclear if this was a Borough or County responsibility and the chairman offered to report it. Valerie Hemsley-Flint pointed out that the aluminium signs can be turned around quite easily.

**12. Trees and Woodlands**

David Hill reported that a copper beach provided by Jeremy Leigh Pemberton had now been planted in commemoration of the Queen’s Jubilee. He pointed out that there was not a lot of drainage in the area if there was a winter storm. Mr Leigh Pemberton commented that he hadn’t provided the promised plaque for the tree and would do so.

**13. Milstead and Frinsted CE Primary School**

There was no report from Milstead school.

**14 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

Jeremy Leigh Pemberton proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman and the deputy for taking the meeting and the chairman then closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

121st Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill - April 9th 2014

**Matters arising**

1. Village website
   1. An additional page could be added for Neighbourhood watch.
   2. Cllr Daphne Parvin suggested that we included the email addresses and phone numbers for herself and Cllr Whittle.
2. Village clean-up’ event to be explored
3. Scraping / cleaning of the pavement outside the church to be undertaken