

**MINUTES OF THE CHIDDINGSTONE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 22ND JUNE 2021 AT 7.30PM IN CHIDDINGSTONE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr J. Roper (Chairman), Cllr A. Baker, Cllr C. Bishop, Cllr P. Harris, Cllr M. Quirk
Apologies: Cllr P. Myers, Cllr B. Taylor and Cllr H. Williams and District Cllr J. Osborne-Jackson
In attendance: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk) and District Cllr S. Coleman. County Cllr M. McArthur attended the Open Session only. Alison Thompson from English Rural Housing Association attended the Open Session only via zoom.

Open Session

1. To welcome Alison Thompson from English Rural Housing Association and hear update regarding the Chiddingstone Affordable Housing scheme

Cllr Roper welcomed Alison Thompson from ERHA, who attended the meeting via zoom. Alison gave some background to the Chiddingstone scheme as a reminder. In 2015 the Parish Council undertook a Housing Needs Survey, which identified a need for affordable housing in the parish. The Parish Council formed a working group and invited ERHA to work with the Parish Council to find a site. A long list of sites was drawn up and the working group and Alison looked at 20 or so sites, the majority of which were discounted, and a short list of 3 sites was agreed. These were (i) land adjacent to Bassetts in Chiddingstone Causeway (ii) land to the rear of Chequers in Bough Beech, and (iii) land opposite The Rock in Chiddingstone Causeway. The Parish Council held a public consultation event in Chiddingstone Village Hall and there was a good turnout and residents were able to vote for their preferred scheme. The Parish Council wanted to spread the provision of affordable housing across the parish and so members decided to move forward with all three schemes. Negotiations with the owner of the land opposite The Rock tailed off but the other two schemes moved forward quickly.

The Parish Council held a consultation event on the site adjacent to Bassetts on 12th February 2020 in the Causeway Hall and there was a lot of support for the scheme including people who wanted to put their name down on the list for one of the units. The progress has stalled due to Kent Highways not accepting the Manual for Streets guidance for the visibility splay at the access. It is hoped that the Parish Council's application for a Traffic Regulation Order will be successful and the speed limit reduced, which will allow a shorter visibility splay.

The site to the rear of Chequers in Bough Beech is progressing and ERHA has agreed terms with the landowner and signed an option agreement. Currently some ecology work is being undertaken and the architect is preparing a draft scheme. The proposal is for 8 units of affordable houses and 3 units of open market housing. ERHA would like to have an early public consultation event in order to allow residents to view the scheme and give their views of the design of the units. Due to Covid restrictions it has been difficult to hold open public consultation events, but ERHA has successfully carried out an online consultation event in another village and this worked really well. Residents will be able to view the proposed scheme and also register their interest for one of the units. It may also be possible to have an in-person consultation event later in the year if required. Then ERHA hope to be in a position to submit a planning application in the autumn. There are a few reptiles on the site that need a new home and this is being given consideration. The site will have a private treatment plant. The footpath that crosses the site does not correspond with the definitive footpath map and this also needs some consideration. Members supported the proposal to hold an online consultation event and the Clerk undertook to advertise this widely. Alison said that the consultation will run on its own website and she will provide details as soon as it is prepared, hopefully launching the consultation on 12th July. The plans will develop including drainage and transport strategies. Full funding for the scheme is available.

Cllr Harris asked whether Kent Highways are happy with the access at the Chequers site? Alison said that the access is currently used by the offices at the site and so there should be no problem with access, but a transport scheme will be drawn up.

Cllr Quirk asked about the concern raised by the residents of the house at the access. Alison said that the residents already reverse onto the access and have done so for many years. The landowner has offered an in and an out driveway for these residents which has been declined to date, but the offer is still on the table.

Cllr Roper thanked Alison very much for attending the meeting. Alison left the meeting at 7.50pm.

2. Presentation of the 2021 Chiddingstone Community Award
Cllr Roper presented the 2021 Community Award to Sue Coleman for her organisation of the Chiddingstone Volunteer Group during the Coronavirus Pandemic, which was a lifeline for many residents in the parish and much appreciated by Chiddingstone Parish Council.

3. Report by County Cllr McArthur
County Cllr McArthur said that she has been a Town or District Councillor for the last ten years, but used to work at KCC so understands the workings of the council. KCC is in the process of allocating committees but, since being elected, she is the Deputy Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, sits on the Joint Transportation Board, the Kent Flood Risk Board and the Youth Justice Board. She is also negotiating around the aviation groups. There is a huge strain on KCC's budget generally. KCC has withdrawn from accepting unaccompanied asylum minors who are entering the UK through Dover. C.Cllr McArthur said that she has a member's fund of £10,000 to be split across the ward and also a special fund of £6,000 for Covid recovery. After queries from members, C.Cllr McArthur confirmed that she will be continuing the work of her predecessor, Peter Lake, on speeding issues in rural areas, overcrowding of school buses and school places for local children.

4. Report by District Cllr Coleman
District Cllr Coleman reported as follows:
 1. Reorganisation at SDC: she has moved from being Deputy Cabinet Member for People and Places to Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing and Health, which will enable her to focus on reducing the numbers on the housing register. Following a staff reorganisation and a customer re-design programme to improve customer service levels, the offices at SDC will be manned from 7.00am to 7.00pm effective from September. Staff will continue to have the flexibility to work from home for two to three days a week post Covid as the working from home experience has not led to a drop in productivity and enhances the opportunity to work more flexibly for staff.
 2. Local Plan: D.Cllr Coleman attended a presentation on the next steps for the Local Plan. Officers have continued to update the evidence base, but some discussion has taken place on whether further work should continue immediately or whether Officers should wait for the Planning White Paper to become law as this would necessitate further changes in approach. Officers will be commissioning further surveys to gain more information on all the different elements and will examine how Covid has changed the way people live and work. It was interesting to note that a Planning Inspector recently supported an appeal to build a development on an edge of settlement Green Belt site near St. Albans due to the acute shortage of housing.
 3. Volunteers: the volunteer group will continue to run until July 19th in line with Government advice to continue with current lockdown rules. No further requests for help have been received since the last meeting.
 4. Appeal on New Tyehurst Farm: The planning and housing teams are working on the appeal and are trying to ensure that a Local Needs Letting Plan is secured if the appeal is upheld. The Clerk reported that the Parish Council has not been advised that the latest application SE/20/01834/FUL has gone to appeal. D.Cllr Coleman undertook to follow this up.
 5. The track at Chiddingstone Hoath: The Planning Agent has been advised that a chalk track constitutes inappropriate development and SDC has asked him to remove it. A timetable of works has been requested.
 6. The Planning Officer for the application at Prinkham is minded to refuse the application for solar panels which would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

County Cllr McArthur left the meeting at 8.05pm.

Closed Session

21. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Myers, Cllr Taylor and Cllr Williams and members accepted their reasons for absence. Apologies for absence were also received from District Cllr Osborne-Jackson.

22. **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
None.

23. **To minutes of the Chiddingstone Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 18th May 2021** were approved. Proposed by Cllr Roper, seconded by Cllr Harris, and all were in favour.

24. **To discuss the vacancy on the Parish Council**

The Clerk reported that the vacancy that has arisen because of Richard Streatfeild's resignation has been advertised. SDC have been notified and if ten electors write to SDC requesting an election by tomorrow, 23rd June, then the Parish Council is obliged to hold one. Otherwise the Parish Council can co-opt a new member. This is usually done by means of an informal interview of candidates. It was agreed that Cllr Roper, Cllr Quirk and Cllr Harris will form an interview panel and Clerk to advertise if the Parish Council is able to co-opt a new members.

25. **Planning:**

i. To consider planning applications received

- i. SE/21/01628/MMA: Land north of The Horseshoes, Tonbridge Road, Bough Beech TN8 7AT - to allow for the substitution of the approved proposed block plan with an amended proposed block plan which shows the proposed dwelling repositioned further away from an existing oak tree, in order to alleviate potential pressure on the root protection area of the oak tree. Members supported this application.
- ii. SE/21/01724/WTCA: Glebe House, The Village, Chiddingstone TN8 7AH - Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Silver Birch, Elder and Sycamore within wooded area stems >30cm dia felled. Remaining trees crown lifted to 3m from ground level. Remove smaller specimens and saplings. Cllr Bishop said that he has had a look and has no objection to these works. No comment required.
- iii. SE/21/01709/HOUSE: Coles Farm, Bore Place Road, Chiddingstone TN8 7AP - addition to Granary (wc and log store), removal of external steps, new balcony and replace internal stair. Members had no objection to this application.
- iv. SE/21/01767/HOUSE: Thatch Barn, Hoath Corner, Chiddingstone Hoath TN8 7BS - construction of outbuilding to form double garage within sloped ground to rear of garden fronting highway with home office accommodation in roof over accessed from first floor at garden level. Members of the Planning Committee agreed to have a site visit and agree a response thereafter.
- v. SE/21/01811/WTCA: Land north of Chiddingstone Sports Ground, The Village, Chiddingstone TN8 7AH - 3 decaying Ash trees suffering from Ash dieback behind stable block, dismantle and fell to ground level. Cllr Bishop said that he has had a look and has no objection to these works. No comment required.
- vi. SE/21/00758/HOUSE and SE/21/00759/LBCALT: Keepers Cottage, Somerden Green, Chiddingstone TN8 7AL - demolition of rear extension, alterations to two existing outbuildings including provision of modest link between them to enable them to be converted to provide a residential annexe, balcony and log store. Amended plans showing removal of domestic features, and introduction of conservation rooflights. Cllr Quirk to have a look at the plans and make a recommendation to the Planning Committee.

The Clerk reported that the Planning Committee has considered the following application since the last meeting:

- vii. SE/21/01570/AGDET: Field West of Kilnwood, Coopers Corner, Ide Hill - agricultural building for general purpose use and grain storage, relating to 21/00863/AGRNOT. Consultation on siting, design and appearance. The submitted comments were: "Chiddingstone Parish Council agrees with the comments raised by Rural Planning regarding the access to this proposed new barn. There is no information included in the application on the exact access route and this needs clarification. The Parish Council has no objection to the other aspects of the proposal."
- ii. To report SDC notifications of planning decisions
- SE/21/00900/MMA: Somerden Farmhouse, Tonbridge Road, Bough Beech - Minor material amendment to 20/02113/HOUSE. Application approved.
 - SE/21/00937/FUL: Land at Reynolds Farm, Clinton Lane, Bough Beech - demolition of existing stable building and store, and the erection of a single storey detached dwelling house and associated parking and amenity space. Removal of existing sand school. Application approved.

- SE/21/00964/HOUSE: Southview Cottage, Coopers Corner, Ide Hill - installation of freestanding Air Source Heat Pump to side of property. Application approved.
- iii. To discuss paperless planning applications
 The Clerk reported that she wrote to Richard Morris, Chief Planning Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, about the difficulty in using online only plans. His response was: “Thank you for your emails regarding the challenges that Chiddingstone and Leigh Parish Councils are having when considering planning applications electronically. Local views form an essential part of the decision making process so it is really important to us that Parishes aren’t disadvantaged in any way. I know that in the past we have delivered specific training on things such as navigating the Portal and using the online measuring tool, as well as sharing best practice and the experiences of others. I’d be very happy to arrange for a further and more detailed discussion of the issues your Parishes are facing so we can see how we might best be able to help, if that would be useful for you?” Members still felt strongly about this issue and would like to receive paper plans. Clerk to reiterate their objection to the change to a paperless planning system.

26. Finance

- i. To approve amendments to the Finance Committee Terms of Reference
 Members considered and approved the updated Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee.
- ii. To approve 2020/21 Year End Accounts
 The Clerk reported that the Finance Committee recommended to the Parish Council that the Year End Accounts be approved. Cllr Harris proposed that the Year Accounts be approved, this was seconded by Cllr Quirk and all were in favour.
- iii. To review the effectiveness of the Parish Council’s Internal Control Procedures
 Members reviewed the Internal Audit Procedures and agreed that they remain effective. Proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Harris and all were in favour.
- iv. Audit for year ending 31st March 2021
- a. To consider and agree Annual Governance Statement 2020/21
 Cllr Roper read the statements as set out on the Annual Governance Statement and members responded as appropriate. Proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Bishop and all were in favour.
 - b. To consider and approve Accounting Statements 2020/21
 Cllr Baker proposed that the Statement of Accounts be approved, this was seconded by Cllr Harris and all were in favour.
- v. To discuss the Internal Audit report 2021
 The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit was carried out on Tuesday 25th May and the report states that the books and records are in good order, and the systems for control of the Parish Council’s finances are working well. There are no recommendations for change.
- vi. To consider grant application received from Chiddingstone Sports Association
 Members discussed the application for grant and said that before they give a grant they would like to see whether the Sports Association can achieve grant funding from SDC as there is a second tranche of discretionary funding due in July. Clerk to request an update prior to the July Parish Council meeting.
- vii. To consider sponsorship of the Chiddingstone Literary Festival 2021
 The Clerk reported that the lowest level of sponsorship this year is £400 + VAT. The Parish Council paid sponsorship of £250 + VAT in March 2020 for the 2020 event that was cancelled. The event organisers have suggested that the Parish Council pay £150 + VAT this year to make up the difference. At vote there were 4 votes in favour and 1 vote against this proposal. Sponsorship next year will be considered at that time but members felt that £400 + VAT as the lowest level of sponsorship is too expensive for the Parish Council. The Clerk advised that Nancy Lovegrove, who is a new Trustee for Chiddingstone Castle, has been in touch suggesting a meeting, members were very happy to meet Nancy and attend a meeting at a mutually convenient time.
- viii. To approve membership renewal to Aviation Environment Federation: £36
 Members approved this membership renewal.
- ix. To approve membership renewal to Society Local Council Clerks: £117
 Members approved this membership renewal.

- x. To discuss proposal to purchase two cctv cameras – cost in the region of £270 each
Members agreed to purchase one camera to see how it works with the possibility of buying a second one in due course. The Clerk reported that there is a meeting to discuss rural crime in Lockskinners tomorrow at 6pm, which she will attend. Cllr Bishop said that he would attend too.
- xi. To approve list of payments
Cllr Quirk proposed that the list of payments be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Baker and all were in favour. Cllr Roper and Cllr Myers to authorise the payments online.

27. Affordable Housing provision in the parish

See Open Session above. Cllr Harris proposed that the Parish Council support ERHA in their request to hold an online consultation event on the site to the rear of Chequers. This was seconded by Cllr Quirk and all were in favour. Clerk to advertise this widely on the website, social media, the noticeboards and parish magazine. The consultation will launch on 12th July.

28. Highways

- i. To discuss the speed limit on B2027 through Chiddingstone Causeway including informal consultation
The Clerk reported that the results of the informal consultation were sent to KCC. The results were: 242 leaflets delivered and there were 60 responses, which gives a response rate of 24.79%. The informal consultation period was 08.05.21 to 31.05.21. The Clerk reported that an email has today been received from Debbie Barton, Schemes, Planning and Delivery Technician for Kent Highways: “I have been speaking to my colleague Whitney Gwillim regarding your proposed speed limit change.
- The cost of a TRO is £2500, this includes site notices and an advert, in addition to the full legal process associated with a change in the highway orders. The only increase on this would be if your proposal received more than six objections, in this case there would be a further cost of £570 in order for a report to be written by one of our officers for the Joint Transport Board Committee, who would then debate the subject and make a recommendation to our Cabinet Member on how to proceed.
 - In terms of timescales you are looking at between 6 – 9 months, this will be dependent of if you receive many objections and how promptly you make payment.
 - If you are happy to go ahead please let me know and I can arrange for an invoice to be sent to you for the initial £2,500, no works would take place until this is received by KCC.
 - If the TRO is progressed you may require additional signage and/or road markings and there will be additional costs for those parts.”
- Members agreed to proceed as soon as possible, with a payment of £2,500. Proposed by Cllr Bishop, seconded by Cllr Baker and all were in favour.
- ii. To hear report of the litter pick held on 5th June 2021
None.
- iii. To discuss the use of the rural lanes by agricultural vehicles and trailers
The Clerk reported that two reports of noise from tractors using the road on Thursday 3rd June were received, one in Wellers Town and one in Bough Beech. The farmer has advised that he was trying to get the silage in before the rain that fell the next day. Members had sympathy with the farmer and supported his efforts. Cllr Bishop asked that tractor drivers are asked to drive with more consideration to other drivers on the road.
- iv. To discuss highway faults on Chested Lane
The Clerk advised that she has reported the potholes and poor road surface to Highways and asked to meet the Highways Steward on site but has not heard back, despite chasing. Cllr Harris said that the Environment Agency may be able to help and undertook to supply details.

29. Aviation

None.

30. To discuss correspondence received

The Clerk reported that lists of correspondence received have been circulated and drew members’ attention to the following

- i. Item 3: Email from D.Cllr Osborne-Jackson with a copy of a letter from Brigadier Archie Miller-Bakewell, Private Secretary to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, as a thank you for his letter and message of condolences following the announcement of the death of The Duke of Edinburgh at Windsor Castle on Friday 9th April.
- ii. Item 4: Email from SDC: “To mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022, there will be a unique tree planting campaign across the UK which will be known as The Queen’s Green Canopy (QGC), which will promote the importance of trees to the environment, through the encouragement of tree planting and tree preservation across the nation. From June 2021, the Woodland Trust will be giving away 3 million saplings free of charge to community groups on a first come-first served basis. Information on how to apply for these free saplings will be available through the Woodland Trust website from June 2021 <https://shop.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees>. The QGC initiative will encourage planting during the official planting season, October to March, to optimise the chance of trees surviving and flourishing. People are encouraged to use this summer to plan their Jubilee tree planting projects and be ready for October. <https://queensgreencanopy.org>
- iii. Items 7 and 19: Kent Police:
 - Wellers Town Road, Chiddingstone – between 8:00pm on Friday 21st May and 11:30am on Saturday 22nd May, somebody tried to break into a shed at a residential property. They damaged the door locks but did not get inside. Crime Report No. 46/87498/21
 - Hampkins Hill Road, Chiddingstone - between 9:00pm on Tuesday 25th May and 7:00am on Wednesday 26th May, somebody stole a grey Land Rover Defender, LD07***, from a farm. They broke gates and fences to get in and out of the farm. Crime Report No. 46/90414/21
 - Lockskinners in Chiddingstone, between 21:00 on Tuesday 15th June and 07:00 on Wednesday 16th June, somebody damaged a lock, a gate and removed a gate post at a farm. They have fly-tipped rubbish in the grounds. Crime Report No. 46/105083/21
- iv. Item 8: Letter of resignation dated 25th May from Richard Streatfeild: “As discussed on the phone after 10 years on the Parish Council it is time for a break. Please take this email as my notification of resignation from the Parish Council. I wish you all the best in the coming years. I am happy to be called if there is something that you think I can contribute, but I suspect you will do very well without any more assistance. I would particularly like to give a vote of thanks to the commitment and attitude of all the Parish Councillors I have had the pleasure of serving alongside over the last decade. I would especially thank Louise for her tireless work and support. At one point in 2015 and 2016 I had doubled her workload with her clerical support of HWCAAG and during that period I had the curious pleasure of dealing with 26 other Parish Clerks. Chiddingstone and Leigh are particularly well served. Thank you.”
- v. Item 12: SES Water: “We have launched a public consultation on our drought plan and we’re keen to hear your organisation’s views. “This plan, which is required by law, sets out the measures we will take when a drought occurs in our area and includes details of the restrictions on water use we would need to implement to manage the situation. It also explains the circumstances in which we would apply for drought permits to take more water from selected sources to supplement our supplies. We have produced a consultation document, which summarises our technical plan, see www.seswater.co.uk/publications. Also on this page is an online survey where you can give feedback. The consultation closes on 30 July 2021.”
- vi. Item 13: The Tree Council: Community Hedge Fund now open for winter planting applications. Grants will be awarded of up to £2,500 for volunteer Tree Wardens and community grounds to plant new hedgerows, hedgerow trees and to gap up existing hedgerows in rural and urban areas across England this winter. Deadline for applications is Sunday 8th August 2021 with planting to take place between November and January.
- vii. Item 14: Email from Sian Hiller: “I took up the role of Chief Officer at Citizens Advice Edenbridge & Westerham in October of last year. The parish of Chiddingstone falls within our catchment area so I wanted to ensure that all residents of the parish are aware of the service we offer. Although we are still not able to see clients face to face, we are continuing to provide free, confidential, independent advice by telephone and email. Advice is delivered by our fantastic team of fully trained volunteers supported by our handful of part time staff. We are a small independent charity, affiliated to national Citizens Advice, that relies on grants and donations from our district, town and parish councils as well as other local organisations and charities. We would be very grateful if Chiddingstone Parish Council would consider making a donation to help us to continue to provide this free service to local residents.”

- viii. Item 15: SDC re: Small Towns & Villages Project: “We have been contacted by the Counter Terrorism Policing South East and Regional Organised Crime Unit who have confirmed that they will be undertaking a pilot communications campaign ‘Small Towns and Villages - Deterring Crime, Defeating Terrorism’ in the Sevenoaks District, which will go live towards the end of June and run across July. Residents and businesses in the Sevenoaks district will receive a booklet and set of Z-cards providing advice on household and business security, as well as how to reduce the risk of terrorism. This pilot is part of a national campaign and being led by the Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters (South East).”
- ix. Item 16: SDC: details of SDC re-structure:
- x. Item 17: Email from D.Cllr Osborne-Jackson with copy email from Govia Thameslink Railway: “Following the Secretary of State’s announcement, we can confirm that national Flexi Season tickets will be available across Southern, Great Northern, Thameslink and other rail operators from Monday 28 June 2021. Tickets will be available for purchase from Monday 21 June 2021 for use the following week. The Flexi Season has been developed by the Government in collaboration with the rail industry and is designed to support commuters who may be thinking of travelling two or three days a week in the future. It is a new ticket option, designed to sit alongside existing season tickets as well as advanced and walk-up day fares. Unlike previous carnet products, Flexi Season will be available for journey options between a much greater range of stations nationwide. Rather than being solely London-focused, the Flexi Season is designed to support commuters on many more journeys across the network. It will be sold as a smart ticket on the Key smartcard, available online and from ticket offices. The Flexi Season will offer 8 days of travel within a 28 day period, at any time between two stations – so long as the journey is not entirely within Transport for London’s Z1-Z6 area. TfL is not currently supporting the Flexi Season. As a rule of thumb, for most journeys, if a customer is travelling regularly two or potentially three days per week, they are likely to feel that the Flexi Season offers better value travel than a weekly season ticket. There will be some journeys however, where the level of discount offered by a weekly or longer season ticket is so significant, that a customer may find that the weekly season or similar is the best option for their journey. Our new season ticket calculator will enable passengers to buy the right ticket for the number of days they want to travel including, from 21 June, the new national Flexi Season ticket.”
- xi. Item 18: KCC Member Environment Briefing June 2021.

31. To hear a report and discuss Parish Projects:

Parish Council website

The Clerk reported that the new website is up and running and is very easy to use and looks much more streamlined and modern. The Clerk is ensuring all information up to date

32. To discuss the Pond and the Sports Field in Chiddingstone Causeway

Members discussed the use of the sports field and Cllr Roper updated members on his and the Clerk’s meeting with Charles Warner. Members were in favour of waiting for further information but then progressing the matter.

33. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

Cllr Quirk asked whether a map and notice could be erected in the village by The Castle Inn directing visitors to the car park at Chiddingstone Castle. Clerk to discuss with Mark Streatfeild as Chairman of Trustees.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday 20th July 2021 at 7.45pm in Chiddingstone Causeway Village Hall. The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

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