

Minutes of the 123rd MEOPHAM Annual Parish Meeting
held on Tuesday 16th May 2017, at 7.30 pm
at the St Johns Centre, Wrotham Road, Meopham.

In the Chair:

Cllr S Buchanan, Chairman, Meopham Parish Council.

Also Present:

Cllr Craske and his wife (Mayor of Gravesham), County Cllr B Sweetland, Borough Cllrs L Boycott, J Burgoyne and D Shelbrooke, 10 members of Meopham Parish Council, M Cason, Community Warden and representatives of local organisations, other invited guests, electors and members of the public.

Invited speaker: Mr Stuart Alford, Assistant Manager Gravesham Borough Council

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the following:- Cllrs J McTavish and D Powell (Meopham PC), Borough Cllr J Cubitt, A Holloway (MP), E. Bugg (Hasler Bursary), Dr J Tretheway, C Barnes, PCSO J Hartley, A Kneif, R Blake and D Fairweather (Meopham Historical Society), Rev A Davie, (St Johns), R Doughty (Culverstone Primary School), R Nicolson (Meopham Community Academy), J Fuller (WI), J Roper (Culverstone Community Centre)

2. Chairman's Welcome to guests, electors, members of the public and the Press

The Chairman welcomed the Mayor of Gravesham along with other distinguished guests and parishioners of Meopham.

3. Minutes of the previous (122nd) Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the 122nd Annual Parish Meeting held on 17th May 2016 were confirmed as a true record.

4. To invite the following to address the meeting:

The Mayor of Gravesham on the role of the Mayor

Cllr Craske addressed the meeting regarding the history of the Mayor and explained the current role of the Mayor.

County Councillor

Cllr Sweetland informed the meeting that he had just been re-elected as the KCC representative for Meopham. He talked about the KCC budgets and the range of things that it provides. This is the sixth year that KCC have had to make budget cuts and it is continually challenging. As a KCC member, Cllr Sweetland is able to provide grants in the area for projects, such as the village halls. He also mentioned the new library in Meopham, due to open at the end of June.

Borough Councillors

Cllr Burgoyne addressed the meeting to talk about Gravesham Borough Council budget cuts and how it needs to look at increasing its income. GBC has recently purchased three properties which has increased the income by around 6 to 7 percent. GBC are looking at how they do things to see if they can be done more efficiently. The proposed closure of the Pitfield Green toilets was mentioned.

Question: what properties did GBC purchase?

Cllr Shelbrooke spoke on this, informing the meeting that GBC purchased an office block in Gillingham and Dartford and 10 industrial units.

5. Presentation by Stuart Alford, Assistant Director (Environment) for Gravesham Borough Council, on changes to the Waste and Recycling Service coming into effect in June 2017 in Meopham

A presentation was given on the new waste and recycling service that is coming in to effect next month. This is a follow on from phase I, started in 2012. Central government has allocated 4.9 million to allow councils to make the changes in order to improve their recycling rates which for the Gravesham area was at 25%. This has now gone up to 34.5%. Eleven new refuse vehicles have been purchased, a weekly food collection was introduced and a wheelie bin for recycling, fortnightly. GBC have a statutory duty to collect the waste and KCC has a statutory duty to dispose of the waste.

In phase II, the following will be introduced: recycling will be collected one week and general waste the next. Food waste will continue to be collected weekly. Another wheelie bin is being introduced, only for people already with bins, for residual waste to replace the black sacks. Extra bins can be provided for recycling and food but not for extra residual waste.

75% of local authorities across the country now provide alternating collections and GBC are just catching up.

The roll out starts on 5th June 2017 and will take about 4 weeks to deliver all the bins. Information and updates will be available on GBC's website and social media sites. The public should start using their bins as soon as they get them. They will also get a calendar with the collection dates.

Questions were taken from the meeting on this agenda item:-

Q. Why is everyone getting such big bins?

A. 180L bin is standard. Larger 240L will be available for larger families. GBC will be looking into the option of residents purchasing smaller bins.

Q. If the disposal costs go up, will this make the service more expensive?

A. KCC would have to find the budget savings elsewhere. GBC are in a long term agreement with KCC for the disposal for 15 years.

Q. Are the refuse lorries able to take all sizes of the bins?

A. Yes

Q. Concern was raised about bins being left in the middle of the pavement after collection.

A. Staff are briefed on this. If residents experience problems with this, inform GBC and they will speak to the staff on this.

Q. Concern was raised regarding packaging from supermarkets that cannot always be recycled.

A. KCC and the Districts Councils are working on this to understand the packaging. Rubbish is a resource and can be reused. Some packaging is required around food safety and some is to make it attractive. Everyone is trying to work towards a more sustainable market on this.

Q. Why don't GBC aim to make money from the recycling?

A. You need to have the infrastructure in place to do this and it also depends on commodity prices. The recycling market can be volatile.

Q. Is waste being used to create electricity?

A. Yes residual waste is.

Q. Is there more money from residual waste than recycling?

A. No, as GBC do not get the money back

Q. The excellent service in street cleansing /fly tipping collection in Gravesend was noted but the service was not so good in the rural areas. Why is this?

A. GBC have a duty to clear issues in the town quicker than in rural areas but they do try to respond quickly.

Q. Concern about fly tipping in the rural areas was raised, especially in Harvel which has seen an increase.

A. GBC has zero tolerance on fly tipping and has adopted a fixed penalty notice on this. Fly tipping is on the increase and is a national problem. GBC is working with Medway City Council on this, investigating and dealing with the culprits where they can.

Q. Can we not open up waste centre sites in a way to make it easier for people?

A. Legally waste centres cannot accept commercial waste. GBC are looking to offer a household clearance service in addition to its bulky waste service. It is up to residents to check that anyone taking away their waste has a waste carrier's license.

Q. Some councils collect glass. If you don't drive, how do you recycle glass?

A. GBC decided not to collect glass as it costs too much money to sort. Supermarkets have the bottle banks so it is ideal to dispose when you are next shopping.

6. Questions from the Public

Before questions from the public, the Chairman thanked fellow councillors and the office staff for their work over the last year.

At a public meeting earlier this year, parking issues were one of the main issues in the parish. The council has been putting pressure on GBC parking enforcements to patrol the area. It has also set up a working group with the aim for people to take responsibility to park safely and respectfully. The council is currently working on a parking campaign with the local schools.

The Parish Community Plan is underway to create a Parish Plan. A survey will be coming out soon.

Parishioners were asked to complete the survey form on every chair regarding the future of the Pitfield Green toilets.

The Chairman informed parishioners that another Picnic on the Green event would be held on 13th August.

The Chairman reported that the following question had been raised with a parish councillor prior to this meeting. Why do Istead Rise not have to pay a precept but have the same level of service from GBC? The Chairman informed members of the precept for Meopham for the coming year, the precept amounts for band D for the other parishes in the Gravesham area for comparison and listed some of the responsibilities of Meopham Parish Council which the precept covers.

The Chairman invited questions from the public:-

Q. A resident felt there were issues with the greens in Meopham, particularly the cutting and the weeds compared to other areas in Gravesham.

A. The Chairman advised that the greens are currently cut by GBC and we would take this up with them. It is important for residents to contact the parish council office with any issues in the parish so we can deal with them appropriately.

Q. A resident asked for an update on Judson's Pavilion and also wanted to thank Cllrs Powell and Wade for their efforts on this project in the past.

A. The Chairman reported that the Judson's Committee were currently looking into funding options for the project.

Q. Has anything further happened with regard to the 2014 call for sites for building? There was mention of merging Culverstone with Vigo and Meopham with Sole Street?

A. Cllr Burgoyne advised that there is a review of the Local Plan which is ongoing. There is not any merger planned. There is a big shortage of housing and the local plan will be out for consultation in November. All relevant documents for this must be in place by 2020.

A resident thanked the Parish Council for all the work that it does for the parish.

Q. How does the Parish Council communicate with younger people in the parish?
Would a youth officer on the council be considered?

A. The parish council is looking at engaging more with the community and would be open to any ideas on how to do this.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor of Gravesham, guests and parishioners, for attending the 123rd Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting closed at 08.55pm.

DRAFT