

HOTHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting, held in the Bluebell Centre, Hothfield on Wednesday 2 May 2018, at 6.30 pm

In the absence of Mr Richard Libbeter, Mr Cook proposed Mr Ian Lloyd to take the chair for the meeting, seconded by Mr Fothergill.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. There were 2 Members of the Public present, 7 Parish Councillors, and Mrs J Batt, Parish Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

An Apology for Absence was received from Parish Councillor, Mr R Libbeter and County Councillor, Mr C Simkins

2. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST PARISH MEETING

These were unanimously approved and signed by Mr Lloyd.

Proposed Mr Fothergill

Seconded Mr Howard

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising.

4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Over the last 12 months the parish council have been dealing with issues as diverse as potholes to the proposed major housing development close to Coach Drive. Following concerns raised about vehicles speeding through the village we have considered the 'speed watch' scheme as well as interactive speed signs. Because of the financial implications involved in these we have put the issue on hold as we believe there may be some traffic calming measures brought in with any development in the Station Road Coach Drive areas. We have supported ABC and other Parish Councils with the lorry parking trial on the A20 corridor, along with them we are monitoring the impact on local residents and as the trial progresses will consider the future proposals.

The main issue for the parish of Hothfield is the proposed development of land close to Coach Drive. You will be aware of the 'drop-in' meeting held in January hosted by HPC to introduce representatives from Crabtree and Crabtree who presented their initial thoughts regarding the development. Around 25 people attended the meeting and valuable feedback was given that will be taken into consideration by the developer before plans are submitted. As a parish council we are grateful to the developer for including us and our parishioners in their planning process, we look forward to working with them in the future to ensure that any development is right for our village. At this time ABC have considered a screening application from Hobbs Parker but no other plans have been submitted.

ABC have entered into the formal stage of adopting the Local Plan and consultations are currently taking place. As a parish council we will consider the results of the ABC consultations together with the outcome of the recent publication asking residents to consider the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan. As any neighbourhood plan will need to be aligned to the Local Plan we believe that it will be best to wait until we know what that plan is before we consider our response to it.

There have been some changes to the make-up of HPC in recent months. David Parker resigned his position as Chair in February and I took on the role as Chair having been Vice-Chair for the last 2 years. I myself will be resigning from the HPC following the opening of their next meeting, this is for personal reasons due to work taking up an ever-increasing amount of my time.

All of the things mentioned previously as well as countless others have been undertaken by volunteer parish councillors who give up their free time for the benefit of others with little or no recognition of the effort they put into their role. I would like to extend my thanks to them and Judith our Parish Clerk I am grateful for their support over the years and wish them the very best of luck for the future.

5. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

This was circulated and no comments received.

6. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Mr Simkins was unable to attend the meeting and sent this to the Clerk following the meeting: This year I am going to focus on three main areas which I believe are at the forefront of the minds of residents.

Bus Services

Understandably considerable concern was expressed in December following a report that KCC intended to reduce expenditure on subsidised bus services. In the event it was agreed in the KCC budget for 2018/19 that savings on this area be made of £450000 compared with the originally mooted figure of over £2m. I would stress that no reductions in subsidised bus services will be made in the Ashford District in 2018. KCC is in the process of organising meetings with Parish councils which will take place in June in an attempt to understand what Communities want for their public transport service. The emphasis will be on school children and elderly people in rural areas and proposals will encompass possible alternative delivery models for rural bus services which would replace conventional subsidised bus services. These could include a taxi style bus service linking rural communities to main line commercial routes or a community led bus service. This programme, known as 'The Big Conversation', will be followed by a Bus Summit in the early autumn.

Potholes

It is acknowledged that this is a nationwide problem, but we know that Kent with its large number of rural roads is in a particularly bad state. I am pleased to report that with the aid of £3.1m from the Department of Transport KCC is spending £8m on a pothole blitz which

started in April. I would ask you to report all potholes on the KCC website and obtain a reference number. This is the best way of helping to solve the problem.

Education

KCC has allocated 17447 school places at secondary level, an increase of 2300 in the last five years which reflects a large increase in the numbers of children going through the primary school years. There has been a large increase in 'out of county' children applying to Kent schools and this has doubled in the past five years. KCC has achieved a significant success in maintaining a high level of parental preference. 80% of children received first preference and more than 90% gained admission to one of their preferred schools. There will be new schools at Finberry and Chilmington Green and a small increase here in Charing. It is encouraging that 92% of Kent schools were rated outstanding in Ofsted inspections.

Finally, the growing trend by central government towards shifting expenditure to local councils is continuing with the Regional Support Grant being phased out by 2020. However, it has not all been bad news as KCC is one of the few counties chosen as a 100% business pilot which is worth £10m to Kent. On top of that KCC has been granted an additional Social Care Grant of just over £3m. It is worth pointing out that KCC is still owed £3.5m by central government for asylum costs incurred for the care of underage immigrants in the summer of 2015. Hopefully the lion share of this will be recovered eventually but central government is not a quick payer! From April councils were permitted to increase council tax by a further 1% with a 2% levy permitted for social care which is the fastest rising item in KCC's Budget. As a result, the KCC element of council tax has risen by 5%.

I will continue to do all I can to support your Parish Council and its residents.

7. **EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.53 pm.

Signed Date