Draft Minutes of the 125th Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill

**held in the Village Hall on Tuesday April 17th 2018**

**at 7pm**

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**Present: -** Simon Bass (chair), Jane Bass (recording secretary), Carolyn Allchin, Peter Allchin, Samantha Pink, Andrew Pink, Denise Gee, Mike Gee, Valerie Hemsley-Flint, Alan Joy, Joan Lewis, Vicky Pearce, Adele Pearce, Susan Smith, Jeremy Leigh-Pemberton, Virginia Leigh-Pemberton, Kevin Shilling, Karen Tottle, Patrik Garten and Shellina Prendergast, Tim Ratliff and Tamsin Landells

**Apologies: -** Nigel Field; Pat and Bill Hobday, John Nightingale, Patrick and Lyssa Phillips, PCSO Aaron Butcher,

The chair welcomed all to the meeting, especially our Borough and County councillors, Patrik and Shellina.

**Basis of meeting**

The meeting opened at 19:07. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and advised the villagers that an Annual Village Meeting (AVM) is held under s72 of the Local Government Act 1972. The National Association of Local Councils is of the view that we can discuss and agree anything which the villagers believe is important and which we can if necessary influence through MBC, KCC or another public body.

The first task is to elect a chairman and vice chairman for the following year. The chair stands down for this and hopefully a villager will recommend someone and that that view is seconded. Strictly speaking the vote is for the meeting itself but a standing contact is helpful for ongoing contact with other bodies.

**1. Choice of Chairman for 2018/2019**

The Chair stood down to allow the election to take place. Joan Lewis (JL) proposed and Virginia Leigh-Pemberton (VLP) 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 may be helpful to have a deputy to assist if the need arose. In the absence of any volunteers the position was again put in abeyance for the year.

1. **Minutes of 124th meeting held on 4th April 2017**

Draft minutes had been made available to those attending the previous year’s meeting and the chairman stated that there had been no amendments requested. Copies of the minutes were made available in the hall and Susan Smith (SS) proposed and Valerie Hemsley-Flint (VHF) seconded that the chairman sign them as a correct record.

**4. Update by Police and Neighbourhood Watch**

Unfortunately, the police had not been able to attend the meeting and had not provided a crime report. The chair had however found the statistics for the North Down ward which stated that in February 2018, there had been 10 crimes committed and that violent crime was the most serious issue. As this did not accord with the local experience it was likely that the ward as a whole was just too big to be reflective of Wormshill.

The chair then mentioned that he received and occasionally put up on the village website reports from the Kent Rural Police team

As has been said before, the chair pointed out that the police can only do something about crimes if they are reported and asked if anyone was aware of any that might not have been? The police had commented that currently there was very little happening here.

Karen Tottle (KL) mentioned that they had been disturbed by hare coursing but that the police had responded in about 10 minutes, a really good outcome. Peter Allchin (PA) commented that their response may have been really good for hare coursing but not in respect of looking for stolen vehicles. They wouldn’t follow up his Land Rover properly but just gave him a crime number for his insurance company to deal with, along with a victim support number, when what he really wanted was the crime properly dealt with.

VHF commented about low level crime and that she had seen someone loading petrol strimmers into a vehicle, as well as bikes for sale. She had reported this but had also had the Victim Support leaflet only. She pointed out the police precept had been the largest increase of all, yet nothing was solved.

Fly-tipping was also raised as a concern.

Patrik Garten (PG) said that he had met the Police and Crime Commissioner (Matthew Scott) and the NFU representative from Frinsted recently and had discussing hare coursing specifically as well as rural crime generally. Rural crime really was being recognised as an issue. The PCC wanted to recruit an additional 200 officers over and above natural staff runover and that the plan was for PCSO’s to build up intelligence and be able to serve the local community, including attending Parish Committee meetings quarterly. This is what the above-average increase in the funding requested by Kent Police was for.

In respect of fly-tipping, the important matter was statistics and it should be reported on-line or phoned to 101 or 01622 690690.

The chair said he could write to the PCC to say theft was not being properly investigated – this was certainly the local feeling.

Vicky Pearce (VP) said that it was problematic locally as we were on the Swale / Maidstone border and so fell between areas. She found a load of Whitstable restaurant menus in what lot of fly-tipping but the police weren’t interested.

**5. Report from Patrik Garten (PG), our Borough Ward Councillor.**

PG said that the Maidstone Borough website was undergoing some changes but the key thing was to report any such incidence of fly-tipping. You would be able to locate any tipping on a map online and he really asked that people do this rather than assume someone else had, either online or by phone.

He did have some very good news in that a new cleaning manager had been appointed by the Borough, Lesley Jones. The chair added that he had been in contact with her already and that parishoners may have already seen the cleaned pavement by the church which she had arranged and had had it done very well. The Chair said he had asked about the current street sweeping schedule but had been told as this was being revised, it was not up to date, but that the new schedule would be put on MBC’s website when it was ready.

PG also added that he wrote a newsletter occasionally and he would provide a copy for the village website.

PG then gave a flavour of what being a Borough ward councillor involved. It was all politics, planning and the local plan. What were the implications of this, he asked? It had finally been passed in November. It was controversial as there was too much housing and too little infrastructure planned. However, if the Borough didn’t implement it they would get even more housing and even less infrastructure. The plan would be reviewed in 2021.

There were elections in two weeks in the rest of the Borough but there was unlikely to be much change in the political balance.

From a planning viewpoint the North Downs was protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, Woodcut Farm at J8 on the M20 would probably be developed over the next decade. There was also some controversial development in Hollingbourne which was going to the Planning Committee this month. There was also development in Bicknor in respect of a farm extension and the accompanying chillers and cold stores. Modern fruit growing meant that apple trees were being planted at twice the density as in the past which meant that there was more fruit to haul out of the area.

PA raised again the issue of fly-tipping. He has to have a waste carriers licence and felt that the real answer was to educate the public that they need to ask for the licence of anyone taking waste away and that they should get fined if their waste got dumped, not just the carrier.

PG pointed out that proof beyond all reasonable doubt was required for a successful prosecution which made this difficult.

VHF said that the Parish Magazine often has an article by Andrew Bowles in and could PG have one as well. He confirmed it could, as well as one by Shellina Prendergast when she does one.

The chair thanked PG for his time and report.

**6. Report from Shellina Prendergast (SP), County Councillor for Maidstone Rural East**

SP started by reminding the meeting that local government had been under huge financial pressure in recent years and that the direct services grant had been flat since 2010. Between £80m and £90m had had to be saved since then and this had been achieved. There had been some good news – KCC had been fighting to increase the central grant to help out and in the last few weeks had heard that they had been managed to get £3.8m for the adult social care budget and £3.1m extra for roads – they now had an £11m ‘war chest’ for a pot hole blitz.

In respect of potholes they now had a ‘find and fix’ campaign but SP thought that rural areas needed prioritising. If you see anything then please report it online. There is an app, ‘Countryeye’ for reporting such matters.

The chair added that he had been to a KCC Highways seminar in October and added to SP’s comments that if something was not reported, nothing would be done as ‘they’ wouldn’t know that anything needed to be done. In passing he also mentioned that he had reported that ‘White Post’ had first fallen over and then disappeared. He would also do the same with the cross roads at ‘Black Post’ as the Stede Hill junction marking was very faint and posed a risk.

SP said that she rarely heard from Wormshill, so things must generally be good at present and she contrasted this with Headcorn which was undergoing huge development and had issues with travellers, and Lenham, which was seeing a lot of development as well.

Susan Smith (SS) asked if the potholes could be painted with fluorescent paint so that they could be seen at night. The chair thought this was a really good idea.

SP then talked about rural transport and she recognised that it was isolated here. She had worked with a couple of families locally on school transport. KCC planned to shelve bus services due to cuts but were looking at digital systems to book services. This would all be discussed before being implemented however. The chair mentioned that the village ‘bus service’, a taxi, used to have support from Jenny Whittles ‘members grant’ but this had ended. SS said that elderly residents used to pay £1 to go down to Sittingbourne and come back but this was now £15 a week whether they used it or not. It was now cheaper by taxi if users only went fortnightly.

SP said she hadn’t been contacted about this and that grants had shrunk. She suggested waiting a few months and waiting to hear the ideas to improve rural transport.

In respect of the police, SP said that the Police and Crime Commissioner was keen to talk to communities and was happy to hold a meeting with them, although PG added that it might take 6 – 8 weeks to get hold of him!

SP added that she was the Deputy Cabinet member for Children young people and education. She may also be able to support small community projects – if she can justify spending public money there may be a grant available, although it needs to be spread over 16 parishes.

PA raised the issue of Drake Lane. This was blocked over a year ago but now 4x4 vehicles were crashing through fences and hedges to get onto it – what was going to happen? The lane from Ringlestone Road to Bedmonton Lane – could it have rubble put down to turn it into a hard surface? SP said she would meet with PA to view it.

VHF said she wanted to contact KCC by phone but the system had not worked. SP said she would report it.

The chair thanked SP for her time and report.

**7. Village Correspondence**

During the year the Chair gets a vast amount of correspondence from the county, borough and police as well as from other bodies such as the National Association of Local Authorities or the Kent Association, the NHS or local charities. Most is not very relevant to a small village like Wormshill but where it is he may comment or update the notice board. There had been no issue like the Local Plan this year.

**8. Village hall update**

Joan Lewis (JL) gave an update on village hall activities. They were responsible for maintenance, upkeep and fundraising. This year they had had nine new members join the committee, following the request last year and it had made a tremendous difference, and she thanked them for this. Mike and Denise Gee had organised a 50:50 competition, with 50% going to the hall and 50% winnings. It had been very successful.

Other successful events had been a Spring Lunch, a quiz and curry evening and a Christmas Fair. There were lots of ideas for the future. They had also had very successful coffee mornings which were good for the village and the committee as they helped raise funds. They had initially been monthly but were now bi-monthly.

The village hall also had its own email address ‘wormshillhall@gmail.com’ and a link on the village website which also shows events being held.

The next event is the Spring Lunch on 13th May.

JL reminded the meeting that they received no external funding for the village hall at all, everything that was needed came from running fundraising events, bookings and lettings.

The AGM was next Tuesday the 24th May at 19.30 and was open to everyone. The funding priorities were the outstanding maintenance. She said she would be stepping down after 21 years as she had been involved long enough and it was now time for a new face to take on the chairmanship.

The chair asked about the suggestion of a disabled toilet which had been made previously. JL said that the committee has to decide priorities and Mike Gee (MG) added that this was more complicated than had been initially thought. The chair added that last year the £500 in the Parish account was still there, ready when needed, as agreed at the previous year’s meeting.

JL said they were now in quite a healthy position financially. The chair said he had noticed that in Yalding that their hall’s regular coffee mornings appeared to be financially supported and it was good that Wormshill could run them without this, as well as raising money from this.

**9. 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 in previous years he saw no obvious 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 2018 to PKF, the auditors for small public bodies in Kent. The short form would declare 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.

**10. Village charities**

The chair reminded those attending of the village charities and that details were on the village website. The accounts had not yet been audited but each of the two charities had received about £300 in income last year in dividends on which £200 had been spent on Christmas gifts and £50 on support for young people.

The next meeting was next month and we would review the contemporary interpretation of the objectives. An issue common to both charities was whether those eligible knew of the support that may be available and asked those attending the meeting to please let the trustees know of anyone who may need support that the charities might be able to help with.

VHF requested accounts once audited and the chair promised to put these on the website and deliver a copy to her. She also asked if the £500 for the village hall could be given to the Village Hall Committee now but the chair said he felt it should be given for a specific project and was awaiting their decision on a suitable one. Jeremy Leigh-Pemberton added that he had no memory of how the funds had got there, they had been there for a very long time. Vicky Pearce added that fundraising for the hall had increased significantly but that matters such as a roof leak had shifted priorities for expenditure.

He thanked his fellow trustees - Nicola Billing, Kevin Shilling, Ian Philips, Claire Bartlett and Paul McGuire and was always happy to hear any new ideas anyone had regarding what could be done.

**11. Planning**

There had been nothing of any significance during the year. There had been concerns around a potential egg production unit but this had not so far hatched. However, the chair would keep an eye open for it if it did happen.

The chair was aware that there was a proposal in the Highsted valley which would extend from Sittingbourne up to the motorway bridge, amounting to 11,500 units. VLP added that there was a map of the proposal in the Bredgar village shop. The chair added the proposal included a new motorway link at the Kent ‘Science’ Park. PG queried if this was new exit or an extension of J5 but the chair said that as far as he was aware it was a new exit, and added that Highways England did not support the proposal, presumably since it was so near J5.

SS said that the motorway link plan had been around for some time but the chair added that this had so far always been rejected.

VHF pointed out it that the supporting facilities needed to be built, not just the houses. MG added that the plan was an extension in part of the Science Park and that he thought the outline had been agreed, although wondered if this extended to the Rodmersham side of the valley. SP said that probably what would happen more in future was that the plan was to build new communities in one place rather than continually extend the existing villages smaller dispersed developments.

VLP asked about the planning department and the issue of traveller caravans on the Bredgar Road and how they could be stopped from building. PG said that this area was in Swale but if it was in MBC’s area, to let him know. Currently there were rules regarding permitted use, 4 years for buildings and 10 years for land.

**12. Highways, road sweeping and footpaths**

The chair said that he and Susan Smith had met with Michele Snoding, KCC’s footpaths officer before Christmas to discuss the local footpaths and getting them into order. He had also recently heard from John Nightingale that kissing gates were to be installed on the paths on his land and felt that this and other work underway would lead to an improvement in the local footpaths.

VHF raised the issue of the corner on Bottom Pond road where it always flooded, which she had raised before. The barrier had rusted away and needed to be replaced and reflectors added. There had almost been an accident there recently. The chair said he would report it which VHF said she had already done and had the job number, Alan Joy said that the drains really needed the silt cleaning out of them otherwise it would always flood.

Samantha Pink (SP) raised an issue regarding the salt bins as they had not been filled since last year. The chair said he would report this.

VP raised the issue of salt gritting. Last year Bottom Pond Road was a second level route for gritting last year but this year it had not been gritted at all.

**12. Trees and woodlands**

The chair said he had recently been walking around the Hucking Estate and there were notices about ash die-back. PA said that this was now everywhere and added that Sweet Chestnut is now suffering from a disease although added that one potential benefit was that Leylandii now has its own disease!

**13. Any other business**

*Defibrillator*

AJ started by saying that Keith Knight had unfortunately collapsed recently and that whilst a defibrillator wouldn’t have helped in this instance it raised the question as to whether having one available was a sensible thing to consider. Kate Joy had done some research and asked the question, did we want one in the village? We would need a phone line and a power source and that lottery funding was available. If a phone box was used, BT would donate the power and would maintain the phone box.

PG asked what mobile reception was like in the village and was told it was not good, which was why a phone line was so important. The installation of a defibrillator would need a heated box and cost about £400. It needed to be in a centrally accessible location. He pointed out that the Fire Brigade were currently giving them away – they were old ones which had been reconditioned as they were switching their boxes to be compatible with SECAMB devices.

Carolyn Allchin (CA) asked about First Aid courses on CPR as these were important as well to be successful.

The chair said that KJ had offered to make a lottery fund application and asked if the meeting wanted her to pursue this. PA asked about security? Jane Bass (JMB) said that they needed to be either kept unlocked or be registered with the emergency services who, once called, would give you an access number. PG said that there was a very low rate of defibrillators going missing. The most important thing in an emergency was to call for an ambulance however.

The meeting said they would like this pursued and the chair said he would take it up with KJ.

*Emergency plan*

The chair said that he had noticed that Bredgar Parish Council had a formal emergency plan and asked if we thought we needed one in Wormshill. Did people know who or how they could contact if they needed help, or vice versa?

SS said that Alan had kept an eye on her as did others in Bottom Pond Road.

John Noble, who had given his apologies for the meeting, said that he thought that people did look after each other already in the village.

VHF said she felt isolated in the snow but that Andy, her taxi driver from Sittingbourne, had rung her to make sure she was ok.

The feeling of the meeting was that we probably didn’t need a formal plan as we managed to cope as we were.

*Quarry in Bedmonton Lane*

The chair said that two architects who had been at the meeting earlier, Tim Ratliff and Tamsin Landells, had bought the old quarry on Bedmonton Lane. Observations were raised about the ease of getting planning permission for housing there but the chair said that given the history, their interest in the site was to be welcomed.

*Spoil from gravedigging*

SS said that the gravediggers had put soil on the village hall grass again and this did not help the area as it was unsightly, even if it was not there for a long period of time. The chair said he would take it up with John Nightingale and JL said that the PCC needed to sort this out for the future.

*Confusion about health service boundaries*

A resident said that she had had no end of issues regarding care post a serious operation. No provision had been organised for this because of confusion as to which Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Wormshill fell into. She had had to change to a GP who was based in Maidstone but the care fell into the Swale CCG and this had led to funding difficulties. PA said that Wormshill had always been split between Maidstone and Sittingbourne, for Fire, Police and Health. Another said she had changed her GP to the Sittingbourne Memorial Hospital although Bottom Pond Road was not under them, although friends on the other side of the road were. She pointed out that she couldn’t drive and so the surgery at Lenham was no good.

PG said that the resident should write to Helen Whately, our MP and the chair offered to do the same.

With that there was no other business. JLP proposed a vote of thanks to the chair and his recording secretary for what he does during the year as well as for the evening. With that, the meeting closed at 21:05.

**Approved at meeting on**

**26th March 2019**

**Simon Bass - Chairman**