

PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 20th April 2020, 7pm remote meeting via Zoom

Present	Cllrs Beveridge, Cochrane, Cruse, Driver, Grant, Lewis, Skeet and Thomas	
In Attendance	Cllrs Dawlings, Holden and Warne; C Levett, Clerk.	
	Cllr Thomas started the meeting with a few words about the passing of Gordon Reynolds and the Parish Council's condolences to the family are noted.	
Item		Action Responsibility
1. APOLOGIES	No apologies were received.	
2. STANDING ORDERS – REMOTE MEETINGS	Parish Councillors unanimously agreed the addendum to the Parish Council's Standing Orders and remote meeting protocol and procedure enabling remote meetings to be held.	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	No declarations of interest.	
4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The Parish Council minutes from the meeting held on 16 th March 2020 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting.	
5. MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ITEMS	<p>a. Benenden Village Trust Office Licence : Cllr Dawlings reported the Parish Council's thoughts back to the Trust. Further discussion regarding this has been put on hold.</p> <p>b. Parish Councillor Vacancy : There was no call for a by-election. It was unanimously agreed to postpone co-option of a new Parish Councillor during the current period.</p> <p>c. Tree Planting : Cllr Thomas had included a piece in the Village Magazine and had invited suggestions from parishioners. One request has been received for planting in Leybourne Dell.</p>	
6. COVID-19/ BENENDEN ACTION TEAM	<p>Cllr Thomas and the Clerk are in constant contact with TWBC, KCC, KALC and other bodies, and sharing information with Benenden Action Team. Information is also posted on the Parish Council website and Facebook page and on Nextdoor.</p> <p>A report from Guy Hagan, Benenden Action Team Co-ordinator, had been circulated and published on the Parish Council website, and set out the following :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parish is divided into 8 areas, each with an Area Co-ordinator. • 171 volunteers are providing support as needed – shopping, phone calls, prescription collection. • There have been two separate leaflet drops to all households. • A dedicated website www.benendenaction.co.uk providing information, updates, local supplies and links has been created. • A Food Voucher Scheme funded primarily by the Church and Community Shop has been set up. • Mental well-being is a key concern. • Particular needs of the elderly and vulnerable are being addressed. <p>The Parish Council and Borough Councillors expressed their thanks to Guy and his team for taking the lead during this crisis, and for their huge achievements and efficiency.</p> <p>Cllr Cruse advised of the lengths which volunteers are going to in order to support those with needs.</p>	
7. REPORTS BY COUNTY/BOROUGH COUNCILLORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Warne reported the following : <p>TWBC has enabled 3 remote briefing sessions for councillors since 23rd March :</p> <p>TWBC operational impact and community response On 6th April William Benson, the</p>	

Chairman..... Date.....

Page 1

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting.

CEO, outlined the council's response and the impact on the council's operations.

- Some services operating only partially.
- Council to coordinate financial support for businesses from central government.
- Local support through helpline and webpage set up. Flier to be distributed to the whole borough.
- Working with other agencies to support the around 2900 "shielded" residents in the borough.
- Assembly Hall acting as a local distribution hub.
- Flier to go out to whole borough with details of what support available.
- NHS Goodsam volunteers information coming through to council.
- Councillors advised to help support their local community's response.

TWBC Finance Briefing On 14th April Lee Colyer, the CFO, reported on the council's financial position and likely impacts, In the short term, the council is in a strong position, but is unable to claim any of the central government available for non-public sector businesses. Greg Clark has written to Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for MHCLG. The council will help residents/businesses access the business rate relief and through the council tax reduction scheme.

TWBC Planning Briefing On 17th April Stephen Baughen, Head of Planning, reported on how planning was continuing to operate.

- The Planning Department is well set up and able to continue to function remotely and is continuing to process applications.
- Turnden, Cranbrook – planning application for 160 homes submitted by Berkeley Homes, has caused much consternation over timing.
- TWBC Planning Committee and Cabinet meetings will be held remotely.

Other issues

- Increase in fly-tipping reported.
- Residents asked to refrain from bonfires, and store garden waste in gardens.
- Police report thousands of phone calls concerning complaints about people not adhering to government guidelines. Please report online.
- TWBC is keen to keep parks open, and most people are abiding by social distancing guidelines.

Cllr Thomas asked if Cllr Warne had been able to discuss the issue raised at the last meeting with the Planning Officers involved. Cllr Warne is still to follow this up.

- Cllr Dawlings reported the following :

Covid 19 Communities are all doing a quite extraordinary job in supporting the vulnerable in this very difficult time. Benenden as a community has done brilliantly and I heartily congratulate Guy Hagan and those involved in establishing the Benenden Action Team for their brilliant organisation. When I advised Guy about the TWBC letter drop to all households and thanked him for all he was doing he replied that he was humbled by the volunteer support (171 volunteers) and all he had done was to provide structure. My view is that the smaller communities find the right way to respond to a crisis and I cannot imagine a community that has done this better than ours.

TWBC is also doing what it can and what is needed to support businesses and residents throughout the Borough. The Council has had more volunteers than tasks that volunteers can help with.

Council staff are mostly working from home. A few staff have been redeployed, notably the theatre team to arrange food parcels for those in need being distributed from the Assembly Hall. The Housing team has been particularly busy accommodating the homeless and rough sleepers.

The Council's finances are strong because it has always managed to balance its budget and has some £20m of reserves. Finances, however, are now very stretched. As the billing authority TWBC collects Council Tax mostly on behalf of preceptors – KCC, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue and Parish Councils (TWBC retains just 10% of the Council Tax). For those preceptors Council Tax is the major or sole source of revenue. TWBC is obligated to pay over to those preceptors but in the current climate Council Tax is being collected much more slowly than normal and arrangements are being made to help households, causing a significant cash flow problem. The position on collection of Business Rates is worse and for Business Rates 96% of the amount billed by TWBC is collected and passed over to central government but Government has agreed that the on payment can be deferred.

TWBC's income is more reliant on fees than Council Tax, but there is now no car park revenue, no theatre income, fewer planning and licensing fees etc. The crematorium is the only income stream unaffected. Significant extra costs are also being incurred as a result of Covid 19.

TWBC is lobbying widely so that the pressure on the Council's finances is fully understood through MPs Greg Clark and Helen Grant, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. When the Council's bankers rejected the request for an overdraft to bridge the payment to preceptors in advance of collecting Council Tax I took this matter up with the new Governor of the Bank of England.

TWBC has received £24m from central government to pay over amounts of £10,000 and £25,000 to many small businesses in the Borough that have been required to close during the lockdown.

Planning The land off Hinksden Lane application was called in and statements of objection were received. The Planning Committee consented to the application to build a barn but a condition was imposed that the building could only be used in connection with the agricultural business undertaken on that plot. That at least should prevent the building being used in connection with the agricultural contracting business the applicant undertakes.

Refuse Service The Refuse and Recycling contractor is managing to continue to provide a full and essential service, except for garden waste, despite staff absences. There is also extra waste being collected as there is more food and domestic waste with residents not leaving home and more packaging from on-line deliveries.

- Cllr Holden reported the following :

- Constituency work has increased during the lockdown.
- Assurances have been sought from the Leader of the County Council regarding the provision of PPE.
- Concerns have been expressed by pre-school providers and these have been raised with the Education Minister, although there is little that KCC can do.

Both Pre-Schools in Benenden are not currently operating. The Clerk advised that no

	rent is currently being collected from Pre-School at St George's.	
8. REPORTS BY CHAIR AND PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES	Remote KALC Area Committee meetings are currently being held weekly. Cllr Thomas and the Clerk have both attended.	
9. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN	<p>The Regulation 14 Consultation is complete and all inputs received during the consultation period have been published on the NDP website.</p> <p>The NDP team, Cllrs Beveridge and Grant are now remotely amending the Regulation 14 Draft Plan. This includes assessing new sites that have come forward. Once changes have been made the 'Regulation 15 Draft Plan' will be sent for a 'health check' to expert consultants, Intelligent Plans, a government sponsored organisation, and is undertaken free of charge. They are expecting delivery of the Regulation 15 Plan and all supporting documents by 1st June. TWBC will then check it complies with planning regulations. After any further changes are made the Regulation 15 Draft Plan will be formally submitted to TWBC and from there on they take responsibility for taking the process forward.</p> <p>TWBC will publicise the plan (known as Regulation 16) for a further 6 week consultation period, giving all stakeholders a chance to study the revised plan and make representations. Once these have been given further consideration, TWBC will arrange for an independent examination to take place. This will consider whether the Plan meets basic conditions and other legal requirements. If successful at the examination stage, with modifications if necessary, TWBC will arrange for the referendum to take place.</p> <p>Locality/TWBC have advised that currently there are to be no referenda until 31 May 2021, but it has been confirmed that the NDP will carry more weight now once through the independent examination stage.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas expressed particular thanks to Cllrs Beveridge and Grant for their substantial ongoing work. Both are spending many hours a day on telephone calls, and the Parish Council agreed to reimburse costs.</p>	
10. PLANNING	<p>APPLICATIONS</p> <p>Cllr Thomas thanked Cllr Grant for her reports and background information on each planning application. A full report had been circulated and published on the Parish Council website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 00749 FULL Freshwater, Cranbrook Road. Demolition of garage and erection of Victorian style greenhouse/potting shed; addition of hardstanding; erection of brick boundary wall. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application. • 19 03536 FULL Cranden Diamonds, Cranbrook Road. Proposed research and development building - revised details concerning this application. Amended red line on the site location plan (drawing 2). The Parish Council unanimously agreed to object to this application. This amendment bears no relation to the principle of the proposed building and additional car parking being proposed on a greenfield part of the site. The Parish Council continues to object to this application and requests that it is refused on the grounds previously stated. It was agreed to ask Cllr Holden to call in this application to Committee. • 20 00670 FULL Land Adjoining Columbanus, Parkfield Crescent, Iden Green. Minor Material Amendment in Relation to 18/03282/FULL - Amendments to the window 	NT

sizes; Removal of windows to the dormers with the addition of rooflights; Removal of Juliette balconies; Removal of Masonry chimney with a replacement by stainless steel twin flue; External render change to brick; Steel post added to the corner of the storm porch and above garage on plot 2; Removal of French doors on ground floor of all houses; Slight increase in dormer size to align with the ground floor below, with reasonable internal head height and the correct wall thickness drawn in plan; Plot 3 garage moved to create two open spaces; Redesign of parking spaces; Patio areas added to the rear of each plot.; LPG gas tanks added to each dwelling; Heights of all houses have been made equal; Photovoltaic panels for solar hot water confirmed; New hedgerow added in site layout plan. **The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application.**

- **20 00708 FULL Land Adjacent To Bankside Dingledden.** Replacement of agricultural building for use as Storage & Workshops (Retrospective). **The Parish Council unanimously agreed to object to this application.** The site is ‘divorced’ from the applicant’s operational site (some 200m away) which comprises 3 large workshops/stores, and a mobile home for security purposes following numerous thefts. The new building may also invite thefts, and with that will be the requirement for a mobile home on this site for security. It makes no sense to site a workshop/store on a separate site away from the currently secure site along the lane. The application offers no justification or need for an additional workshop to carry out operations, and specifically does not offer an explanation for the spread of operations to another separate site. The Parish Council requests that TWBC seeks the opinion of its Rural Planning Consultant and Conservation Officer. Should TWBC be minded to approve this retrospective application, the Parish Council requests that two conditions are imposed: (1) that if it falls out of agricultural use within 10 years, the building should be removed, and (2) because the barn is located in a remote, rural area of the AONB and, as Benenden Parish has a dark skies policy, any proposed exterior lighting must be limited to single lights over the points of access to the barn, at low level and low wattage, and must be operated by motion sensors on short timers. Exterior lights must not be left on all night.
- **20 00871 FULL Hengist House, Rolvenden Road.** Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) of 17 02968 FULL (Conversion of loft space, front and rear extensions and conversion of garden store into annex) - Changes to rear extension. **The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application.**
- **20 00892 FULL 4 Medway Cottages Woodcock Lane.** Erection of two storey side extension and single storey rear extension. **The Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application,** but object to the proposed leaded light windows on the grounds that the style is out of keeping and character with the setting and the cottages. The extensions introduce additional windows to front and rear, those at the front will be more numerous and dominant than those existing at present, and the Parish Council requests an alternative design/style at the submission of details stage.

DECISIONS

- **20 00039 FULL Land Off Hinksden Road.** Erection of an agricultural building to be used for the storage of agricultural, equipment and machinery, and creation of a farm track. Permission granted. To note : TWBC has applied a condition regarding external lighting and details of any external lighting scheme must be submitted prior to first occupation. TWBC has also applied a condition to the approval of this

application re the use of the building for agricultural storage only. (4) The hereby approved development shall only be used for agricultural storage and only in relation to the land identified within the red site outline on the site location plan. The building shall be used for no other purpose unless approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Should the use of the hereby approved building for the purposes of agriculture cease within 10 years from the date on which the development is subsequently completed then, unless otherwise the Local Planning Authority have otherwise agreed in writing, the building must be removed from the land and the land must, so far as is practicable, be restored to its condition before the development took place, or to such condition as may have been agreed in writing between the Local Planning Authority and the land owner/developer. Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to protect the character and appearance of the countryside.

The Parish Council to be vigilant to these conditions.

- **20 00402 FULL - 1 Bishopsdale Cottages, Biddenden.** TWBC granted permission. The Parish Council had objected to this application on a number of valid grounds and will write to TWBC requesting an explanation for approval.

11. HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

The meeting on 23rd April with Fiona Paine, Highways Schemes Project Manager, to discuss the Highways Improvement Plan has been postponed.

12. RESOURCING/ FINANCE

a. **Monthly Finance**

TRANSACTIONS FROM 1st March 2020

Brought forward 71185.28

Expenditure

	Supplier	Reference	Amount
DD	John Lewis	Broadband	9.75
BACS	C Levett	Clerk's Salary	888.60
BACS	Tenterden Twilight	Public Toilets	328.00
BACS	Iden Green Pavilion	Hall Hire	28.00
BACS	Benenden Village Hall	Hall Hire	24.00
BACS	HMRC	Employer's Contributions Q4	150.14
BACS	Air Ambulance	Donation	250.00
BACS	Iden Green Pavilion	Hall Hire	14.00
BACS	Thompsett Landscaping	Grounds Maintenance	129.00
BACS	Benenden PCC	Village Magazine	1000.00
BACS	edf energy	Public Toilets	89.78
FEE	Unity Bank	Service Charges	23.40

TOTAL 2934.67

Reconciled with bank statement 028 31st March 2020 **68250.61**

April 2020 Payments for Approval

DD	John Lewis	Broadband	9.75
BACS	C Levett	Clerk's Salary	888.60
BACS	Tenterden Twilight	Public Toilets	430.13
BACS	Groundwork UK	NDP Grant Underspend	3201.52

	BACS	Castle Water	Public Toilets	114.58		
	BACS	KALC	Annual Subscription	843.07		
	BACS	TP Jones & Co	Payroll Q4	57.60		
	BACS	ACRK	Annual Subscription	80.00		
	TOTAL			5625.25		
	<p>There was an underspend on the last NDP grant. This was because the approved amount for Michael Thornton was £4,495 against £1,400 actual expenditure. This makes very difference to the predicted total spend for the NDP.</p> <p>b. Annual Audit 2019/20 Statutory audit deadlines have been extended. The publication date for final, audited, accounts for local councils will move from 30 September to 30 November 2020 and draft accounts must be approved by 31 August 2020. The date scheduled for internal audit was 4th May and has yet to be rearranged.</p> <p>c. Clerk's Appraisal Cllr Thomas to action.</p> <p>d. Parish Reserve Fund TWBC had suggested that the Parish Reserve Fund held by TWBC is handed back to the parishes. This will be divided between parishes based on the Council Tax base, and Benenden's share will be £1,227. The funds can be used for any "hardship fund" if needed or can be kept in parish reserves.</p> <p>The Parish Council unanimously agreed to accept these funds, and further confirmation is awaited from TWBC.</p> <p>At present the Food Voucher Scheme is being generously funded by the Church, Community Shop and individuals, and Parish Council funds will be made available if necessary.</p> <p>e. British Red Cross Donation Request A request from the British Red Cross had been received for a donation towards its Covid-19 response. The Parish Council unanimously agreed a donation of £150.</p>					NT
13. CORRESPONDENCE	No other correspondence.					
14. PARISHIONERS' QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flag Flying A request had been received to fly the Union Flag on 21st April for the Queen's birthday as a mark of respect and the St George's Cross on 23rd April, especially as there is no access to the Church. Parish Councillors agreed to this on this occasion. 					
13. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION/ OTHER ITEMS TO NOTE	Cllr Grant advised of some misreporting of breaches in lockdown rules.					
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	Monday 18 th May 7pm, to be confirmed.					
	The meeting closed at 8.25pm					

Clerk to the Parish Council, 20th April 2020