**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, VESTRY HALL ON THURSDAY 9TH AUGUST 2012**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Rook (in the Chair), Cllrs. Bunyan, Cook, Fletcher, Hazlewood, Goodchild, Hemsted, Holmes, macLachlan, North, Swann and Veitch

**APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. Bancroft, Holdom and Marley

Members who had a personal or prejudicial interest, whether direct or indirect within the meaning of Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2000, or a personal or prejudicial interest defined by the Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council’s Code of Conduct, in any of the matters appearing on the agenda were invited to declare that interest at this stage. Alternatively, personal interests can be declared at the time when the specific interest is being discussed, if a member wishes to speak on an item in which they have a personal interest.

Cllr. Rook read out the statement of interests. No interests were declared.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

55: Cllr. Francis Rook proposed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 14th June be adopted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr. North and agreed.

VISIT BY CHIEF INSPECTOR NICOLA FAULCONBRIDGE:

56: The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Nicola Faulconbridge – District Commander for Tunbridge Wells to the meeting. She stated that it was her intention to speak with all parish councils during the coming months in order to understand our concerns. She explained how she had taken over the role from Jon Bumpus who had moved over to Maidstone and informed Members that she lived on the outskirts of Bedgebury Forest – any concerns we may have matter to her – she lives here too. Chief Inspector Faulconbridge stated that she has a view from a policing perspective; things had changed significantly since she left the area in 2005 – she started her career in Tunbridge Wells and she was pleased to return here in 2012. She has to make bids for resources and coming from a rural area she has the knowledge to enable her to understand the issues to work out and prioritise staffing and resources. There has been a 20% cut overall in staffing which means that existing staff have to do 20% more. She informed Members that she is an operational manager and loves to get out in the field.

Cllr. Holmes welcomed Chief Inspector Faulconbridge to Cranbrook and mentioned that our popular Town Centre Constable operates with other rural policemen out of Tunbridge Wells and that we no longer have anyone dedicated to this area. Local intelligence could be compromised; having a Town Centre Constable was very reassuring. Chief Inspector Faulconbridge explained that the new model came into effect in November and will be reviewed; she will see whether one year on it still is the right decision to operate out of Tunbridge Wells is. Nothing will happen until after the Olympics. She recognises that local knowledge is important in the rural area where there is a not the benefit of other resources such as CCTV. Her biggest challenge is the lack of vehicles and she is investigating local sponsorship from companies to have a proper fleet of vehicles. She needs to ensure that officers have transport. Ashford Division is closing the front counter at Tenterden and she has been approached to see if their officers can work out of Cranbrook Police Station. This would be good for this area as there would be more visible officers. She stated that she had three Police Community Support Officers, including Lee Jules who was with her tonight but only one vehicle between them – there is no more money in the pot to provide another vehicle. She reiterated that she would be reviewing the situation before Christmas on whether officers would move back to Cranbrook rather than operate out of Tunbridge Wells.

Cllr. Swann asked whether there could be some guidelines for community groups holding events. He mentioned the road closure for the Jubilee Event which was applied for in March and it took till June, in fact one week before the event, before it materialised. Chief Inspector Faulconbridge informed Members that she had met with William Benson, TWBC Chief Executive and they were keen to work together to prepare some guidelines. Funding has already been secured. The legislation was changed four years ago and the responsibility went to the Borough Council with the Police only being responsible for crime and disorder. It is hoped that hard copies of the advice will also be available as well as being able to be downloaded from the website. The guidelines will be available by the end of the year and there will also be training events.

Responding to a question from Cllr. Bunyan, the Chief Inspector clarified that officers report into Tunbridge Wells and then are deployed back out into the rural area, they still have ownership of their rural area. If the officers are moved back out to Cranbrook, then the supervision will have to be moved back out as well . Cllr. Rook stated that Tunbridge Wells has the 3rd lowest crime area in the United Kingdom, road traffic accidents are the problem. Chief Inspector Faulconbridge agreed and mentioned TWITA – Tunbridge Wells is Traffic Aware – there is a huge impact when children speak to drivers to make them aware of speeding. There are also restorative road checks which educates drivers. She asked to be made aware if there are any specific areas for speed checks. There are already night time checks particularly on the A229 corridor which are crime related.

Cllr. Veitch suggested that rural crime may not always be reported. There appears to be difficulty and a lack of awareness on how to report crime and also the new 101 number. The Chief Inspector agreed stating that there was a huge under reporting problem in the rural area particularly with the elderly. There are many ways that crime can be reported and every crime and incident reported will have an attendance. She informed Members of a text number 60066 which people can store on their mobile phones, this is particularly useful for certain groups of people such as persons with learning difficulties etc. Responding to a comment from Cllr. macLachlan on the night time speed checks, she agreed that feedback needs to come back out to the community and suggested that parish council’s would be the best placed organisation to deliver that feedback.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Nicola Faulconbridge for attending and sharing information with us.

CODE OF CONDUCT/STANDING ORDERS:

57: Vice Chairman Cllr. North drew Members attention to the information circulated prior to the meeting which set out clearly the various options. Under the Localism Act 2011 the new arrangements for Member Conduct, which replace the Standards framework came into force on the 1st July 2012. Parish and Town Councils are required to adopt a Code of Conduct. There are a number of draft codes in existence and all Members were provided with copies of both the Kent Code and the Nalc version. The Kent Code has been adopted by both TWBC and Maidstone Borough and surrounding parishes have also adopted the Kent version. Cllr. North reminded Members that no changes were permissible to any of the drafts. The TWBC Standards Committee has been dissolved and the responsibilities of this Committee has been passed to the renamed Audit and Governance Committee which will now include 2 independent Members, 2 Borough Councillors and 2 Town/Parish Councillors – the latter will only need to attend if ethical issues or complaints are being heard. Cllr. Rook confirmed that he was one of the Borough Members on the Audit & Governance Committee. Cllr. North stated that all councillors would need to complete a new Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests form. These must be completed and returned within 28 days and if advice is needed, the Monitoring Officer will assist.

Cllr. North then proposed that:-

**Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council adopts the Kent Code of Conduct for Members and amend our Standing Orders accordingly.**

This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and unanimously agreed.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:

58: The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting at Sessions House, Maidstone together with the Clerk. Also at the meeting were the Chairman and Clerk of Hawkhurst Parish Council, Portfolia Holder KCC Cllr. Graham Gubbins, KCC Cllr. Roger Manning and three officers of KCC. The meeting had been called because of concerns of Hawkhurst PC on the award of the contract for the unit as Hartley Dyke to Scott Care. It appears that the Hartley Centre is not a huge success, only ten clients have signed up so far. KCC did agree to review the situation. It was stated at the meeting that the plans for Bowles Lodge are imminent. It was also stated that the PFI for the Long Field was withdrawn when the Village Green application was submitted and the funding was transferred to the Bowles Lodge site. Officers from KCC would like our help in making them aware of anyone who we feel would benefit from a day care facility. Cllr. North deplored the Village Green application and hoped that people who signed up would realize that a day care facility for our local people had been lost because of their actions.

Cllr. Rook informed Members that he had walked around Cranbrook with Cllrs. North and Veitch, and Borough Cllrs. John Cunningham and Alan McDermott to clarify some issues. We stated that we would consider taking on car parks but not rivers and he was pleased to see that any mention of culverts was not in the Borough heads of agreement letter.

The Chairman reminded Members to come forward with any ideas on the Parish Charter. He was on the working group and the next meeting is on the 4th September.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

59: Cllr. Swann gave a verbal report of the meeting held prior to Full Council. He reminded Members that everyone is equally responsible in the finances of the Council and to this end a payments list will be circulated to all Members prior to the Council Meeting. He reminded Members to submit reports and articles to the Clerk for the September Newsletter.

PLANNING & PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT:

60: Cllr. Bunyan informed Members that there had been three meetings and she referred specifically to the application for the redevelopment of the former Sissinghurst Primary School. The Committee accepted that the site would be redeveloped but had major concerns on the design and bulk of some of the units. With regard to the exception site in Common Road, Sissinghurst the feedback following the exhibition showed that we had 29 responses, 21 for which included 8 for but with some reservations and 2 against. Concerns included car parking and sewerage.

Responding to a question from Cllr. Swann, Cllr. macLachlan confirmed that Borough Councillor John Smith had already called the Primary School application into the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

BURIALS & PROPERTIES COMMITTEE:

61: Cllr. Hemsted referred to the report of the meeting held on the 24th July and drew Member’s attention to 05/12. The Regulations will be changed to include that solar lights/lanterns will not be permissible in our burial grounds. He recommended to Members to visit the Vestry Hall and view the new floor.

Cllr. Hemsted then proposed that the report be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. Bunyan and agreed. Cllr. Holmes enquired on progress to find sites for benches and cycle racks. Cllr. Hemsted confirmed that he had walked around the town centre with the Clerk and a possible site for a bench had been identified but when the property owner was contacted we received a negative response. Perhaps parishioners could come up with some suggestions. Cllr. Goodchild stated that he was pleased to see the new fencing still intact in the lower corner of St. Dunstan’s where the shortcut had been fenced off.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:

62: Cllr. Holmes invited Cllr. Fletcher to give an update on Broadband. Cllr. Fletcher confirmed that he was being chased by TWBC for evidence. Cllr. macLachlan had offered to cover Sissinghurst. Responding to comments from Cllrs. Bunyan, macLachlan and Swann on the amounts of £100 and £30 respectively which would need to be paid, Cllr. Fletcher confirmed that people needed to be made aware of what they were paying for and he used the example of the old dial up versus broadband. He confirmed that 30 sign ups per box would be needed to make it financially viable. He also confirmed that people need to be aware that in order to get to the 2nd stage we need to get through the 1st stage. He stated that the information was very slow in coming out to parishioners and responding to a question from Cllr. Bunyan he confirmed that 4 boxes will receive and upgrade but there will still be 5 that still need to be upgraded.

Cllr. Holmes referred to the report of the meeting held on the 3rd July and item 04/12 (c) Rural buses. The Sunday No. 5 service has been extended for six months when it will be reviewed – loadings are quite good so hopefully Arriva may wish to continue without the subsidy. He referred to the Welcome card which had been circulated and invited Cllr. Goodchild to comment. He explained that the QR pad would scan into the appropriate Parish website page. Cllr. Bunyan commended the Card which she felt was a brilliant idea.

Responding to a question from Cllr. macLachlan, Cllr. Holmes confirmed that a meeting of the Tourism Forum had gone ahead and a new chairman had been elected. He then proposed that the report be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. Veitch and agreed.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE:

63: Cllr. Veitch referred to the heads of agreement relating to car parks which had been circulated. This issue would be discussed at an extra meeting of the Committee which had been scheduled for the 14th August and to which any Member could attend. This is the first formal document from the Borough Council and we are not yet in a position to seek legal advice and she is anticipating changes. The Chairman referred to the plans for the alternatives to the humps in Waterloo Road which are on display in the Information Centre. These will also be discussed at the meeting on the 14th.

Cllr. Veitch then proposed that the reports of the two meetings held on the 19th June and the 23rd July be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr. North and agreed.

Cllr. Rook speaking as a Borough Councillor reported that at a recent meeting Cllr. Scholes had stated that all the car parks needed to be self-financing and that Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council has shown the way on how negotiations should be conducted.

CRANBROOK CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

64: Cllr. Bunyan stated that neither she nor Cllr. Swann had attended the recent meeting. Cllr. Fletcher referred to the comments made on Major Clarkes House and he was concerned that we might lose the opportunity for older person’s homes. Cllr. Bunyan confirmed that the planning application had been withdrawn.

KALC:

65: Cllr. Fletcher stated that there had been no recent meeting.

ACTION WITH COMMUNITIES IN RURAL KENT:

66: Cllr. Fletcher drew Member’s attention to the third page of the Newsletter and the item that £17.5m community right to build funding announcement.

CLERKS REPORT:

67: The Clerk reported on a letter which had been received from John and Ann Gurr which unfortunately informed the Parish Council that they would no longer be able to manage the Farmers’ Market. Their last market would be the Christmas Market. Cllr. North thanked Mr. & Mrs. Gurr for all their help and asked that a formal letter of thanks be sent.

CORRESPONDENCE:

68: There was nothing to report.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

69: Cllr. Rook informed Members that the Cranbrook Music Festival was being held on the 8th and 9th September.

70: Cllr. Rook reminded Members that they needed a passport photo and a short biography for inclusion on the website.

71: Cllr. macLachlan gave an update on the Village Shop in Sissinghurst and the new local contract issues between any new owner and the Post Office which could cause concerns. This new local contract is a national scheme and is already causing problems at Staplehurst. The post office has to be open at all times that the shop is open.

72: Cllr. Bunyan asked the Clerk for an update of The Bull Public House. The Clerk confirmed that she had received an e mail from the Regional Manager on Monday which stated that they were close to a sign up for major reinvestment to enable the public house to re-open. The Clerk had also requested that the hedge be cut and Enterprise Inns had contracted this out to be done and she was pleased to report that this had now been carried out.

73: Cllr. Cook reported that he and Cllr. Veitch had attended a meeting regarding the Catherine Elizabeth Wood Charity and they are looking for applicants under the age of 21 to apply for books or equipment for training. He has inserted an article for the September Newsletter.

74: Cllr. Fletcher stated that he had spoken with a gentleman from Kent Highways who had informed him that the Transportation Department of KCC was the department responsible for signage for lorries in Waterloo Road.

75: Cllr. Hemsted reported that the Sissinghurst Fete would be held as usual on August Bank Holiday Monday.

76: Borough Councillor Rook informed Members that he had recently visited the Camber Wind Farm together with other Borough Councillors and it was surprisingly quiet.