

AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ST ALBANS CHURCH HALL, BLUE BELL HILL 22 JANUARY 2013

MINUTES*

Present: Cllrs Gledhill (Chairman), Elvy, Mrs Gadd, Green, Homewood, Smith, Tiller, Winnett, Wright

In attendance: Mrs Collier, Deputy Clerk

In attendance 7.45pm to 8.45pm - Mr Haskins, BHD Architects and 2 representatives of Barton Willmore LLP (Agents for Natural Burial Ground, Blue Bell Hill application)

15 Members of the Public

Apologies: Cllrs Balcombe, Mrs Brooks, Ms Hurley
Borough Councillors Davis, Dalton,

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AGENDA ITEM 1

131. Declarations of Interest additional to those disclosed in the Members' Register of Interests

There were no other declarations of interest additional to those listed in the Members' Register of Interests or detailed in the appropriate minutes.

AGENDA ITEM 2

132. Apologies for absence - Noted.

AGENDA ITEM 3

133. Chairman's Announcements

133.1 – The Chairman informed Members the Clerk was on compassionate leave following a family bereavement. Members recorded their sympathies.

AGENDA ITEM 4

134. Adjournment of the meeting to allow for public participation (subject to the provisions of Standing Order 29(d))

134.1 – Planning Application TM/12/03806 – Natural Burial Ground, Common Road, Blue Bell Hill

The Chairman introduced Mr Haskins, Architect and representatives of the Agents making the planning application on behalf of the applicants Commonwealth Properties and invited the public to discuss the application with them and Council Members. Plans were available at the meeting this evening and in the Parish Office. The Parish Council will be considering its response to the application on Tuesday 5 February 2013. The following points were raised by residents:

There were concerns about the legal ownership of the site. The Chairman responded the Parish Council could only consider the planning application presented to them by TMBC.

In response to residents requests for more details about actual use of the site the representative of Barton Willmore stated that the site will have two buildings, one for funeral ceremonies (to take up to 50 mourners) and one for administrative and storage needs. Burial plots will have brass markers flush to the ground and their surfaces will be scattered with wildflower seeds after burials. Fresh flowers will be allowed at the time of the burial without cellophane and will be removed after 7 days. Burial caskets must be biodegradable. Tree planting will be allowed in specific areas, not on burial plots. Individual graves will be identifiable with GPS even if not marked with brass markers.

Residents expressed their concern that Common Road is too narrow for a regular succession of funeral cars and visitors to the site. It is part of the North Downs Way regularly used by walkers and horses. The site is to near sports facilities such as the local cricket ground and riding school and regular shoots take place on nearby land all of which have traffic and parking implications.

Residents queried the ‘local’ need for this facility. The village is already home to the crematorium which is currently being expanded and on occasions causes traffic congestion when large funerals take place or on heavy visitor days such as Mothers Day.

The representative stated it was believed the catchment area for families wishing to use a ‘natural burial site’ could stretch from Greenwich to Ramsgate with particular relevance to the Medway and Maidstone population. There are other sites at Sittingbourne and Otford but neither have funeral service buildings.

The site will remain open for walkers, it will not be fenced but the agents believe that use of the land as a natural burial site will assist in preventing the ‘off road motor cyclists’ problem that has persisted in the area. Residents queried how security will be maintained on an unfenced site, the local crematorium has experienced theft of brass plaques and other issues.

Residents summarised their objections as follows:

The land itself may have been identified as suitable for a natural burial ground in appearance and catchment area but it is not fit for purpose when taking into account the access, the width and already heavy use of the approach road, the closeness to the riding school and cricket ground and local pub, the unlit road with no footways, no public toilet facilities and the overall increase in traffic entering and exiting the village.

Mr Haskins confirmed that there have been discussion with Kent Highways regarding the access road. The Agent stated that they have dealt with one other application of this type in the South East which was refused due to its location close to a listed building which housed the local primary school.

The Agent categorically denied that the application was a 'stepping stone' for further development of the site.

The Chairman thanked the application representatives for attending this evening. He thanked residents for their views and closed the discussion stating that they should also individually report their views to TMBC by e mail or letter and invited them to copy their views to the Parish Council to be taken into account when considering our response on 5th February. He also invited residents to view the plans in the Parish Office if this is more convenient than viewing on line.

Cllr Homewood (County Councillor and Borough Member for Blue Bell Hill) and Cllr Sullivan (Borough Member for Blue Bell) both stated they had listened to the views expressed this evening but were unable to comment at this stage as both are members of the TMBC Planning Committee that will make the decision on the application.

134.2 – Upper Bell Public House

Residents asked if the Parish Council had any details on the future of this site. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council had expressed its views on the demolition application with concerns at tree removal and inaccuracies on the application regarding the visibility of the site from local roads and footpaths. The Parish Council had not received any plans relating to the future of the site once demolition is completed.

Residents expressed concerns at Health and Safety aspects of the demolition taking place. Workers have been seen not wearing hard hats, tree branches have been falling into the road and underage youths have been seen driving dumper trucks and using chain saws. The Chairman advised that residents can only bring these matters to the Health and Safety Executive's attention.

Cllr Sullivan (Borough Member for BBH) stated that he has informed Kent Highways that their land (redundant slip road) has been used as part of the demolition site and trees on KH land have been removed. An Enforcement Order has been issued but this has so far not been effective. Kent Highways have further stated that if it is confirmed that trees from their land have been removed they will require replacement planting.

Cllr Sullivan will bring the fencing that has been erected to the attention of TMBC as it is causing sight issues for vehicles leaving Mill Road.

Cllr Homewood (County Councillor and Borough Member for BBH) stated that he is in regular contact with the site owner and will continue to try and establish a reasonable relationship between the owner and local residents.

Residents commented that many vulnerable residents local to the site are concerned at the noise levels, health and safety and future of the site but are nervous of publicly expressing their views.

134.3 – 5 Mill Lane

A local resident expressed his concerns at the commercial use of this property, namely the breaking up of large refrigeration units in the back garden with large vehicles accessing the site via a very narrow side entrance. Cllr Sullivan reported that TMBC Enforcement Officers have visited the site and have found no case to answer. He suggested local residents continue to be vigilant and report any further suspicious vehicle movements to him or direct to TMBC. Residents confirmed it is what is going on in the garden that causes concern, not in the house itself.

134.4 – Crematorium traffic/village exit

Residents asked if anything could be done re the timing of the traffic lights at the only exit from the village on heavy visiting days to the crematorium ie. Mothers Day. Delays of around 20 minutes can be experienced. Councillors doubted that Kent Highways would be willing to change traffic lights timings for one off days such as this but residents' concerns were noted.

The Chairman thanked residents for their attendance and reports.

AGENDA ITEM 5

135. Law and Order in the Parish

135.1 - Crime Report distributed to Members and attached at **Appendix A** to the bound copy of the minutes.

AGENDA ITEM 6

136. To confirm as a correct record and to sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 December 2012

136.1 – Appendix C – Cheque list. DD1208 Virgin Media – Amend Net figure to '£20.35'.

Subject to this amendment it was proposed by Cllr Gledhill, seconded Cllr Elvy, that these minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting and the actions proposed **agreed**.

AGENDA ITEM 7

137. Matters Arising from the previous minutes (including those which required Members' action)

There were no Matters Arising.

AGENDA ITEM 8

138. To receive the report of the County Councillor Homewood (whole Parish) and Borough Councillor (Walderslade/BBH)

138.1 – Cllr Homewood confirmed that he would be monitoring closely the situations relating to the Natural Burial Ground and Upper Bell.

138.2 – Cllr Homewood has a small amount of grant monies still available for local community projects and invited applications.

AGENDA ITEM 9

139. To receive the reports of the Borough Councillors

139.1 - Apologies and report received from **Cllr Davis (Eccles)** distributed and attached at **Appendix B** to the bound copy of these minutes.

139.2 – Cllr Sullivan (Blue Bell Hill and Walderslade)

Cllr Sullivan confirmed that he would continue to monitor closely the situations relating to the Natural Burial Ground, Upper Bell and 5 Mill Lane.

TMBC's Parking Action Plan includes double yellow lining for Papiion Grove, Catkin Close and Fernbank Rise. Tunbury Avenue has been discounted from the proposals apart from a small section opposite Saracen Heights.

TMBC are considering a request from a resident to remove double yellow lines from Laurie Grey Avenue.

Parking on the Robin Hood Lane bridge is being investigated following reports it is distracting for motorway drivers underneath.

Cllr Sullivan checked that the Council were aware of the failure of the new **BBH Christmas lights**. The Deputy Clerk confirmed they every effort had been made by the office to get the contractor to repair the lights before Christmas but unfortunately this had not happened. The Clerk is now in correspondence with the contractor. No invoices for

the work have yet been received and no payment will be made until the situation is rectified to the satisfaction of the Council.

Cllr Sullivan reported that residents were complimentary about the new **planter installations** on the central reservation. Noted.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Sullivan for his attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 10

Committee reports/minutes: to consider and adopt minutes, and to deal with any matters arising

140 – POLICY AND RESOURCES – 8 January 2013

It was proposed by Cllr Gledhill, seconded Cllr Wright, that these minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting and the actions proposed agreed. **AGREED**

Matters Arising

141.1 – Page 1, 3.2 – 2013/14 Budget & Precept confirmation

These figures were confirmed to be sent to TMBC. **Clerk**

141.2 – Page 1, 3.3 – Enhanced Fixed Rate Deposit

The Deputy Clerk stated that the Clerk has discussed this with Nat West and researched alternatives. He will make a report to FASC if he has returned to work. **Clerk**

141.3 – Page 2, 4.2 – St Peter & St Paul Aylesford Church Grant

The Vicar has expressed his thanks to the offer of a one off £1000 grant towards recent church repairs. He has also discussed with the Clerk making an application for a grant under the Hall Grant scheme and will consider this further.

141.4 – Page 3, 14. **Council Aims and Objectives** – Agreement of final draft deferred to P&R 5 February 2013. **P&R**

141.5 – Page 3, 15. **Localism Act 2012** – Recommendation to delegate to the Clerk the role of granting a dispensation on permitted statutory grounds to a member until the next election in respect of the restrictions which apply to that member at a meeting which is considering a matter in which he/she holds a disclosable pecuniary interest was **agreed**. Clerk will check all Members complete the appropriate form. **Clerk**

142 – **PLANNING** – 8 January 2013

It was proposed by Cllr Wright, seconded Cllr Elvy, that these minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting and the actions proposed agreed. **AGREED**

Matters Arising/AOB

142.1 – Page 3, 3. TMBC – Current & Future Infrastructure Provision – Final draft agreement deferred to Planning 5 February 2013. **Clerk**

AGENDA ITEM 11 - Accounts for Payment

143 – Cheque List at Appendix C

16 payments totalling £11015.30 were proposed for payment by Cllr Gledhill, seconded Cllr Elvy. **AGREED**

It was noted that cheque 09519 for £14 issued to Louise Jones has been lost and therefore cancelled. Replaced with additional £14 on cheque 9530 issued today.

AGENDA ITEM 12 - To consider any other items of correspondence/aob

144 - Available in the Parish Office:

144.1 – Water Resources in the South East – Conference in London – 13 February 2013

144.2 – TMBC Standards and Training Committee – January meeting cancelled. Next meeting 11 March 2013. Cllr Elvy aware.

AGENDA ITEM 13

145 - To consider in closed session any confidential items of business identified in the agenda items 1-12

There were no confidential items of business at this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 14 - Closure of the meeting at or before 9.30pm.

146 - There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.20pm.

* These minutes will be provisional until approved or amended at the next meeting on 19 February 2013.