

Staple Parish Council

Minutes of an Ordinary Council Meeting, Wednesday 9th September 2020

7.30pm via Zoom (due to Covid 19)

Present: Cllr T Bartlett (in the Chair)
Cllr Mrs Coulson
Cllr N McCollum
Cllr G McCollum
Cllr J Kirk
Cllr R Loukes
Cllr M Conolly
Cllr S Chandler
Parish Clerk: Lisa Acarnley

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Cllr D Kirk sent his apologies.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests.

None

3. To approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 8th July 2020 and to report any matters arising therefrom not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

KCC have quoted £400 for 3 new 'Please drive carefully' signs. It was agreed to proceed with this. Clerk to contact KCC to confirm.

A letter of thanks was received from the NHS, following the donation of £25.

Thanks were extended to Rex Cadman of Barnsole House / The War & Peace Collection workshop team for repairing the broken finger-post sign. It was noted that this was the second time that they had repaired the item. (Despite them not being responsible for its breakage on either occasion)

- minutes were approved.

4. Report from District Councillor – Mike Conolly

1. Correction to my last report: The new medical school will be based in Canterbury, not Medway.

2. Planning: The government has issued new proposals aimed at speeding up the planning process and these are out for consultation. If implemented these would mean a major shake-up of the current planning process and there are also implications for the number of dwellings required over the next few years. DDC and many other councils have major concerns about these proposals, which clearly have an effect on the development of our Local Plan, and we are in touch with our MPs to seek their support.

3. Freeport: The Government, through the Treasury and the Department for Trade, is seeking to establish 10 Freeports across the UK. It is intended that these be key in levelling up the UK economy. They would become national hubs for global trade and investment in the UK. Two essential criteria are that there must be a net gain to the Treasury and that the applications are business led. DDC is actively involved in the application for an East Kent Freeport, working with the Harbour Board, Discovery Park, Eurotunnel, Manston (now that the DCO has been approved,) and KCC. This combination of enterprises, we believe, makes East Kent a ideal location and we are hopeful for a successful result.

4. Housing: DDC and the three other partners in East Kent Housing will formally take over management of each Council's housing stock on October 1st. 47 EKH staff will transfer to DDC. (We understand that Canterbury, with only a slightly higher number of homes, will be taking over 90.) This will not be a simple process. We are already seeing a decline in service levels and it will almost certainly get worse before it gets better.

5. Cable Car: the idea of a cable car from the Dover Waterfront up to the Castle has long been a gleam in the eye for DDC. A recent report from specialist consultants SCJ Alliance has provided a new impetus as it suggests a real commercial opportunity. Clearly the support of English Heritage is crucial and they are discussing the project at a senior level. A formal paper outlining the business case will go to Cabinet in the autumn. It is expected that one year would be required for planning and design and between one and two years for construction, depending on which technology is chosen.

6. The dates for the Open Golf Championship next year have been confirmed as July 11th to 18th. Work on Sandwich station has been completed and the new Travelodge at Discovery Park will open by Christmas.

7. The café at Kearsney Abbey is now open and parking arrangements have been improved.

8. The Sandwich Toll Bridge will be closed for urgent repairs from September 21st for 10 weeks.

9. A planning application has been received for a Mini Golf centre on Walmer seafront. The current pop-up version has proved very popular

Cllr Conolly also confirmed that planning permission has been granted for Preston village to build a new village hall.

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Cllr Bartlett explained that the Cafe at Kearsney Abbey is currently a pop up one, with a view to opening the main cafe at the end of the month.

Cllr Bartlett confirmed that the government has almost doubled the amount of new houses that the area needs to build and this has not been a popular decision amongst local parishes and councillors. Cllr N McCollum explained that there is also concern over local heritage sites and whether these could suffer.

Councillors will be working on getting local MPs on side and if everyone pulls together then there is more chance that the government will back down.

The final consultation is not due until Spring/winter next year.

The Winter grant is still available for organisations to apply for. Cllr G McCollum suggested that details are sent to the organisations who usually apply for funding from the Country Fayre.

KCC Members Report – Sandwich Division – September 2020

Although formal meetings do not happen in August work has continued much more intensively this year than is usual for the month, in particular towards an amended budget for the current year to come to full Council in September but also to continue the work towards re-opening some facilities and building safely with the relevant Covid-19 restrictions. Clearly this will sometimes depend on the size and configuration of buildings with some of our older buildings being more challenging.

The re-opening of further libraries, reinstatement of limited book browsing and the mobile library services are all happening, sadly this is not possible for Sandwich library yet but it is being worked on.

Work on economic recovery continues with the announcement of a new Economic Recovery Dashboard which is available on the KCC website at [Kent.gov.uk/research](https://kent.gov.uk/research), this will be a vital piece of the recovery jigsaw in Kent providing real insight and understanding of how our local economy and our business sectors are faring as we emerge from lockdown.

Details of how school transport will be managed as pupils return to school next week have been announced and can be found on the KCC website, Cabinet Member Richard Long has said that wherever possible and providing it can be done safely we would encourage pupils to walk or cycle to school, with a parent or carer if necessary which will free up much needed space on public transport. For pupils with special needs KCC has been working with Special schools directly to ensure that children with additional needs will be provided with a safe route to and from school.

Finally last Monday KCC made the very difficult but essential decision to stop receiving unaccompanied asylum seeking children from the port at Dover, because of the gravity of this decision I am repeating in full the statement that was made on the day by myself as Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Leader, I would just like to add that some media reports have been incorrect and any young people arriving on our shores have been taken directly into the care of other local authorities :

As you know over recent months we have highlighted to you and more widely through the media the crisis which faces the County Council with regards to our ability to accept and safely meet our statutory duty of care to newly arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) from Border Force at the port of Dover. It is deeply regrettable that we must advise you that KCC can no longer accept new UASC arrivals from today until a solution can be found by the Home Office to fairly distribute the children to other Local authorities.

Since the beginning of 2020 we have received over 400 UASC referrals and we now have 589 under 18 year old's in our care today. In addition to this we have 940 UASC care leavers. This compares with the level the Government has stated Kent should or could safely look after (0.07% or 231 children in Kent) and we believe there are only 1 or 2 other LAs close to or over 0.07%.

This has been fuelled in particular by arrivals by boat from France since March. In August alone we have had close to 100 arrivals. The pace and volume of arrivals is now overwhelming our service capacity.

The long term effect on our services of having such a disproportionately large cohort of UASC in Kent alone risks a cumulative and detrimental effect on the performance and safety of all of our children's social care services, particularly those for children in care and care leavers. No single authority service should be asked to take this pressure in the way that Kent has.

In May 2020, Roger, as Leader, made a direct appeal for support to the Home Secretary Priti Patel. Following this, we held several urgent discussions with Chris Philp MP, which did generate some solutions including the announcement of increased funding nationally for UASC and Care Leavers. There is no doubt that the increase of resources to KCC which will flow from the new formula will be very helpful, and is a welcome recognition of the degree to which the issue has not been addressed satisfactorily in previous years. However, the large scale increase in the numbers of UASC arriving on our shores this year, particularly during lockdown, and the failure of the National Transfer Scheme to fairly distribute the care of these young people throughout the UK, has placed an impossible strain on finite KCC social care resources such as social workers, independent reviewing officers, care workers, foster carers, accommodation and funding.

Following advice from Matt Dunkley, our Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, we have accepted that having utilised our remaining residential capacity over the weekend and this morning by taking a further 13 young people, the County Council will no longer be able to safely discharge our statutory duty to receive into our care unaccompanied minors arriving at the Port of Dover, claiming asylum and referred to us by the UK Border Force.

In making this response we have taken into account the current situation we are facing with respect to the numbers of children already in our care and we are mindful of the statutory duty we have under the Children's Act 2004, particularly for Sue as Lead Member, with regard to the provision of a minimum of standard safe and legal care to any young people to whom we are corporate parent. We will continue to review the situation and stay in contact with the Home Office and other UK local authorities for support.

This is not a position we wish to be in but is the stark reality of what is a very national problem falling purely on Kent shoulders. As we have consistently suggested to the Home Office, this situation could easily be remedied by a national solution which would see every other local authority in the UK immediately accept 2 or 3 (under 18 year-old) UASC from Kent into their care. Kent's numbers would reduce to the County Council's safe allocation as stated in the National Transfer Scheme (231 children). Only Government can make that happen.

Sue Chandler

Cllr Chandler also confirmed that more tip visits per household will be available. Drainage works at the bottom of Durlock Road have been completed but we need to wait until there is sufficient rainfall in order to confirm that the works have been fully effective.

5. To receive any updates on the Community Speedwatch and Speed Indicating Devices.

Community Speedwatch & SID Report

September 2020

Speedwatch

Since the lock-down due to the pandemic and at the request of Kent Police and Community Speedwatch we have not done any Speedwatch sessions.

Although Speedwatch has started (from June 15th) Staple group has been unable to start until we were given the green light on Sunday allowing everyone to operate a session. This is as long as we abide by the Covid rules of 2m separation and 70's plus wear masks. Good News for us ~ bad news for speeders!!!

If you have any spare time and are worried about speeding in Staple please, PLEASE, contact me. You only need to spare 1 – 2 hours in a month. If no-one comes forwards I have to assume that Staple villagers are happy with the traffic speeds through the village. This month we welcome one new member who sees speeding every day past his house on Lower Road and wanted to help ~ thanks Nigel

We will very happily accept any new volunteers who would like to see a reduction in speeds through the village. Please contact me if you want further information:- roger43@gmail.com or 01304 812306

SID report (for August)

The Street - east bound SID Stayed in same direction

85th Percentile Speed = 34.2 MPH a slight increase from June

85th Percentile Vehicles = 15,893 counts a 52% increase (increase in traffic due to road Staple/Wingham closed)

Total Vehicles = 18,698 counts

Average Speed: 27.9 MPH

Max Speed = 65.0 MPH on 02/08/2020 14:35

Lower Road Staple West SID in opposite direction

85th Percentile Speed = 34.1 MPH

85th Percentile Vehicles = 12,616 counts

Total Vehicles = 14,842 counts

Average Speed: 26.5 MPH

Max Speed = 70.0 MPH on 04/08/2020 01:25

Cllr Loukes asked Cllr Chandler if there was any update on whether we could use the post and SID at Piglet Place. Cllr Chandler will chase this up.

Cllr Loukes advised that there is one new volunteer on the Speedwatch team now who is available at weekends.

6. Update on Defibrillator and AED training

A defibrillator has been purchased by the Parish council and put up outside the village hall. Thanks were given to Cllr Loukes for coordinating this and to Cllr J Kirk and Cllr D Kirk for installing it and getting it up and running.

Cllr G McCollum suggested that perhaps a few training evenings could be arranged in the hall to ensure that as many people as possible know how to carry out basic first aid and operate the defibrillator. Numbers of people per session will have to be considered due to social distancing.

Cllr J Kirk to look in to the possibility of this and arranging someone to carry out the training.

7. Response to residents following feedback.

Councillors were concerned by the tone and potentially libellous comments from residents which have been put on facebook groups relating to the planning application in Durlock Road. They would like to make it clear that anyone with an interest in the planning application was not present during the discussions.

It was also noted that complaints seem to all be directed under the planning umbrella, whether or not they are related to this.

It was agreed to merge the two Facebook Staple accounts so that all information is in one forum.

It was suggested that it may be a good idea for the Parish Council to do a presentation which details what the Parish Council can and can't do.

8. To discuss any planning applications

- i) 20/00709 | Erection of 4no. detached dwellings, 2no. detached garages and associated parking (existing industrial unit and dwelling to be demolished) | The Lodge Fleming Road Staple CT3 1LG

This application has previously been discussed and supported. These changes are all beneficial and so the Parish Council agreed to continue to support.

An email from a resident expressed concerns over potential traffic volume during the Summerfield build.

While this is a query for the planning department, the Parish Council are aware that certain conditions and restrictions have already been put in place by the planning officers regarding the disruption of deliveries, site traffic etc. However, as the Highways department are still in the process of investigating possible traffic management options it was agreed that the parish council should inform them of its concerns and also suggest a temporary one-way traffic flow be considered.

The email also raised concerns over the mess left of the hedge by the team of clearers and pot holes in Mill Lane. The Parish have now reported the pot holes to KCC highways and Cllr Bartlett will contact the contractors Rogate to ask them to clear away any mess they have left.

9. To receive an update on any financial matters, including:

(i) Cheques for approval

Invoice from DDC 10098608 - £188.46 (Description EMPTY 2 BINS)
Vat amount for Defibrillator - £257.50
Clerk Salary - £190

All cheques approved.

10. To receive any footpath updates

Cllr Coulson confirmed there was nothing to report and no complaints have been made.

11. To receive any highways and transport update

- i) Report from Cllr Loukes regarding Shatterling road passing by Peter Ewart

Cllr R Loukes visited the property and spoke with the residents and has made a report of the issue and possible solutions.

Lynne and Peter Ewart are having a problem with HGV vehicles passing down their very narrow road which is in Shatterling on the Rusham Road along to the Nash Road. HGV vehicles are too wide and long to pass round their 90 degree bend and consequently traverse over their garden and have damaged twice this year their front garden.

It was suggested that this may be happening as not all HGVs are using the correct sat nav systems, designed especially for large vehicles.

This problem has been forwarded to KCC who are now dealing with this. Cllr S Chandler has agreed to follow this up to check it is in hand.

It was noted that there are a lot of logs being stored along Nash Road and lorries could be going there. Cllr Loukes has the following information:

This newly acquired field has been leased by the owner to the Biomass plant in Sandwich.
The site is managed by Euroforest which is a large organisation based in Carlisle but with a local manager and office.

The field is used as a temporary storage yard to feed the Biomass plant which uses up to 240,000 tons of wood per year. This wood comes from the huge areas of sustainable forests in southern and other parts of England.

Nash Rd is an overflow storage field for the limited storage at the Sandwich plant.

Once the yard is full then there will no activity for a while (probably after Christmas).

The initial lease is for 12 months but presumably can be renewed assuming field owner gives permission.

The lorries have been given specific instructions to use the Sandwich bypass and main roads and to stick to 20 mph along the narrow Nash road.

The local manager is keeping in touch with people close to the field

Euroforest contact:- Area manager Ben Manterfield 07500664563

Office

01304805070

12. To receive a Village Hall & Recreation Ground report.

Cllr J Kirk confirmed that the Parish Council are unable to hold meetings here at present, due to government guidelines. Village hall insurance does not cover the defibrillator, so the Parish Council will have to arrange this themselves. There are quite a few weeds around the shrubs. Clerk to contact garden maintenance company.

13. Any confidential items to be discussed.

None

14. Any additional correspondence as permitted by the chairman

The parish clerk has handed in notice and therefore a new clerk will need to be appointed. Cllr J Kirk to publish the advert on facebook.

The Parish Clerk would place an advert in the KALC Vacancies section.

The Parish council would very much like to thank Andrew Etchington for clearing rubbish from around the village.

15. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14th October at 7.30pm at Staple Village Hall or via Zoom. (TBC)

Mrs L Acarnley
Clerk to the Council