

Minutes of the Monthly Council Meeting of Lower Halstow Parish Council held virtually due to Coronavirus Covid19 restrictions on Tuesday 1st December 2020

Present: Cllrs: K Howard-Challis (Chair); R Smith (Vice-Chair); T Portman; M Szabo; A Smith; E Stiles; A Groves; Mrs A Smith (Clerk); and four members of the public.

1. Apologies

An apology was received from KCC Cllr Mike Whiting; SBC Cllr Roger Clark, SBC Cllr Corrie Woodford and PCSO Lee Fennell.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest

Cllr A Smith declared a pecuniary interest in the quote regarding the allotment fencing and gate (Item 9d).

3. To agree Minutes of the Meetings held on 6th October 2020

It was resolved to agree the Minutes for the meeting held on 6th October 2020. They will be signed within social distancing rules. Proposed by Cllr A Smith and seconded by Cllr R Smith. Agreed unanimously.

4. Reports from:

a) KCC Mike Whiting: Cllr Whiting requested that the following was read from an email sent to the Clerk:

I would have said well done to John and all those involved in getting the broadband sorted. There have been a couple of battles, but the war was won!

I would have also thanked the primary school for their interest in the Plan Bee pollinator projects. I have set aside £200 to help fund their project from my member grant.

Finally, I would have said my Member Grants are now spent for the year.

b) SBC Councillors

No report.

c) PCSO

Lower Halstow Dec/2020

Information provided by: PCSO Lee Fennell, Swale CSU

Crimes of note:

- Two people seen drinking and taking drugs in a vehicle in the village during the school run. Patrols attended, but the vehicle had gone and could not be traced

- The front registration plate was apparently stolen from a vehicle parked in Curlew Drive. A crime report was taken

- A vehicle window was smashed overnight in the village near the bus stop. A ball bearing was found, indicating that a catapult or BB gun had been used. A crime report has been taken

Anti-social behaviour and other incidents of note:

- Reports of small nitrous oxide canisters (laughing gas) left at the end of Lapwing Drive, near the Brickfields, thought to have been left by youths. Patrols of the area have been increased

- A couple of reports of possible poaching/unauthorised shooting in the fields around the village have been sent to the Rural Task Force

- Suspicious activity reported involving young males in a white 2017 Ford Ranger around the area. Although there is no concrete evidence of wrongdoing, this vehicle was stopped by police recently and an information report has been submitted. If this vehicle is seen in suspicious circumstances by anyone, please could this be reported to Kent Police. I would like to wish the councillors, clerk and all Lower Halstow residents a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

d) Friends of the Brickfields.

No report.

5. Matters Arising

a) To discuss update for purchase of land at Brickfields. The Clerk had emailed the Parish Council's solicitors, but has received no response to date.

- b) To discuss hawthorn bushes overhanging car park space 5 Westfield Car Park. Some of the overhanging branches have been cut back by the resident and a quote has been received for £140 to do this work. It was proposed by Cllr Portman and seconded by Cllr Groves to accept the quote. Agreed unanimously.
 - c) Update regarding Dock Repairs. Cllr R Smith reported that three quotes have been received. The engineers recommend either urgent remedial work to repair the dock or it should be closed as it is unsafe. The Parish Council want to pursue the repair option. If funding cannot be found the dock will have to close. Mr Gransden has been advised that the berthing contract is to be cancelled with six months' notice for the essential dock repairs to take place. A bid application has been prepared for financial support. The Chair asked the Councillors for their comments regarding the closure of the dock. Cllrs A Smith, Portman and Stiles agreed that in view of the information given the docks were deemed dangerous and that there was no option but to close.
 - d) Update on Lower Halstow Gigabit Broadband. Cllr Howard-Challis expressed his thanks and appreciation, at the beginning of the meeting, to John McGee, for the success of the bid and Gigabit Broadband is now confirmed for Lower Halstow.
 - e) Update on the Planning Consultation. Any residents with questions regarding the Planning Strategy consultation should contact the Clerk. All details are on the website.
6. **To Review Financial Regulations Policy.**
- a) Amendments to the Financial Regulations Policy, based on the Kent Association of Local Councils model, were sent out to Councillors in response to the Council's decision to apply for a credit card for approval. It was proposed by Cllr R Smith and seconded by Cllr A Smith to authorise the amendments. Agreed unanimously.
7. **Finance**
- b) To consider the external auditor's report regarding the AGAR for year ended 31 March 2020. The Clerk re-iterated the comment made in the box "Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority". As a result, the Parish Council must answer "no" to assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2021/22. The Councillors were clear on the actions necessary for the accounting year.
 - c) To consider the budget for the year 2021/22. The Clerk had sent out recommendations from the Finance Committee for consideration. However, more information is expected from Swale Borough Council during December regarding tax band D for Lower Halstow. A decision will be made in January regarding the precept when the Councillors have considered all the information.
 - d) To discuss rent review for land rented to the Parish Council at Westfield Car Park. L Stevens & Sons have requested a meeting to discuss a rent review. Cllr Howard-Challis will try to arrange a meeting within Covid-19 restrictions.
8. **To discuss and agree response (if any) to the following Planning Applications:**
- a) 20/505242/FULL Proposal: Erection of rear infill extension and part conversion of garage into habitable space with external alterations: 7 Seaview Terrace, Breach Lane, Lower Halstow.
It was agreed to make no comment.
 - b) Any applications received between producing the agenda and this meeting.
None.
9. **Reports from Councillors regarding:**
- a) **BRICKFIELDS & PLANNING**
The digger is still on the Brickfields which was there to mend a broken sewer pipe and may have to remain on site, possibly until March because of issues with the high water table. The problem with the sewer pipe running through the Brickfields has been a recurring one. The Woodland Trust has given the Friends of the Brickfields 50 species of mixed trees to plant in the Brickfields and they will go in next year.
 - b) **PARKS & LEISURE**
No report.

c) **DOCKS & BARGES and CAR PARKS**

Cllrs R Smith and Stiles paid a visit to Westfield Car Park to assess how the system was working. Out of the 36 spaces there were 6 parked in the correct spaces and displaying the right permit; 1 vehicle not “legally” parked and 22 were vacant at the time. Cllr Stiles volunteered to carry on making checks at various days and times. The Clerk will supply Cllr Stiles with an excel spreadsheet containing the information to check against.

Action: Cllr Stiles

d) **FOOTPATHS HIGHWAYS LIGHTING and HEDGEROW MAINTENANCE**

A further quote will be sought for the fence and gate at the rear of the Memorial Hall Site allotments. All the hedgerows have now been cut in the village and only one resident had to be chased, this year. A large chunk of the Church wall has been knocked down. A resident confirmed that it was done by Swale Borough Councillor refuse lorry, it has been reported and will be repaired. Cllr Portman has planted two Silver Birch trees on the recreation ground and received some positive feedback from residents in the area. The Guelder roses have been planted at Westfield Car Park and this completes the hedgerow there. Cllr Portman asked for an update on the signing off of the planning regulations and Cllr A Smith had contacted the planning consultant who said this was not obligatory. Cllr Portman expressed the need to be mindful in future to always be upfront and keep within the law when presenting any future planting plans to the council.

10. Clerks Report

Payments of £125 have been received in respect of Westfield Car park.

Barclays bank have responded regarding the Parish Council's complaint and the outstanding funds of £450.00 have been transferred to Unity Trust Bank. A letter from them has been posted, but not yet received.

The Clerk has now received the forms for completion in respect of applying for a credit card.

The bank balance as of 30th November is £99773.33

The accounts were sent to the Councillors by email and the payments have been noted by the Councillors. Cllrs Howard-Challis and Szabo will authorise the payments as per the list (attached) by internet banking.

11. To consider questions received from Lower Halstow Residents

An email with photos attached, regarding a small strip of land outside Charnwood, Breach Lane was read to the meeting, which had been circulated. The Councillors thought tarmac would be the answer here. However, the land is not owned by the Parish Council. The Clerk will contact Cllr Whiting regarding this, as it seems likely that it belongs to KCC Highways.

Action: Clerk

12. Items for information only:

a) Items for the website: The Christmas Tree lights will be turned on, Saturday 5th December 2020

b) To receive agenda items for the next meeting: None.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 12th January 2021

The meeting closed at: 19:45

Payee	Description	Gross Amount £	VAT £	Cheque No/Bank Payment
Mr P Froggatt	Reimbursement for purchase of Poppy Wreath	20.00		34926619
Streetlights	Lighting Repairs Invoice 11780	49.50	8.25	194437810
PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit Invoice SB20202429	360.00	60.00	857137679
Business Stream	Water Services Invoice: 2761986/10	270.99		113259078
Mr M Szabo	Reimbursement for Zoom meeting: Invoice INV54873676	14.39	2.04	539441581

Payments –December 2020

Other payments:

29 December 2020 Standing Order

Clerk's Salary - £644.60

Date:

Signed:

**Cllr. K Howard-Challis
Chair**