

**LAMBERHURST PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Minutes of the Meeting held 12th April 2016**

Present:

27 members of the public

The chairman, Lamberhurst Parish Council, Dr Denis Cruse (DC).

Borough Councillor Edmund Hastie (EH).

Dave Jenkins PCSO (DJ)

Chris Wheal and Nick Packham, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (CW / NP)

Neil Gunn (Environment Agency)

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all those in attendance to the meeting.

1. PRESENTATIONS

A. Chris Wheal, Volunteer, Kent Fire and Rescue Service

CW explained that there had been a change in Fire Safety Regulations in public buildings in 2005. Until then, the Fire Brigade would inspect premises and issue certificates whereas now the onus was on businesses, halls and commercial properties to take certain steps to ensure safety. CW made the following recommendations:

- The Hall Hiring Agreement should include an address and postcode in case emergency services needed to be called
- All equipment should be PAT tested
- An escape plan should be thought through and in evidence in the hall
- Users should only use fire extinguishers if they would aid escape.
- The advice is to evacuate the building via fire exits as quickly as possible, shut all doors and call the professionals. Do not try to fight the fire yourself.
- All users should familiarise themselves with the fire safety requirements of the hire agreement and with escape routes and whereabouts of fire equipment and fire exits.

Chris Hamilton, secretary of the WMH Managers Committee, reported that a fire officer had visited the hall in July 2015 and made a several safety recommendations which had since been implemented. A plan of evacuation was on the noticeboard and PAT testing done once a year. She also urged hall users to read the Hiring Agreement carefully and be aware of all the safety issues.

B. Neil Gunn, Environment Agency

NG explained that the government policy was based on economics: how much would be saved in the longer term by spending to reduce flood risk. There would be no cuts in spending on flooding this year. In Lamberhurst over £6,000 was projected for channel maintenance. Once every 10 years money was spent from the highways

budget to clear away silt under the bridge. Every 6 months an inspection took place. Parishioners should let the clerk know if they spotted something that needed doing.

NG then responded to requests to consider two aspects of flooding: firstly the feasibility of dredging and secondly a Community Resilience Plan to include an earlier warning system. It was difficult to obtain an accurate idea of how much might be dredged from the river as the river bed was very uneven. There was not a strong evidence base for dredging. The cost (see appendix 1) would be over £100,000 and to model this would cost a lot more. NG's professional opinion was that this would not achieve a great deal in terms of the money spent. In addition, Lamberhurst had already had capital funding. NG would, however, support money spent on two identified properties which had as yet no protection installed (£5,500 per property) and would work to protect the village store. The case for the Chequers was more difficult, as there were a lot of entrances for water and there were restrictions on funding for public houses.

NG then addressed the idea of the Community Resilience Plan. This involved collating information and ensuring that those at risk were given as much warning as possible of flooding. For Lamberhurst, the river gauge at Bartley Mill gave a four hour warning of flood. There were currently two online sources of information: www.riverlevels.uk and www.shoothill.com. These did not update as often as people might like. The Environment Agency was reluctant to interrogate the telemetry system more often than it did because the benefits were not considered to be sufficiently great and there were significant cost implications (see appendix 1). There was one other possible way forward in that there were currently 9 flood storage reservoirs, one of which was in the Lamberhurst area. The status of these 9 sites was currently in review because of costs but if they were retained it could be possible to obtain live river levels through this means. NG asked for patience and he would try to put something better in place if he could, within the grounds of affordability. He wished to reassure the public that there was a formal service run by well-trained, experienced professionals and that there was a system in place which worked

NG then took questions from the floor.

Q Had the river straightening carried out by Kent Highways when building the bypass along with the opening of lock gates at Goudhurst, kept flooding at bay in recent years?

A. The year 2000 flood was a 1 in 100 years event and the worst flood since had been a 1 in 30 to 40 years event. It was the difference in rainfall and not the opening and closing of the lock gate which had prevented worse flooding.

Q. Why is it necessary to pay to remove material from site when dredging. Why can it not be packed up to add height to the banks?

A. Every way of alleviating flooding in one area aggravates it in another. Embankments can send water in other directions and more costs are involved in engineering if the material is relocated on site. There is not a good ratio of cost benefit.

Q. Ample warning is key to helping householders prepare for a flood. What can be done to mitigate against storms and power loss, which prevent flood pumps from working?

A. £5,500 per household is available for protection of vulnerable properties. Individuals can contribute more if they wish to or might find funds locally through other means. NG would work with DC on a good Community Resilience Plan. He agreed that having a plan was key.

Q. Dredging has to be a solution

A. Dredging cannot be justified either technically or economically.

Q What could be the effect of work carried out at Hoathly in times of flood?

A. Defences and channel straightening there affects only fields and not dwellings. The economic effects are smaller. In some circumstances farmers are paid to receive water on their lands.

DC thanked NG for addressing the meeting and for answering questions.

Figures relating to costings discussed above are attached as appendix 1

C. Chris Hamilton. Lamberhurst Community Cinema

Chris Hamilton explained that this would be launched in the autumn and gave details of how this would work. There would be a first run / test screening on June 25th.

See appendix 2 for full details

D. Clive Stott. The Queen's Birthday Celebrations

CS explained that events would be running over the whole weekend of June 11th and 12th. It was proposed to bring forward the Duck race to coincide with this. A sewing event for the 'Wrap around the Church' project would take place on 11th and on the 12th a Royal parade, open air church service and street party with live music and entertainment. It was believed that Hook Green might be preparing its own event too. There would be associated road closures. There was a proposal to present a special coin to all the children of Fidgets and the primary school. Any further ideas would be welcomed, as would offers of help. Money raised at the event would go to the church for the stonework repair project. DC added that there was funding available for the event from KCC, TWBC and LPC.

E. Dave Jenkins PCSO

DJ gave the latest crime figures for Lamberhurst.

January 1st to December 31st 2015:

- 1 burglary
- 6 burglaries other than dwellings
- 11 thefts
- 6 thefts of motor vehicles
- 2 thefts from vehicles
- 9 incidents of criminal damage
- 4 assaults
- 1 rape
- 5 incidents of domestic violence
- 2 arrests for drug possession (not locals)

Jan 1st to date 2016:

- 1 burglary other than dwelling
- 3 thefts from motor vehicles
- 1 incident of criminal damage
- 4 assaults
- 1 incident of domestic violence

DJ agreed that the crime rate in the village was low. Asked what the detection rate was, DJ agreed to find out and let the parish know. Asked if anything had been done about drug incidents in the churchyard, DJ reported that he went there regularly but had never encountered anyone, nor had he dealt with any incidents of joyriders at

night on the A21, although he had seen reports on the system. A parishioner reported that cones and signs at the Church Road build-out appeared to be being sabotaged deliberately on a regular basis.

F. Edmund Hastie. Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillor

EH reported that he had had a meeting with residents of Hook Green to try to rationalise the speed limits in the area. His bike ride had raised more money for local projects and this year, for the first time, Goudhurst had raised more than Lamberhurst. This year he would support the Lamberhurst Community Cinema.

He reiterated that TWBC could give up to £400 for the Queen's Birthday celebrations if it matched the community's own fund raising. The money had to be spent on an event on the day.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 2015 APM

The minutes of the previous APM were approved as a true record and there were no matters arising from them.

3. INVITATION TO BOROUGH / COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND OTHER LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES TO ADDRESS THE MEETING OR GIVE THEIR REPORTS

A. News from Alex King

Borough Councillor Barry Noakes and County Councillor Alex King had sent their apologies. Alex King had sent through information on two items which were then discussed:

Access via footpath to school from Spray Hill

AK had been involved in this issue. Francis Trew, as school governor, reported that there were three possibilities and KCC were awaiting feedback from the school on how they wished to proceed. The school wished to do this in the current financial year. LPC were also asked for their views. DC suggested that FT come to the next LPC meeting (May 10th) to discuss this. A member of the public asked whether it was possible to install a sign warning vehicles that children were exiting from the footpath. It was felt that children were having to walk into the road because of the state of the ground and that a proper pathway would make this safer.

Petition about build – out at Church Road and application to review speeds on School Hill and build-out near the War Memorial

RS reported that progress was slow. The aim was to achieve slower traffic on School Hill and hedge cutting where it was needed. DC reported that AK was reviewing the situation. BU had reported the uneven road surface and had got the hedge cutting done. She would email again, explaining that the matter was raised at the APM, to discover if they were on schedule for the re-surfacing of the road.

Rural Bus Service Consultation

AK wished to draw parishioners' attention to two online consultations.

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/BusReview/consultationHome>. This consultation runs until May 15th and can be viewed and commented upon here.

Mobile Library Consultation

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraries/consultationHome> This consultation is finished but the results can be viewed here.

Council tax Increases

There was to be a 1.99% basic increase in council tax plus a 2% supplement for social care making council tax rises of 3.99% overall.

B. Julia Cruse on behalf of St Mary's Church

JC reported that £150,000 was needed for immediate repairs to the church stonework. The 'Wrap Around St. Mary's' project was a chance for the whole parish to sponsor the fabric of the church. Lots of different workshops were taking place. She showed some examples of panels already created by village groups and urged others to take part. Money would be raised by donations, maybe in memory of an individual or an event and other events would be going on to raise money, especially at the Patronal Festival weekend in July when the church would be swathed in the fabric.

C. Ron Tibbs on behalf of the Hook Green and Bayham Bowls Club

RT reported that new members were needed urgently if the club were to continue and avoid the loss of an important community asset. He urged people to go along and have a try.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

See appendix 3

5. OPEN DISCUSSION

Questions were raised on the following issues

A. The Closure of the Village Post Office

The reasons for the closure were not yet known. DC had contacted the proprietor of the shop, who said that he was in consultation with the Post Office. Should the closure prove permanent he would, if possible, install a cash dispenser and sell stamps in the shop. DC had also contacted the Post Office who confirmed temporary closure from April 5th and made him aware of a letter that was to be sent to TWBC, to Greg Clark and to the parish clerk giving official notice and contact details. Further information was therefore awaited.

B. Parking at Scotney Castle

A parishioner reported that overflow vehicles from Scotney Castle had become an issue in the village on busy bank holidays. At the Easter weekend the situation became gridlocked and dangerous, with vehicles parked down Spray Hill on both sides and up as far as the Brown Trout. The roundabout had also been blocked. The problem seemed to be that the castle had closed its overflow carpark because of bad weather. The parishioner asked that LPC investigate what the National Trust intended to do about parking over the winter months if this car park could not be used. It was suggested that recent charges for parking might also have encouraged visitors to park elsewhere.

C. Internet problems

There had been problems with Wi-Fi since Storm Katie. David Hurst - Brown encouraged parishioners to contact BT in the first instance and to email him if problems persisted.

The meeting closed at 10.22pm

