

Minutes of a meeting of Bilsington Parish Council held at Bilsington Village Hall on Wednesday 16th February 2022 at 7.30pm.

Present: Councillors; S Hudson (Chairman), M Bilham, L Lawson and R Thompson.

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.

858. Apologies for absence:

Cllr S Carrington, Borough Councillor L Harman, County Councillor D Robey.

859. Declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

860. Minutes:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st December 2021 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

861. Neighbourhood Watch:

See attached.

862. Ashford Borough Councillor's Report:

I want to share the news that the Council and developer, Milligan are actively seeking interested parties to repurpose the town's former Odeon cinema. You may be aware that there has been continued lobbying to retain this building both directly to the Council and via social media. The Council has been exploring various options for some time.

Our town is undergoing a revival driven by changing community needs and younger and more diverse population. The building itself, which was also previously the Mecca Bingo hall, was opened in 1936 and designed by Andrew Mather, who was responsible for designing many of the other Odeon cinemas across the UK.

The plan is to retain and renovate the front of the building facing the High Street to create an active entrance and frontage to the Lower High Street. The rear of the building which houses the old auditorium will be demolished and replaced by a new extension that provides a modern, flexible space from which there will be enhanced views to the iconic Grade I listed St Mary's Church.

On another topic, some of you may have seen that I had an exchange with KCC Highways regarding the number of bollards that have been put in place along Brockman's Lane. This is technically not in Saxon Shore, but it is an issue upon which many residents have commented so I will be keeping an eye on developments. I am told the installation is temporary due to the soft verges.

863. Kent County Councillor's Report:

- The KCC Budget for 2022 - 23 and a Draft 2022 - 2025 Medium Term Financial Plan, was approved by the KCC Full Council, on 10th February, at an eight-hour meeting, and although things are going to be very tight next year, this represents a very good result, which will enable us to continue to provide services to residents.

- The Government has asked Local Authorities, at all levels, to come up with ideas for how more powers could be devolved from Whitehall and given to groupings of Local Authorities, to enable better delivery of various services, within 'sensible geographical areas'. The budgets would go with the powers. This is called a 'County Deal' and KCC is working with Kent District Councils and Medway to try and flesh out what this might mean for Kent. This is tied up with the 'Levelling -Up' agenda, and we are studying what this means, now that the White Paper has been published.
- KCC is also in the process of producing a new Strategic Plan. The last plan was produced in March 2020, but could not be implemented, as COVID became the main priority, and an interim plan was produced in December 2020. However, as we move out of COVID and back to normal, a new Strategic Plan is required, and the intention is to have this in place by mid - 2022. It is obviously connected with the 'County Deal' work referred to above.
- The online booking system for Kent Household Waste Recycling Centres will become permanent and will soon include the ability to make same day bookings, which has been trialled in two of the centres and will now be rolled out to the rest. This is in response to the Public Consultation, in which same day booking was the biggest improvement that people wanted, by a huge margin. Overall, the new system has resulted in a service that is better for residents, more cost effective for KCC, better for road safety, since queuing is eliminated, better for KCC staff, who have more time to help residents, as well as increasing the amount of material that is being recycled.
- The latest round of the Early Help Grant has resulted in £54k being allocated to a number of organisations across the Borough. Following final checks, letters went out to the successful applicants on 14th February.
- KCC has done some work on the drains locally, which I think has resulted in some improvement, but please let me know if you need anything else.

864. Planning:

21/02184/AS New House Farm, Ashford Road – Single storey front extension.

Resolved: The Parish Council supports the application.

865. Finance:

Schedule of payments:

Staff costs December 2021 £371.29

Staff costs January 2022 £352.51

Resolved: To authorise payment of the items in the schedule of payments.

866. Flagpole:

The Flagpole has been delivered and Councillors Bilham, Hudson and Thompson will arrange installation at a location agreed with the village hall. At the same time the Parish Council litter bin will be removed from its location .

867. Highways:

It has not been possible to obtain an update from Kent Highways on the Highways Improvement Plan due to staff annual leave. The drain in Newchurch Road is still blocked, the Clerk to take forward with the County Councillor.

868. Village Hall:

Cllr Bilham gave an update as to the current financial position of the village hall. The recent wine tasting proved to be very profitable, unfortunately the February quiz had to be cancelled due to lack of support.

869. Platinum Jubilee Events:

Councillors will meet with the Village Hall committee to arrange events.

870. Queen's Green Canopy:

To thank Her Majesty for her service and celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, Ashford Borough Council is aiming to plant one tree representing each resident who will be living in the borough in 2022. This will be almost 135,500 trees planted over the next three years. This is also a fantastic opportunity to increase opportunities to sequester carbon in the longer term and beyond. This is an opportunity to support the Borough Council as a green pioneer, increase biodiversity and enhance the local environment, improve the health and wellbeing of residents and enjoyment of local areas.

In order to support this exciting project, Parish Councils are invited to apply for trees and hedging plants to plant within their own parish areas. Each Parish Council can apply for as many trees or hedging plants that the proposed site can accommodate, it is a requirement that the Parish Council own the land that is to be planted or have the legal landowner's permission in writing. Application can be made for more than one planting site, however, a separate application is required for each.

As part of the application process an overview is required of where the planting is to take place, what is hoped to be achieved from the planting and how the Parish Council plan to maintain the trees once they are planted to ensure the project is sustainable and aligned to the Borough Council's green pioneer objectives. So if the plan is to make a small woodland for local interest, providing shelter for a popular seating area or want to plant a hedgerow to improve a site's biodiversity, this is an opportunity to tell the Borough Council how the parish plan to enhance the local environment and improve local people's health and wellbeing. Trees have many benefits, they benefit people's health and wellbeing, they benefit the environment, they enhance biodiversity, they strengthen communities and have been shown to benefit local economies, by planting the right trees in the right places for the right reasons, it is possible to achieve so much more than just sequestering carbon.

All trees and hedging will be native species sourced through the UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown (UKISG) Assurance Scheme which is consistent with maintaining very high standards of biosecurity and biodiversity. All plants will vary in size depending on species, but will be approximately 60 – 80 cm.

Trees will be delivered to successful Parish Councils by Aspire Landscape Management for planting in December 2022.

Resolved: Whilst agreeing with the scheme as the Parish Council owns no land it was agreed not to proceed.

871. Future Meeting Dates:

May 5th 2022 followed by the Annual Parish Meeting

June 30th 2022

September 29th 2022

December 1st 2022

February 23rd 2023 all meetings to commence at 6.30pm

872. Other items for information:

None

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm