



# Cowden Parish Council

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MINUTES OF THE COWDEN PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
MONDAY 28 JUNE 2021  
AT COWDEN MEMORIAL HALL

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Glyn Henley, Andrew Saunders, Lorraine Millgate, Celia Berry and Stephen Boakes.

Also present: Councillor Margot McArthur (Kent County Councillor), Caroline Bizios (Parish Clerk), Jenny Chettle (member of the public) and Bill Jones (member of the public).

**Public Question Time:**

Jenny Chettle, a member of the public, requested that the spraying of weed killer be stopped along the front of properties on the High Street. Several of her plants had been sprayed and killed. This was not an activity undertaken by the Parish Council and Councillor McArthur agreed to investigate whether or not a Kent County Council department was responsible for spraying.

Jenny Chettle also stated that she does not support the cutting of grass verges and considers that they should be left to grow.

Bill Jones, a member of the public, addressed the meeting regarding the village Christmas Get-Together event which will be taking place on Saturday 1 December in the Memorial Hall. Mr Jones advised members that the sponsors who usually support this village event are unable to support the event this year and asked that the Parish Council consider donating as much as possible to support the event. He wished to stress that this was an event for the entire village community. It was agreed that Mr Jones' request would be put on the agenda at September's Parish Council for Members to consider. Councillor Berry agreed to establish what the total cost is in respect of running this event.

Councillor McArthur introduced herself to Members as the newly elected Kent County Councillor and briefed Members on her areas of involvement within the County Council.

Councillor McArthur reported that within County Hall constraints on budgets were a concern with Adult Services particularly stretched. In addition the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers through Dover has become unsupportable with the County Council having stated that it is no longer going to provide support.

Councillor McArthur also reported that she has small Members' grant fund and a special grant fund this year to support COVID recovery.

Councillor McArthur had noted that the provision of new waste bin was on the agenda and advised Members that in her capacity as a Sevenoaks District Councillor, she is a member of the Greener and Cleaner Advisory Committee and offered support to the Parish Council should assistance in this area be required.

Finally, Councillor McArthur also noted the inclusion of Aircraft Noise as an agenda item. Councillor Boakes advised that this was a regular agenda item for the Parish Council along with highways matters and the ongoing issue of potholes.

Note: The above notes do not form part of the Minutes.

## MINUTES:

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Dickins.  
(Councillor Dickins had provided apologies for absence to the Clerk by email.)

### 2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Berry declared an interest in agenda item 11 as a member of the Christmas Get-Together Event and agenda item 12 as an allotment holder.

Councillor Boakes declared an interest in agenda item 14 as a member of Cowden Parochial Church Council (CPCC).

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

**Resolved:** The Minutes from the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 4 May 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting with the following amendments:

Public Questions: Final paragraph to read: “*At the request of a member of the public, Councillor Saunders asked Councillor Dickins.....*”

### 4. Clerk’s Report

The Clerk’s Report was circulated and noted.

### 5. Highways

#### (a) Highways Report:

Highways report previously circulated and noted.

Councillor Berry reported that she had been approached by members of the public who had raised concerns regarding logs being placed on the carriageway outside Pipers Barn. The Clerk was requested to log this onto the highways fault reporting system.

### 6. Aircraft Noise

No response had been received to date to the Parish Council’s latest letter dated 15 February 2021 to Tom Tugendhat. Follow-up correspondence to be drafted.

### 7. Broadband

The Parish Council had submitted a response to the National Association of Local Councils in respect of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s call for evidence on improving broadband connectivity to very hard to reach areas.

### 8. Website Hosting Platform

The Clerk reported that Parish Council’s new website was currently unavailable. The new platform had been developed by Aubergine and the Parish Council required to upload data. However, issues had arisen whereby some of the information uploaded onto the website was not compliant with accessibility regulations. The Clerk is working with Aubergine to resolve the outstanding issues in order that the website can go live as soon as possible.

## 9. Financial Matters

### (a) Accounts for Payment:

**Resolved:** Accounts for Payment approved as set out below:

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>
Mrs C Bizios	<u>Salary Payments &amp; Expenses:</u>	
	Monthly payment 14/5/21	400.00
	Monthly payment 14/6/21	400.00
	Reconciliation payment	688.56
	Expenses	24.61
HMRC	Tax & NI	738.81
SLCC	Annual Subscription	166.00
Mr K Robertson	Internal Audit Services	92.00
Cowden Sports Association	Planning Fee – Partial Refund*	117.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2626.98</b>

\* Refund applicable as planning application received from a parish council attracts 50% reduction to standard fee. £234 originally paid to Sevenoaks District Council.

### (b) Financial Report:

Financial Report circulated and noted.

### (c) Annual Audit – 2020/2021 Financial Year:

#### (i) Report from Internal Auditor:

The report from the internal auditor has been previously circulated to Members for information and consideration. The internal auditor raised no matters of concern but advised that the Parish Council should give thought in the coming months to how it manages and reports on the level of Reserves held.

Councillor Boakes requested that the Minutes note the thanks of Members to the Clerk for the work undertaken on this year's audit.

#### (ii) Approval of Annual Governance Statement:

**Resolved:** Annual Governance Statement approved by Members and signed-off by the Chairman. Proposed by Councillor Boakes and seconded by Councillor Saunders.

#### (iii) Approval of Year-End Statement of Accounts:

**Resolved:** Year-End Statement of Accounts approved by Members and signed-off by the Chairman. Proposed by Councillor Boakes and seconded by Councillor Saunders.

#### (iv) Year-End Bank Reconciliation:

**Resolved:** Year-End Bank Reconciliation approved by Members and signed-off by Chairman.

### (d) Review of Standing Orders:

**Resolved:** The amendment to the Standing Orders to reflect changes to the planning application process approved by Members. Proposed by Councillor Boakes and seconded by Councillor Millgate.

## 10. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman – Planning Committee

**Resolved:** Councillor Saunders was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Planning Committee. Proposed by Councillor Boakes and seconded by Councillor Millgate.

**Resolved:** Councillor Boakes was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee. Proposed by Councillor Saunders and seconded by Councillor Berry.

## 11. Recreation Ground

### (a) Play Area Safety Inspection

The Clerk reported that the annual RoSPA safety inspection of the children's play area on the Recreation Ground had been booked to take place in July.

### (b) Request to Use Recreation Ground – Village “Get-Together” Event

Request received to use the Recreation Ground for a village “Get-Together” event on Sunday 15 August 2021. The applicant advised that the event would be a village picnic with a barbecue and licensed bar.

**Resolved:** Members unanimously approved the use of the Recreation Ground for a village “Get-Together” event on Sunday 15 August 2021.

### (c) Waste Bin

The metal liner from the waste bin on the Recreation Ground has been removed. The Clerk was requested to investigate the costs associated with the provision and installation of a vandal proof waste bin.

Councillors Berry and Millgate had observed that there were several areas on the boundaries of the Recreation Ground which were not being adequately mowed by Landscape Services. The Clerk to discuss this with the contract manager.

## 12. Allotments

The Clerk had been in contact with Landscape Services to make them aware that not all the work agreed to clear the allotments had been undertaken. The contract manager will visit the allotments in the coming week with a view to getting the clearing team back as soon as possible.

An allotment holder had contacted the Clerk expressing concerns in respect of vegetation spraying that had been undertaken on the newly cleared area of the allotments. The Clerk to raise the concerns expressed with Landscape Services.

The Clerk reported that the waitlist for allotment plots was reducing. There have been a number of residents who have moved and given up their plots. It was hoped that those residents remaining on the waitlist could be offered plots in the near future.

## 13. Burial Ground Matters

A request had been received to add an additional inscription on a headstone in the New Burial Ground. Inscription to read: “ Betty Holman 30 June 1926 - 4 June 2015”.

**Resolved:** Request for additional inscription approved.

## 14. Churchyard Maintenance

Councillor Boakes agreed to draft a document setting out what the Parish Council's responsibilities would be in terms of the maintenance of St Mary Magdalene Churchyard from April 2022.

Councillor Millgate advised the meeting that she believed that a contract was in place between the CPCC and a community payback scheme to maintain the Churchyard. Councillor Boakes considered any such scheme to be separate to the activities that the Parish Council has assumed responsibility for. Councillor Boakes agreed, however, to establish the status of the contract referenced by Councillor Millgate.

**15. Tree Inspection**

Councillor Berry and Councillor Millgate had undertaken the annual inspection of trees on land managed or owned by the Parish Council. There were no trees that presented any safety concerns. There were however a number of instances of overgrown vegetation which may require attention.

**16. Asset Repair and Maintenance**

The Clerk to source quotation for repairs to the broken window in the bus shelter.

**17. Correspondence Received**

Oak Tree – Old Burial Ground

A member of the public had contacted the Parish Council requesting that work be undertaken to cut back the low overhanging boughs on the Oak tree in the Old Burial Ground. This tree is the subject of a TPO. The Clerk to source to quotation for works and submit the relevant tree works application to Sevenoaks District Council.

Government Call for Evidence – Remote Meetings:

Further to changes in legislation which required local councils to resume face-to-face meetings from 6 May, the Government had issued a call for evidence requesting views from local councils in respect of the holding of virtual meetings in the future. The Clerk had provided a short response expressing the view that local councils should have the flexibility and choice to meet virtually should they wish to do so.

West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association (WKNWA):

Correspondence received from WKNWA asking the Parish Council to consider contributing towards the funds required to keep the Association running. Councillor Saunders suggested to Councillor Millgate that the inactive account of the local Association be closed with the remaining funds being donated to WKNWA.

Cowden Mews – Cricket Ball Damage:

Correspondence received from Cowden Mews Association for information advising of recent cricket ball damage to properties in the Mews was noted by Members.

Planning permission – Storage Shed:

Notification had been received from SDC that planning permission for the siting of the storage shed on the Recreation Ground had been granted.

**18. Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies**

Nothing to report.

**19. Matters for Reporting or Inclusion on Future Agenda**

Request for Grant – Christmas Get-Together Event

**20. Dates of Future Parish Council Meetings:**

Monday 13 September

Monday 8 November

Monday 13 December

Meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Chairman: ..... Date:.....