

ICKHAM & WELL PARISH COUNCIL

Ordinary Parish Meeting 12th December 2016 at 7.30pm

Minutes of meeting

Present: Councillors J deGraft-Johnson (Chair), S Hipkin, P Hodges, K Richards, L Shouls, K Tatman, G Wyant; Pat Heath (clerk)

Public: 3 members of the public

2016/113 Apologies

There were none

2016/114: Declarations of Interest

Councillor Wyant, as church warden and member of the PCC, declared her non-pecuniary interest in the discussion re financing of churchyard grass cutting

2016/115: Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 21st November 2016

The minutes were signed by Councillor deGraft-Johnson as true records.

2016/116 Matters Arising

116/01: Councillor Wyant reported that she had again talked to Martin Twyman about clearing the channels in Drill Lane and had been told that he did this once a year in spring.

116/02: re 106/03 clearance of Black Hole Dyke – other parts of the Little Stour had been cleared but not BHD, although it was not too bad but did need clearing now after the sluice gate had been installed. The clerk was asked to find out the schedule of works.

116/03: Councillor deGraft-Johnson reported that the new noticeboard for the village should arrive this week and would possibly be installed by the end of the week. Permission to affix the board to the wall of her property had been given by the house owner.

2016/117 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to discuss.

2016/118 Planning Applications

There were no planning applications to discuss.

2016/119: Finance

119/01: A 2-page document detailing the possible increase in precept and requesting their opinion had been delivered to all parishioners in the preceding week. We had only received 3 responses (via email), two of which favoured the proposed 40% increase, (approximately £8-9 pa for an average house), and one which would prefer other means of funding but accepted that this increase was the only feasible way of raising the money required to supplement the CFF for the next year.

119/02: Councillor deGraft-Johnson then asked the three members of the public present at the meeting for their opinions:

- 1) As 'Devil's Advocate', raised the question of why the village should pay for the church grass cutting then proceeded to endorse the proposed precept increase as the church was an asset to the village, stating that parishioners should support the local environment and that the amount being asked was small in relation to increases in property prices.
- 2) The second speaker supported those opinions and was in favour of precept increase rather than more fund raising and asked that if any families were struggling to pay this, could they be given help?
- 3) The third member of the public also supported the proposed 40% increase and mentioned that Church Commissioners funds are used to support retired priests not Churches. He felt that visitors appreciated the well-maintained churchyard and that the village indirectly benefitted from weddings etc. He formally thanked Councillor Hipkin for his efforts and the other councillors.

119/03: The councillors were then asked for their opinions:

- 1) Councillor Tatman pointed out that the precept applied to the whole parish not just Ickham village and that the least well-off in the parish tended to rent and so were adversely affected by increase in property prices (increased rental) and some were struggling. He felt that the church should raise the necessary funds and that he was willing to help in this, but that for the following year only, the parish council should fund the grass cutting, utilising the 40% precept increase.
- 2) Councillor Wyant (declared interest) also supported the proposed 40% increase and mentioned how the grass clearing had revealed previously hidden historical tablets, and this benefitted the whole parish not just the village. There were already two fund raising

events each year and the church had only just managed to balance its books last year and would not be able to do so this year, partly due to £3k damage inflicted by Storm Katy. She mentioned that there was currently no parish vicar and that having additional members of the PCC would be useful and might help with ideas for fund raising.

- 3) Councillor Richards agreed with Councillor Tatman that the church should undertake more fund raising, or that maybe the villagers could be asked to cut the churchyard grass. In the interim, she supported the precept increase for the following year.
- 4) Councillor Shouls mentioned that the church did not get maintenance funding and supported the proposed precept increase for next year.
- 5) Councillor Hodges supported the increase as a temporary measure but did query who would do additional fund raising for the church as Councillor Wyant could not be expected to do more than she currently did. She also pointed out that, despite the parish wide distribution, we had only received 3 responses re the precept increase and that there was little support for fund raising in general.
- 6) Councillor Hipkin stated that the churchyard was an open space in the village and that he had asked Canterbury CC to consider it as such. Councillor Walker had told him that next year, we would only receive about 64% of the amount requested from CFF, but that he would argue our case for the additional cost of the churchyard grass cutting at the City Council meeting next year at which the allocations would be ratified. Councillor Hipkin was in favour of the 40% increase in precept to cover the churchyard costs next year but pointed out that in following years, the increase would be needed to supplement income and that our reserves were low. He also felt that the parish needed to find ways of funding projects outside the village, such as a bus shelter in Bramling, to achieve parity.
- 7) Councillor deGraft-Johnson, although supportive of the increase next year, stated that this matter was a parish v village issue and that the councillors should remember those with lower incomes. He felt that fund raising should be undertaken in the future.
- 8) In summary, all approved the 40% increase in precept for 2017-18.

119/04: Councillor Hipkin reported that the Council Tax Support grant that we would receive next year would be £33.91 (down from £67.82 this year) and that the following year, there would be none. He also reported that, due to decreased central funding, the Policy & Resources Committee which had met on 16th November, had recommended changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. In 2017-18, the minimum payment would be 10% (currently 5%) of

the council tax levied and the reduction would only apply to those with assets of under £6k, (currently £16k) and maximum band width property E. A scheme to help those struggling to meet the payments will be set up.

2016/120 Highways

120/01: Councillor Tatman reported that the water mains replacement had been completed.

120/02: In view of this, Councillor Tatman asked Highways to undertake the repair of the pavement from Duckpitt Cottages to Littlebourne, which had been deferred because of the mains work. He was informed that the original enquiry was flagged as “resolved with customer” so had to open a new enquiry.

120/03: There had been once accident since the last meeting (07/12/16). A car went into the back of a lorry near the bridge at Littlebourne, both travelling westwards. No further details available.

120/04: Potholes at Port Rill, Wingham Lane - flagged as ‘Work in progress’ – probably to be undertaken next year.

120/05: Interactive sign opposite Bramling House: Reported as potentially not working – under investigation.

120/06: Tarmacking along 50m stretch of A257 at Bramling. The tarmac covered all sorts of gullies and inspection hatches and still had not been removed in the 3 months since reported. Original enquiry “resolved with customer” so Councillor Tatman had to open a new enquiry. He was phoned back to say that Highways could not simply dig down to the inspection hatches as this would leave a deep hole. The BT covers had to be raised (by BT). Highways and BT are conducting a Kent wide survey to see exactly where this needs to be done on all roads.

2016/121: River Stour

Councillor Wyant reported that the river level was very low and the water table dropping, with very little danger of flooding unless there was prolonged and heavy rainfall. In answer to a question, she reported that there were adequate sand bags available, should they be needed.

2016/122 First Aid course

Councillor Richards reported that the flyer advertising the course was posted on the web and Facebook and sent to all parishioners. There were to be two courses in January – 7th and 21st - and, so far, there were 10 bookings on the 7th (maximum 12 per course) and 3 on the 21st. However, Brennan Dwyer was now unable to do the 21st and so this was to be rescheduled to the 18th February and Councillor Richards will contact those booked for the January course.

2016/123: Litter picking

123/01: Councillor Shouls reported that she and 3 other parishioners had collected about 10 kilos of rubbish on 3rd December from the roads and fields of Ickham.

123/02: The litter left opposite the pub was discussed again and suggestions on how to deal with it discussed. It was thought that much was dumped from cars parked there and that a rubbish bin placed there would not solve the problem. For Councillors' information, Councillor Shouls had taken several photos of the accumulated rubbish including bottles, takeaway food packets etc.

123/03: It was suggested that the manager could be reminded about the idea of asking staff to pick up one or two pieces of litter just on their way in to work, but acknowledged that some people may feel this is not their job. It was suggested that the pub might like to look after this area as it would improve the appearance of the pub.

123/04: Littlebourne employ a person to collect rubbish twice each week, (and do other cleaning etc.) and on average about 10 bagsful are collected each time. Councillor Hipkin noted that there was no precedent for claiming such costs under CFF.

123/05: Councillor deGraft-Johnson agreed to have an informal chat to The Duke about this problem.

2016/124 Parish contact list

There was little demand for creating an email distribution list and, although parishioners had to be informed of such matters as the precept increase, the AGM etc., this could be done via the web, or The Gazette newspaper to which Councillor Hodges contributed for Ickham village and Councillor Tatman for Bramling, or by personal contact. Councillor deGraft-Johnson will distribute the revised electoral roll list and Mrs Dixey stated that she was willing to help distribute matter, if it were necessary.

2016/125: Standing Orders

Councillor Hodges reported that she was preparing the revised Standing Orders as had been mentioned at the meeting in January 2016 (ref: 138/06) based on the 2011 version and the latest copy from NALC and that this would be presented at the next meeting. The Parish Charter Questionnaire had been sent to Canterbury CC.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

The next parish meeting is on Monday 16th January 2017 at 7.30pm