



Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Ruckinge Parish Council held on Thursday 8th June 2023 at 7.30pm in Bromley Green Hall.

Present, Councillors; S Hewison (Chairman), T Bennett, T Cliffe-Harrison, M Pepper and P Sillibourne.

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.

Also present: Cllr L Harman (ABC), and 2 residents.

296. **Apologies for absence:**

Cllr D Archer, D Robey (KCC) and P New (Neighbourhood Watch)

297. **Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

298. **Kent County Councillor's Report:**

- I have chased the Village Gateway Sign repair again.
- Please let me know if you have any more drainage issues, thinking of Bromley Green Road, and I will try and get these dealt with.
- The KCC Budget is under tremendous pressure, due to the spiralling cost of Adult Social Care, and to a lesser extent, Children's Services & Education. There is no easy answer to this in the short term. The Highway's Budget is particularly badly affected, as the condition of the roads demonstrates. KCC has, however, secured £6m for Government for potholes repairs, which is something.
- We continue with our plans to re - introduce Nuclear Power to Dungeness in the form of Small or Advanced Modular Nuclear Reactors. We have agreement in principle for a site visit by Andrew Bowie, who is the Energy Minister, and this is likely to take place over the next two months. We had a very good meeting with Natural England on site recently, as they are a key player, given the SSSI that surrounds the power stations.
- Plans to deal with the Stodmarsh issue, which is about mitigating the effects of Phosphorus and Nitrogen getting into the environment, are moving fast and are likely to involve a mixture of Wetlands, and more Tertiary Water Treatment from Southern Water, as well as some onsite treatment for some sites. This is very important, as the issue has held up the development of Allocated Sites in the Local Plans of most District Councils in Kent, and opened the door to speculative Planning Applications in unsuitable locations, which nobody wants.

- KCC has just secured agreement with HM Treasury, to take control of ringfenced funds to operate the Kent & Medway Business Fund Loan Scheme in perpetuity. This is a very successful scheme, which has helped hundreds of small businesses and created thousands of jobs right across Kent, and represents a major achievement by KCC.
- The Exit & Entry System (EES), which is planned to deal with moving between the UK and the EU, has been delayed again, and looks unlikely to be in place this year. The French have asked that if the timing slips from November 2023, then the introduction of the system should be delayed until September 2024. This is obviously likely to lead to the delays in crossing the Channel continuing.
- Operation Brock was re-introduced for the Bank Holiday. Obviously, this is not a long-term solution for the traffic and lorry problems, and one does need to be found.

299. **Neighbourhood Watch:**

See attached.

300. **Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:**

Cllr Harman reported that the new leader of the Council is the leader of the Ashford Independents who has appointed his cabinet made up of 4 Ashford Independents, 4 Greens and 1 Independent. The Council for the first time is gender balanced. A number of issues have been raised by residents from blocked drains, barking dogs and mobile phone connectivity.

301. **Public Participation:**

There were no public submissions.

302. **Minutes:**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 11th May 2023 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

303. **Chairman's Report:**

Due to work commitments it is a possibility that some future meeting dates may have to be changed. There have been a number of complaints about speeding through Bromley Green Road and a request to reduce the speed limit to 30mph. Speedwatch has been discussed in the past however it is doubtful if there are any places in Ruckinge that would be allowed on Health and Safety Grounds.

It was agreed in the first instance to ask Kent Highways to undertake a survey of the road to ascertain if there is a speed issue.

304. **Planning:**

Planning application PA/2023/0723 – Woodfield Farm, Bromley Green Road – Erection of 4 detached dwellings, together with all necessary infrastructure, following the demolition of existing buildings.

Resolved: The Parish Council object to the proposals primarily on the grounds of overdevelopment of the site.

Whilst the use of a brownfield site is welcomed the Parish Council have a number of concerns regarding the application and some of the information contained in the documentation.

With regards to the transport statement it lists a number of services however a study of the timetables for those services gives a different result. The number 2A service is shown in the transport statement as utilising the Smithfield Crossroads bus stop, whereas the Stagecoach timetable shows it following a different route. The only regular timetabled service using this stop is the 11/11A/11B which do also operate on a Saturday albeit at times that would be inappropriate for someone wishing to use the service to travel to work. The three remaining services are dedicated schools services.

The transport statement also quotes KCC parking standards incorrectly the 01/09/2021 version quotes that rural 4+ bed houses should have 3 spaces per unit and 0.2 spaces per unit for visitor parking.

It is noted from the plans that the intention is for this to be a gated development with visitors parking beside the approach driveway with no turning provision. No indication is given to the width of the approach driveway is there sufficient width for two vehicles to pass each other?

The Parish Council consider that this application does not comply with the Ashford Local Plan 2030 for a number of reasons:

Policy SP1 (a) whilst this is a brownfield site it is not easily accessible being 2.6km (a 31minute walk from the nearest public transport) (d) the plans are for a mini close behind the built form of neighbouring properties (g) there is no mix of property size in the proposals.

Policy HOU5: this is a development in the countryside and does not provide accommodation for a rural worker, is not connected to a heritage area, it is not re-use of a redundant building, it is not of exceptional quality or innovative design nor is it a replacement dwelling.

Policy TRA3(a) requires 3 parking spaces per unit and 0.2 spaces for visitors in line with KCC standards the application only provides for 2 spaces per unit.

Policy TRA4: whilst attempting to promote the local bus network the current timetable is not conducive for workers nor is a 31 minute walk to and from the bus stop.

Policy ENV3a the proposals have not taken into account the setting, scale, design and details of the vernacular buildings.

Policy ENV4 whilst the plans do not show external lighting the area benefits from dark skies and any light spill either from internal lighting or outside lights is pollution.

Policy ENV5 the development does not enhance the neighbouring ancient woodland.

Policy ENV9 whilst the plans show the inclusion of a pond in the middle of the development it also shows that an existing pond will be infilled. This area has been subject to issues with drainage during periods of rain with tankers being deployed to alleviate.

Planning application PA/2023/0910 – Rough Stocks Farm, Stonegate Lane, Ruckinge – Proposed stables and sandschool with jump store.

Resolved: to offer no objection to the application.

Planning application PA/2023/1027 – The Hollies, Bromley Green Road – Propose conversion of attached garage.

Resolved: to offer no objection to the application.

305. **Finance:**

Schedule of payments:

Clerk's salary	£456.52
Clerk's expenses	£8.10
HMRC	£96.20
Sutcliffe play	£1,522.80
Harmer & Sons	£585.60
BWP Creative	£273.60
Home Tech Electrical	£220.00

Resolved: to authorise the payment of the items in the schedule.

306. **Annual Risk Assessment:**

Report RPC/2023/01 brings to the attention of the Parish Council the findings of the annual assessment undertaken as part of the end of year preparation for the Annual Internal Audit.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report RPC/2023/01**.
2. To receive and note the **Annual Risk Assessment**.

307. **Asset Register:**

Report RPC/2023/02 brings to the Parish Council the asset register compiled from the financial records of the Parish Council which supports box 9 of the Statement of Accounts included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report RPC/2023/02**.
2. To receive and note the **asset register**.

308. **Report of the Independent Internal Auditor:**

Report RPC/2023/03 brings to the Parish Council the outcome of the Annual Internal Audit carried out by the Independent Internal Auditor as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability return.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note **Report RPC/2023/03**.
2. To receive and note the **Internal Auditor's Report**.

309. **Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023:**

Report RPC/2023/04 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require smaller authorities, each financial year, to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare an annual governance statement in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note Report RPC/2023/04
2. To determine if the Parish Council can answer “Yes” to each of the assertions in the Annual Governance Statement
3. To authorise the Chairman to sign the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

310. **Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023:**

Report RPC/2023/05 brings to the Parish Council the Accounting Statements for 2022/2023 which form Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note Report RPC/2023/05
2. To authorise the Chairman to sign the Accounting Statements at Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

311. **Certificate of exemption from External Audit:**

Report RPC/2023/06 details the criteria for the Parish Council to complete a Certificate of Exemption from External Audit.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note Report RPC/2023/06
2. To authorise the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer to sign the certificate of exemption.

312. **Bromley Green Road – drainage issues:**

Nothing to report.

313. **Ruckinge Village Hall:**

It was agreed to send a registered letter to the trustees of the former committee to ascertain the up to date position with regards to the funds remaining in the account. Depending on the response a formal complaint may be lodged with the Charity Commission and an audit into the use of the grant funding received.

314. **Bromley Green Hall / Carters Field:**

The recent quiz night was very successful in that £500 was raised for funds. Recently 12 volunteers cleared the car park of weeds and cut back the hedge.

315. **Items for future meetings:**

Councillor Sillibourne raised the subject of the byway along the canal which he regularly maintains. He asked if there were funds available to meet the cost of the materials which had risen in price dramatically.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:05pm.