

# Bethersden Parish Council

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## **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 in Bethersden Village Hall at 1800hrs.**

### **Appendix A**

Borough Councillor report.

### **146/2024 Present**

Cllrs A Boyd (Chairman), E Allan, K Brannan, P Buss, J Crannis, K Mitchell, M Peters and C Tearle (Parish Clerk) plus 7 members of the public.

### **147/2024 Apologies**

Cllrs A Jordan, C Simkins (KCC) and A Pickering (ABC)

### **148/2024 Community Land Trust Presentation (CLT)**

Cllr M Elgar from Shepherdswell with Coldred Parish Council and Chris Gabriel gave a detailed presentation on how it went about achieving its objectives to build housing for local people.

It was not easy, with many problems to overcome Top of the list was the need to prove a housing need in the first place. (A current Housing Needs Survey). The second problem was finding a landowner that would sell land for affordable housing, which would be below the commercial price for building land and be a Rural Exception Site. In the end this proved to be the Church Commissioners. This process took over 10 years to accomplish with many sites being looked at. Financial support was received from the Parish Council which continues to this day and a grant was received from Dover District Council to assist in its initial set-up.

English Rural Housing Association are the developers and are about the only housing association involved in this type of scheme. They purchased the land and then leased it back to the CLT on a 999 year lease. It's the local CLT that own the freehold of the land and administer the scheme locally. Having a CLT gives access to grant funding which is not available to local councils. It was English Rural which put the case for the project together and created its viability.

It is important that the CLT is independent of the Parish Council and that any land purchase is sponsored by the local CLT.

Under a follow-up discussion, it was recognized that a number of pieces of land within the Parish may potentially be appropriate for the Parish Council to `facilitate discussions` regarding future development, where the principles of the CLT work in Shepherdswell may be relevant, including land that previously came to light through the work undertaken as part of the Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan.

Finally it was resolved to agree that the Parish Council should seek to commission an up to date local affordable Housing Assessment at the earliest opportunity.

### **149/2024    Declarations of Interest**

Cllr M Peters -DPI Min No:160/2024 as his wife is the Treasurer.

Cllrs E Allan, A Boyd, K Brannan, P Light, k Mitchell (shareholders), M Peters (financial contribution)– OSI Min No:160/2024.

### **150/2024    Minutes of the Meeting of the 9th October 2024**

It was resolved to approve and sign these.

### **151/2024    Election of a Parish Councillor by Co-option.**

After a brief discussion, as a CV from the candidate had been sent out in advance of the meeting, it was resolved to elect Phillip Light to be a councillor for the rest of this term of office. He then took his place on the council and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### **152/2024    Chairman`s Report**

The Hoads Wood debacle appears, at last, to be moving forward to a solution, the contractor to do the job has been selected and work contracted out by the EA.

Residents have had to suffer foul smells throughout the summer and autumn but, in the meantime, that the EA have agreed to attend along with other stake holders a public meeting to explain the situation and solutions. This will be held at 5pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 at the Village Hall.

I attended an interview with ITV regards Hoads Wood progress.

Nothing has been heard from the Ashford Wanderers football club since agreement to use the Bethersden Pitch and pavilion was agreed subject to conditions.

Tracey Laws is again organising the VE day celebrations in May 2025 with the parish council - these are proceeding. She proposes live entertainment. Help as always will be appreciated nearer the time

Councillor Mike Peters has been elected Vice Chairman of the Bethersden Parish Council and is very supportive especially regards planning matters. He heads up a working group in relation to the upgrading and replacement items on the Mill Road playground. He is also forming a working group with Cllr Brannan regards the updating of the 2003 village plan.

Councillor Philip Buss has received his British Empire Medal for which we congratulate him and express our thanks to him on behalf of the community for the great works he has done, over his whole life, for the parish of Bethersden.

Nothing further to report regarding the ABC call for development sites.

Cars are still being parked opposite the school and close to the Wissenden Lane junction on the inside sharp bend causing danger to through traffic, cars are also being parked on the street opposite the Mill Road junction on the inside bend and, again a danger to through traffic.

ABC lost the appeal by the developers Hodson's on Chilmington development against the council for its planning refusal for the waste water plant on Chilmington. The emphasis was expressed in the inspectors report to enable the recommencement of development and occupation of houses on the estate. The original discharges were to go through the Bybrook works and the treated water into the river Stour. The discharge has nitrogen and phosphate levels that breach current water content and are causing pollution of Stodmarsh, the building of the proposed waste water plant has been granted, but not the discharges, the actual discharges and content, have not yet been determined by the EA. If the liquid discharge is permitted it will dump treated waste water polluted with nitrogen and phosphates from washing machines and dish washers into the river Beult also. If that waste water is unacceptable in the river Stour and their solution is to pollute the river Beult flowing through Bethersden instead is unacceptable.

The Parish Council presented a verbal statement of support for the Stevensons Site development subject to four formal conditions, one of which was that no or minimal detrimental effect would be suffered by the neighbouring properties and another that Bethersden Parish Council shall be consulted regards the qualification of the applicant occupiers and that applicants are properly related to the Parish of Bethersden. That the Sec. 106 payments should be apportioned between High Halden and to the Bethersden Parishes.

The Parish Council attended and laid a wreath on behalf of the Bethersden Community at the Parish remembrance service in Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

Concern has been expressed by a member of the community regards notifications of progress regards planning applications.

The recent private fireworks party in the George field has caused concerns for local pet owners in the village. In granting permission, it was required by the council that the organiser notified the neighbours of the event and carried out a risk assessment. However, it has been suggested that no contact details of the organiser were given on the notification. Also, that the event started before the time on the notification, it was professionally organised with large commercial fireworks rather than the small family affair expected. I understand other people enjoyed the display.

The Vice Chairman and myself will be attending a "Parish Seminar" at KCC sessions House Maidstone on 20<sup>th</sup> November where I hope we will get some answers regards the speed control, uses of the A28 and other highways matters.

The car dumped in Whiston Drive has at last been removed after extensive representations from the parish council.

It was reported that following representation from the parish council that the Bull Stables on the A28 should have a restoration order placed on them by ABC to rectify the destruction to the building and return its original state. It was reported that a planning application had subsequently been made for the building, but no record of this appears on the ABC website. It is now an eyesore and must be put right. It could become a traffic hazard for traffic on the A28.

## **153/2024 Parish Clerk's Report**

Nothing has been heard of from Ashford Wanderers FC since the last meeting.

## 154/2024 Planning

### a) To consider the following applications

**PA/2024/1808**-Court Lodge, Church Hill, Bethersden, TN26 3AQ

Listed building consent for superstructure repairs to areas of external brickwork, Internal brickwork, plasterwork, timber skirtings and mouldings.

It was resolved to send the following response:

***We have no objections to the principle of this proposal, subject to requesting that the Borough Council ensures that the precise details, as set out in the submitted application documents (e.g. finishing materials and any other external finishes, including painted finishes) are made the subject of appropriately worded planning conditions, and that the details of the scheme are then strictly adhered to in the implementation of any consent that is granted. This is in the interests of safeguarding the integrity, character and appearance of this important listed building in the village and within this part of the Conservation Area.***

**PA/2024/1959**-The George Inn, The Street, Bethersden, TN26 3AG

Installation of kitchen flue (retrospective).

It was resolved to send the following response:

***In view of the Parish Council's long-standing support within the local community for pursuing the purchase of The George Inn PH, and returning it to its former self as a valuable local community asset, we have decided that we should decline on making any planning or listed building applications affecting the property at this juncture. As a result, we will be content on this occasion for ABC to decide the current planning application (ref PA/2024/1959) without any comments or input from ourselves.***

**PA/2024/1929**-Vine Fm Office, Woodchurch Rd, Bethersden, TN26 3JY

Proposed self-build dwelling.

*Cllr A Boyd declared a DPI because of business connections to the applicant and left the meeting.*

It was resolved to send the following response.

**As a matter of principle, we wish to make clear that we support local farms and local farmers and recognise both as a crucial part our local (and national) economy. In the context of this current planning application this includes our willingness to support the principle of the applicant's family wish to live in close proximity to their agricultural place of work. However, we recognise that in discharging its planning responsibilities, there are key planning issues that we believe need to be dealt with by the Borough Council before the grant of planning permission for the proposed development can be contemplated.**

**First, we consider that ABC should thoroughly examine whether sufficient evidence has been submitted to support the essential need to accommodate a rural/agricultural worker in a new/separate residential unit on the site.**

**If the Council does not have the relevant expertise in-house to undertake this detailed examination, then appropriate expert advice should be sought to examine, inter alia:-**

- the evidence to show that the farming business is sustainable and has a sound financial basis that will continue into the foreseeable future,
- the justification for requiring the new, *additional* dwelling unit on the application site,

- and demonstrating that the agricultural need cannot be met by accommodation already on the application site or elsewhere close by.

Secondly, if the “essential need” case is made, then we would expect a planning condition to be placed on any permission to limit the accommodation solely for occupation by a bone-fide agricultural worker(s) (and their immediate family/dependants).

Insofar as the details of the submitted application are concerned, we are satisfied that the proposed dwelling (with annexe) is reasonably modest in scale and design in this relatively open countryside setting, and also reasonably well located in relation to other structures/buildings at this site. Nevertheless, we would not object if an alternative location were to be negotiated by the Council that enabled the proposed dwelling to be even more closely related to the existing group of buildings on this site, in order to create a greater sense of a tighter grouping of buildings in this rural location.

#### b) Stevenson`s Site (PA/2022/3072)

A prepared letter was read out by Cllr K Brannan about the above site with regard to the planning process at ABC who asked for it to be sent to various `interested` parties The full letter may be seen at appendix B

#### 155/2024 Future Section 106 Monies

This report sets out the Bethersden Parish Council’s list of “top six priorities”, *if and when* any Section 106 financial planning contributions are delivered as part of new housing development within the Parish in the next two year period (Jan 2025 – December 2027). This list has evolved from the original “long list” (that was circulated and discussed at the end of the July meeting of the Parish Council ),and subsequently refined.

The priorities are as follows:-

1. Modernise/upgrade/enhancement of Village Hall
2. Modernise/upgrade/enhancement of childrens play area
3. Modernise/upgrade/enhancement of pavilion at Recreation Ground
4. Investment in ground and land management issues (for land within ownership of the Parish Council), including any relevant drainage/flooding issues
5. Investment in burial grounds

It is important to continue to recognise that we cannot expect to resolve *all* local issues through S106 monies, and that any payments we may request/receive (via ABC) can only be in “scale and kind” to the development itself.

It is recognised that, by virtue of the controlling planning regulations, S106 monies generally cannot be used to “rectify an existing problem”. However, it is believed that requests for future S106 monies to “modernise/enhance local facilities” etc, are open to us to make to ABC.

The actual sums of any S106 contributions will also of course, significantly depend on (i) the numbers of houses that may be built within the Parish in due course and (ii) whether ABC decide to include the Parish in any distribution exercise.

It was resolved to recommend the following:

- (i) that the Parish Council formally notes and agrees the five “top priorities” listed above, pursuant to any Section 106 financial planning contributions that may be forthcoming in the next two year period, and
- (ii) that the list is formally sent to Ashford Borough Council at an appropriate opportunity (with a suitably worded covering letter of explanation).
- (iii) To commence a process to produce approximate costings for each of the above top five priorities at the earliest opportunity.

**156/2024 Christmas Tree**

Approval was given should it be necessary to purchase a tree for erection in the churchyard.

**157/2024 Bethersden Design Statement**

It was resolved to renew and refresh this with Cllrs M Peters and K Brannan leading on the project. The original was completed in 2003.

**158/2024 Hoads Wood Progress Update**

Members were briefed on the recent release of information from the EA and the forthcoming meeting in the village hall.

**159/2024 River Beult**

A request has been made for some funding. Cllr M Peters suggested a £500 donation. Members will revisit this next month.

**160/2024 Bethersden Village Hall**

The Parish Council discussed the request for financial assistance sent to us on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The P/Clerk has been asked to write to the Village Hall treasurer for their current financial position, and to ask what other funding organisations have been approached.

**161/2024 VE Day Celebrations**

Members were sympathetic to the funding request, but wished to know if there would be any further requests ahead of setting the budget for next year.

## 162/2024 Finance

a) It was resolved to approve the schedule of payments and balances  
30<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Lloyds Bank – Treasurers Account	65,080.67
Lloyds Bank – George Field Account	8990.95
Co-op Bank	21,128.01
<b>Income</b>	
Bethersden Tennis Club	399.00
Bank Interest	7.38
<b>Expenditure</b>	
C Tearle (Salary & Expenses)	1,741.20
HMRC PAYE	1,165.38
Countrywide Grnds Maint Ltd – 600630 & 601069	639.60
Chris Buckman	120.00
Bethersden Village Hall (BVH – 2024-181 & 176)	56.00
Leo Lyons Digital (9102)	270.00
Scottish Water Rec Pavilion	45.08
Information Commissions Office (ICO)	40.00

A review of the budget setting for 2025/26 and the associated Parish Council Precept was deferred until the December meeting.

## 163/2024 Date of the Next Meeting

This will be on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 1900hrs in Bethersden Village Hall.

## 164/2024 Exclusion of the Public

It was resolved to exclude the public and the press from the meeting for the following item of business by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

## 165/2024 Playground Working Party Report

### REPAIR AND REPAINT FOUR EXISTING ITEMS IN THE PLAYGROUND

<u>Description of work</u>	<u>SafePlay</u>	<u>Sovereign</u>	<u>Kompan</u>
Cost to repair/repaint <b>SHELTER</b>			
Cost to repair/repaint <b>SLIDE</b>			
Cost to repair/repaint <b>SEE-SAW</b>			
Cost to repair/repaint <b>TUBULAR ROUNDABOUT</b>			
<b>TOTALS</b>			

All sums/prices exclude VAT

NOTE 1 – in addition to Sovereign’s figure, they would wish to add a sum for safety fencing for the duration of the contract. SafePlay have stated that safety fencing is included in their prices.

NOTE 2 - on the basis of the above, SafePlay offers a quote that is £xxx better value than Sovereign and includes safety fencing within its prices.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:-

1. that we seek references for Safeplay before placing an order for the repair and repaint of the four existing items referred to above.
2. if references are positive, that we proceed to place an order with Safeplay to undertake the required “repair and repaint” work
3. that we proceed to seek a quotation from Sovereign to install seven new items of play equipment (in place of some of the existing items) which will enable a comparison with the quote already received from Safeplay

As previously reported, the finished playground we are aiming for would provide us with:-

- four repaired/repainted items (shelter, slide, tubular roundabout and see-saw);
- seven new items of play equipment dotted throughout the playground area (to replace our badly worn items) – **NOTE** - quote already received from Safeplay;
- the retention of two existing items that do not require any changes (green roundabout and spring ride) + our new timber park seat;
- full resurfacing of the entire playground area – NOTE – quote already received from Safeplay

plus, appropriate fencing with suitable “self-closing” gates around the hard surfaced play area (recently added/as and when funds are forthcoming in the future).

It was moved and seconded that the above three recommendations be agreed.

#### **166/2024 Attenuation Tank**

It was resolved to see if there were any obstructions to the proposed redirection of the water from the ditch at the bottom of the George Field into the surface water pipe in the access road to George Grove, before it went into and under the George Grove access road culvert.

#### **167/2024 Public Notice Board**

To delegated to the Chairman and Parish Clerk the task of acquiring a new notice board and arranging for its installation.



## **Appendix A**

### **Borough Councillor Report**

J Blanford ABC

ABC is to start moving its offices W/C 25 Nov. The Possingham Fm. site has gone to appeal because ABC refused the application, and she is pleased that the Stevenson`s site was approved.

For the new ABC Local Plan there is a need for 29 gypsy sites. Cllr J Blanford is now the new shadow planning chairman.

With reference to the Stevenson`s planning site, she will check the original S106 agreement as this parish appears not to receive any benefit from it.

Cllr Blanford was asked to check the status of two recent retrospective planning applications at Bulls Bridge Fm, Ashford Rd, and potten Fm, Bull Lane to check if further applications are expected to be forthcoming, or if ABC are moving forward with enforcement action. She has asked for details to be sent to her by the Clerk.

## **Appendix B**

To the Chief Executive and Leader of Ashford Borough Council (copied to Katie Lam MP)

Following the Planning Committee Meeting on Wednesday 6th November, may we formally register our serious concern regarding the process adopted to determine application reference number PA/2022/3072: the redevelopment proposal of Stevenson Bros Workshop site off the A28 in Bethersden that gave approval to a planning application submitted on 6th December 2022.

During the period of some 23 months during which this application was being considered there was very sparse communication from the Planning Department regarding the progress or development of the proposal for this site or indeed any material changes to the application details in the intervening period. This is also true of the larger development proposal at High Halden which it had apparently been decided internally was to serve as the "host" for the development at Bethersden.

Not only was this an unusual interpretation of The Ashford Local Plan policy but when it came to the consideration of both applications at the same meeting, the Bethersden application was considered after the High Halden scheme had been fully discussed and approved. This approval was given without due reference to the Bethersden scheme which had been clearly stated as being the necessary pre requirement for the High Halden scheme to be permitted, despite its notable shortcomings in terms of the very numerous material planning issues raised by neighbouring properties concerning the adverse impact on their homes.

The consequence of this was that insufficient consideration was given to the negative impacts of the Bethersden scheme on its Conservation Area, the immediate scale and relationship to the 4 adjacent listed buildings, and the overpowering impact on the welfare and amenity of neighbouring residents.

We have as a result received understandable and fully justifiable complaints from local residents on the process adopted by your Council in the determination of this application. We are therefore bound to ask you to respond to the following main matters of concern:

1. Why was an updated Planning Application accepted by the Council on the 8th March 2024 including formal notification to other owners of the site without any change to the status of the application or public acknowledgement?
2. Why was the Certificate of Ownership Notice served on the 8th March when declared on the 7th? If this certificate of ownership is found to have been mishandled or incorrectly served, we submit that the application is likely to be invalidated in law. Consequently, we believe this needs to be very closely checked (and responded to) for obvious reasons.
3. Why was this updated application dated as being signed on the 22nd Dec 2022, when it was received on 8th March 2024?
4. Why were invitations not issued to attend the Planning Committee Meeting to previous respondents to the original planning application, to enable them to speak against the application if they so wished?
5. Why is the site, with the benefit of consent being “gifted” to Ashford?