Draft Minutes of the 128th Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill

**held in the Village Hall on Tuesday May 6th 2021**

**at 7pm**

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**Present: -** Simon Bass (chair), Jane Bass (recording secretary), Carolyn Allchin, Peter Allchin, Karen Tottle, Dan Cheema, Patrick Phillips, John Nightingale, Denise Gee, Mike Gee, Valerie Hemsley-Flint, Kate Joy, Joan Lewis, Susan Smith, V Payne,

**In attendance:-** Patrik Garten, Shellina Prendergast and John Boyd, PCSO.

**Apologies: -** Hilary Nightingale,

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

**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.

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

The Chair stood down to allow the election to take place. John Nightingale (JN) proposed and Patrick Phillips (PP) seconded the proposal that Simon Bass (SB) be chairman for the year and there being no other proposal, this was supported unanimously by the meeting.

**1b. 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 125th meeting held on 17th April 2018**

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. It was proposed that the chairman sign them as a correct record.

1. **Matters arising from previous meeting**

* **Updates** from our councillors, Patrik Garten (monthly) and Shellina Prendergast (annual) would be uploaded onto the village website
* **White Post** – the chair had attended a meeting of Hollingbourne Parish Council to discuss this, the proposed replacement being part funded by Shellina Prendergast
* **Black Post** - road makings had been updated
* **Drakes Lane** – there had been damage by off-roaders. PA would contact SP about this as KCC had spent a considerable sum on the byway. JN wanted to support efforts to maintain the byway as it should be and the KCC Rights-of-Way officer was discussing making it inaccessible to four-wheel drive vehicles. The chair would write to SP about this. PA pointed out that many places had barriers barring access except to affiliated off-road driving clubs who would be issued with keys, but would be barred from access if they were found off the byway.
* **Bottom Pond Road** - VHF raised the issue of barriers on the left-hand side which are no longer there, as well as the flooding of the road. SP asked if she had reported them to the KCC hotline. She said that not only had she reported it but she was given a job number the previous year but nothing had happened. The drain is silted up and the road floods. There is a pond at the side of the road which is deep and dangerous if anything leaves the road.
* **Salt bins** – these had been filled
* **Defibrillator** – there was no progress to report
* **Spoil from gravedigging** – this should be addressed through the work on the play area PA planned to do.

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

John Boyd (JB) was attending rather than the PCSO as he had a prior engagement. However he will feed back any questions to Dan on the Rural Task Force.

The Maidstone Neighbourhood watch website is the place to go for information on security, eg GuardCam image recording. For example you need good light on the subject to get good CCTV images – infra red triggers don’t light the subject sufficiently.

JN said crime reports are minimal – flytipping is a major issue. Maidstone are very good at picking them up but he is still reporting instances a couple of times a month. It has got worse in the last couple of years. JB said that these do get registered by the council and they prosecute offenders.

PA advised that you cannot tell how many are in a vehicle involved in flytipping and said you should not approach any vehicle involved but instead take the details from a distance.

VHF said she used 101 to report matters. There was a family storing stolen goods in the village – it was reported and the response wasn’t always appropriate.

The reporting system can be used for anonymous reporting.

JB said he won’t get the information from a report for a couple of days. However, for a crime being committed in front of you ring 999. There is a big turnover of staff in call centres, particularly 101 centres because of the stress. They may be less experienced than the 999 call handlers.

Use 101 for reporting after the fact. You can phone 999 back if eg incident is over and it can be downgraded.

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

*Flytipping*

The crime of waste tipping was a serious issue in the Borough but the MBC waste crime team had been very successful. 10 vehicles had been impounded of which three were crushed and one was waiting for a sale.

The important thing was to report it which can be done from the MBC website. It is important to note that they will only pick up from highways or within 3m of the edge. If it is in the adjacent field it is not MBC’s responsibility. They may not clear tipping from gateways unless it is adjacent to the highway.

The phone operator will use the same phone number as the website. There is also the Country eye app. Photos are uploaded with coordinates. This is a simple system for reporting incidents.

All these reports go to the Local Government ministry. They get reported and it is on this basis laws get changed (or not). They are not ‘statistics’ with no meaning but will drive change if they are sufficiently compelling. This is why it is important to report things, as well as enabling Maidstone to take action.

The MBC waste crime team, PG and other North Downs councillors have a regular meeting - all are suitably impressed with the work of the team. Local knowledge of flytipping hotspots is used to correlate with MBC reports and cameras in high risk spots.

PA reported to police a burnt-out car in Drakes Lane. Is MBC responsible? He assumed that if it was taxed, licensed and insured for driving there it would be the police but PG advised him to report it to MBC who would deal with it. PA had to move it himself in the end with a police letter. PG said abandoned vehicles are different to flytipping but to let him know if no-one is taking responsibility – eg , if it is not gone after 60 hours (it should be gone after 48 hours but sensible to allow a little leeway..

If there is a large volume of asbestos KCC may be responsible but again notify him if nothing appears to being done.

*Monthly newsletter*

Regarding his monthly newsletter, PG apologised that it hadn’t been published – he was sending it to the wrong address. SB does now receive it and will add it to the website from now on. Let PG know if you would like a personal copy emailed.

*Planning*

The egg production unit had been turned down [at the time, it was rescheduled the next day and then subsequently rejected again later in the year].

He was concerned as he knew some residents were worried about the Saywell Farm lighting and that light pollution potentially infringed AONB rules about ‘dark skys’. The lights should shine downwards and not be stronger than the movement detector timer in the arena. However, the planning committee had allowed the request.

Planning enforcement are not been keen on enforcing but do please do report any infringements on the website and let PG know of such instances, so he can see that they are followed up.

MBC councillors each have a grant of £1,000 in total and he is very happy to say that has given £160 to replace hand washing water heaters in the village hall - perhaps a defibrillator next year?

JN said that with respect to the egg farm, thanks were due to PG and SP for sterling work in keeping officials aware of the significance to the village. He added that Wormshill is at the edge of MBC and Swale – there is a major development from the Kent Science Park through to Rodmersham. There 1,000 houses planned which will have a huge impact on the AONB. MBC should be making their concerns known for impact on AONB. PG said MBC don’t normally comment on neighbouring authorities applications (unless cross border). Neighbouring authorities are Conservative whereas MBC is Liberal Democrat and this has led to communications not being as good as they could be.

The junction 5 rebuild will cause a rat run through Bredgar and Hollingbourne etc if it takes place. SP / PG have been working with Helen Whately and Highways England over this.

JN added that the AONB must be a KCC concern too. The AONB will potentially be so degraded that it is no longer worth keeping.

SP stated that Swale are supporting an 11,000 house development but once it is in the local plan it is too late – please make comments now! SP will write to HW about the train service from Sittingbourne being overfull as it is.

SP said she thinks it is better to build a garden village and that all the infrastructure should be present from the start – this would be a much better solution than 1,000 additional houses in each village which just destroys all areas.

PG will write a letter to Swale and to the AONB unit. MBC wants to extend the AONB and he will make representations.

SB said Swale does include him in planning matters. The council leader now supported the Highsted development as the favoured option. The Highways Agency had invited him to a Junction 5 planning meeting but he had had to give his apologies, but he has the slides.

VHF said that trains were full by the time they got to Sittingbourne and had written to the press about this. Allegedly the Swale leader has said that nothing is to be built near Sheldwich – where there is a motorway junction already and which he lives nearby. The station is small and the fact that a new motorway junction is needed it seems ludicrous. She cited the example of Great Easthall in Sittingbourne – there are none of the promised shops and no facilities were built although they were promised initially. Any developers should have to put the infrastructure in place first.

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

Her annual report will be available shortly. There have been enormous funding pressures on Kent County Council with savings of £650m made over the last eight years. However, they still managed to fund some essential non-statutory services – rural bus services, young persons travel passes, country parks etc.

Her election pledges included increased broadband and improving the roads. She is working on getting better mobile network coverage in the area. A far as Highways are concerned, from 2017/18 KCC have increased the spend from £70m to £89m – nearly £100m, plus £28m for Brexit road planning. They employ highways engineers, drainage engineers etc and are carrying out a pothole blitz.

Planning Infrastructure – SP voted against MBC local plan due to a lack of infrastructure etc.

Education - Primary school places are under pressure in Maidstone. And this will feed through to Secondary school. Special educational needs (SEN) numbers are growing phenomenally. KCC have a different picture to the national one.

If we let her know of any issues in Wormshill she would be pleased to take them up.

Waste – KCC will charge for commercial waste at recycling and waste centres, because cross border waste is coming from other local authorities who are already charging. Despite this, they reported no increase in the flytipping statistics from 1/4/19. If anyone sees flytipping, please report it. The policy can be reviewed if it proves necessary.

As far as reporting is concerned – flytipping, potholes and drainage report can all be done on line if you can, since it costs £10 to process each phone call. If necessary send SB details. We can track by parish.

KCC is a “corporate parent” for many looked after children eg, unaccompanied asylum seekers. If anyone interested in adoption or fostering, please get in touch.

VHF raised the issue of the school bus being stuck in snow at only 2 degrees temperature. The bus driver simply left the bus and disappeared, the children were getting cold. Others managed to get there and brought the Wormshill children back. Shouldn’t the driver be responsible? SP stated that the buses deregulated – some are commercial services and some subsidised. If there are issues, parents must report them. JL pointed out that the driver had gone to seek assistance and had not just abandoned them.

VHF said that the council tax police precept was up 14% compared with the previous year – was there no 5% cap? PG said the police and Parish Councils can set their own rate. Counties are restricted to 2.99% plus 2% social care. Matthew Scott, the Police and Crime Commissioner, is trying to get extra staff, not just to replace those leaving but in addition.

SP government cuts lots of responsibilities devolved down to town hall. VHF write to Matthew Scott with concerns.

SB pointed out that the ‘County lines’ drugs issues were elsewhere in Kent even if knife crime was less of an issue. PG agreed and said youth gangs have come down in Maidstone but rural crime is still an issue. The council is working with Police and other agencies.

JN campaigning for improved mobile reception – for example, the Ringlestone pub has no mobile reception and this is a challenge for potential incoming tenants. The broadband is generally quite acceptable however.

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.

Cups – Kate Joy brought along gardening the cups from Keith Knight. The chair would keep them until we decided what to do with them.

**8. Village hall update**

Jane Bass (JB) gave an update on village hall activities. They were responsible for maintenance, upkeep and fundraising. The trustees were her and Mike Gee and they were helped by a committee of four others and she thanked them for this. Mike and Denise Gee continued to organise 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 and a quiz and curry evening. 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 next event is the Spring Lunch on 12th May.

The AGM was next Tuesday the 21st May at 19.30 and was open to everyone. The funding priorities were the outstanding maintenance as the roof was to be repaired shortly.

They had also received funding from PG’s members grant for now water heaters in the toilets, Not only did they replace the one in the gents which was broken but they also were more environmentally friendly than the previous ones, as they only heated up water when needed. The chair thanked PG for the grant.

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.

**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 2019 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.

VHF asked about the funds to be used on a specific projects and this was still available.

PG mentioned that since last year the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had replaced s106 agreements. This covered anything over 100 square metres and was a new tax – although there were some exclusions. This amounted to £90 a square metre and MBC would pass the levy onto Parish Councils and Neighbourhood groups. SCB would follow this up with MBC.

**10. Village charities**

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 in May.

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.

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**

PG said members had learnt a lot from what went wrong in developing the last Local Plan so will take input from communities for the next update. If SCB can’t go to a forthcoming meeting it would be good to get someone else who can go.

PG said he would call in applications to object or support within timescale.

SB said there was not much in the North Downs for planning as being an AoNB it was more difficult to develop here but there would always be proposals such as the chicken farm.

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

Susan Smith (SS) said she had rung the council regarding the big road sweeping lorry coming through the village. The little one comes through but we need the big one to come from Blackpost through Bottom Pond Road to clear up general debris on the road. It is meant to be every 13 weeks but she asked when it had last come through.

SCB said the MBC website was to include the new cleaning rota – he will check what the position is.

There was a meeting of SS, PG and the local manager last year but there has not been much change since. Lesley, the new manager did a good job but she had left. He is unsure of the recruitment position but will bring the new one up if appointed.

SS added that the big lorry did come once after the meeting.

**13. Any other business**

SB said there were a few instances of garden waste being disposed of over fences / hedges onto the verge, this had been reported by VHF. This kills wild flowers and makes an unsightly persistent mess.

About half a dozen people in the village don’t have garden waste bins and a letter has been circulated and one did get a bin. PG said that this is fly-tipping and the culprit should be reported. Is there any video evidence? If you are willing to give evidence, MBC can prosecute. MBC keep the proceeds of Fixed Penalty Notices but pay fines to central government.

Fees for bins are increasing this year.

PG added that as a small local community, could we not name and shame on the website or have a community web site? This would save us all from £40 year bins.

JN said that maybe they thought they were composting and the way to go was to have a quiet word/

VHF asked if we still had subsidised compost bins? SP added that it should be on the MBC website if they are still provided.

PP mentioned the crocuses. JN had let land to be used by the Rotary Club of Sittingbourne who had given crocuses to reflect on vaccination against polio. He and four members of the village had planted them. The chair said they were much appreciated and Patrick said he would pass on thanks to them.

With that there was no other business. JN thanked the chair and his recording secretary for running the meeting and dealing with correspondence etc. With that, the meeting closed.

**Approved at meeting on**

**18th May 2021**

**Simon Bass - Chairman**