

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Footpaths Properties & Greens Committee
Meeting held on 22 June 2017 in Shorne Village Hall**

PRESENT Mr R Lane (Chairman)
Mr R Cooper
Mr R Theobald
Mr M Redfern
Mrs S Lindley

APOLOGIES for absence were received from Miss P Clifton,
Mr R Hardy, and Mr C Rea

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 April 2017

The minutes were AGREED as a true record.

2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

3 To receive an update on maintenance of Crabbles Bottom (81)

Mr Lane has requested quotations from two contractors to repair/replace the damaged section of fencing.

4 Maintenance & Cutting of Greens & Verges (82)

It was noted during early June that the grass verges and greens in the village had become badly overgrown. On those areas which had not been cut by the Parish Council's contractors in March, April, and May, the grass was up to 18 inches high. KCC eventually cut the verges on 12 June 2017.

It appears that the reduction from 8 to 6 cuts per year now undertaken by KCC is having a detrimental impact on the village environment. In April, Mr Lane made enquiries to KCC to find out how much they would pay if the Parish Council took over responsibility from KCC, but had to ask Kent County Councillor Bryan Sweetland to intervene to get a response. KCC finally sent maps and a schedule of urban verges in Shorne on Monday 19 June. The area is slightly greater than that identified in the paper issued on 22 March and includes shrubs at Shorne West. The paper will be reissued to reflect these changes.

KCC would pay the Parish Council an annual sum of £1,201 to take over the maintenance. This is expected to cover 6 grass cuts a year, plus one visit to trim shrubs in Shorne West.

Mr Lane will endeavour to obtain quotes from contractors, but it is unlikely they will be within this budget. The Parish Council will have 3 main options:

1. To do nothing and leave responsibility for the work with KCC. We would have to accept just 6 cuts a year, at approximately 5 weekly intervals. We would still carry out the supplementary cuts of the areas planted with bulbs during the spring, at a cost of £320.
2. To take over full responsibility from KCC. We could then maintain the previous 8 cuts a year and include the supplementary cuts of the areas planted with bulbs during the spring, and would receive £1201 a year.
3. To leave responsibility for the 6 cuts with KCC, but to arrange for interim cuts ourselves, including the supplementary spring cuts. Whilst the Parish Council would receive no payment from KCC, the frequency cutting would increase to 10 or 11 a year at 2 to 3 weekly intervals.

Enquiries have been made to Cobham, Higham, and Meopham Parish Councils to look into 'sharing' resources. Cobham have responded stating that they do not have a contractor themselves, but would be interested in sharing ours. Meopham will be discussing this at a meeting on 27 June. No response has been received from Higham Parish Council as yet.

5 Maintenance of Public Rights of Way (90d)

At the previous meeting, parishioner Mr Watson offered to clear vegetation on footpath NS170 using his own petrol brush cutter. On 10 June, a small team of volunteers cleared weeds on footpath NS162 and cut back vegetation encroaching on to the green in Shorne Common Rough. Again, two of the volunteers used their own petrol brush cutters.

A further report has been received, stating that footpaths NS163 and NS163A are overgrown. Mr Lane has contacted John Pelham, KCC PROW Area Officer, who initially asked the Luddesdown volunteer team whether they could help, but they were unavailable. Mr Pelham has now contacted Mike Hickmott of the Ramblers Association, who helped with NS163 in 2015. Failing that, he will get the KCC PROW team to carry out the work but there may be some delay.

Mr Lane considers that it is not reasonable to expect volunteers to clear heavily overgrown footpaths using hand tools only, as the work is very arduous. Nor should we rely on parishioners to use their own power tools.

Mr Lane has enquired about opening a trade account with Mammoth Hire, who hire brush cutters from around £36, hedge cutters for around £29, plus a delivery & collection service from £7.50 plus VAT each way. Mammoth Hire also hire flail mowers, and Mr Lane will find out the cost for larger works.

6 Pathway Obstructions in Court Wood (83)

Mr Theobald reported that there was a problem with the Ordnance Survey maps, as they show that the pathways radiating from Court Wood stop short of the fields, and are not connected. This is not correct. Mr Theobald wants to ensure that the pathways are accurately plotted and shown to be linked before asking residents to complete forms and affidavits. Mr Redfern said he would find out if any of his contacts has access to accurate GPS equipment. Mrs Lindley would look at any mobile apps that might be available.

Mrs Lindley reported that she had written to the Land Registry for the ownership for the various pieces of land.

7 Swillers Lane Pathway Extension (84)

Mr Theobald has not yet contacted Mrs Shove's daughter, Kay, to ask if they would be willing to consider allowing the track extending from Swillers Lane alongside the stream to the edge of the wood to be designated as a Public Right of Way.

8 CCTV Proposals (85)

The closing date for comments and quotations was 28 April 2017. Comments were received from 6 parishioners, 4 broadly supportive and 2 not in favour. These have been tabulated and distributed to councillors to consider as part of the decision-making process at the next Parish Council meeting.

9 Michael Gardens Landscaping Screening Strip (86)

Mrs Lindley has sent a further e-mail to GBC, pointing out that the issue of concern is that some occupiers appear to be cutting down the screening trees.

10 Shorne Common Play Area - Annual Inspection (87)

Graham Marchant of GBC has supplied conifer wood chippings for the play area. Mr Lane obtained two quotations for cleaning the play equipment, cutting back the vegetation encroaching on the play area and spreading the chippings under the play equipment. The quotation from John Vilday has been accepted, and the work is scheduled to take place on Friday 23 June 2017.

The gate post to the car park has rotted and snapped off. Mr Dore has re-fixed the post on a metal stake, but the post needs to be replaced. Quotations have been requested from two contractors. Mr Lane requested approval to accept the most economical price. This was agreed by members.

11 Adult Fitness Equipment (88)

Mr Rea has circulated a costed proposal for outdoor fitness equipment at the Michael Gardens play area. The estimated cost is £13,384 plus VAT.

This is a considerable sum, equal to half the annual precept. It was felt that the Parish Council could not justify this level of discretionary expenditure.

As the Michael Gardens play area is equipped and maintained by GBC, Mr Rea might wish to ascertain the level of local support for the fitness equipment, and to approach GBC directly. Grants may also be available from organisations such as Sport England or the National Lottery.

12 Fly Tipping Signage (89)

Mr Lane has circulated details of “No Fly Tipping - CCTV in Operation” signs, which cost £35 each plus VAT. Possible locations include 3 in Shorne Ifield Road, one in Crutches Lane, and one in Shorne Common Rough. Mrs Lindley felt that ownership of the land should be established and permission obtained first. Mr Lane said that there is a likelihood that KCC would impose costly design standards and fees if permits were sought. As the cost of the signs is reasonable, it was agreed by members to purchase and fit the signs.

13 Repairs to Gate at Shorne Recreation Ground (90a)

At the previous meeting, Miss Clifton reported that the gate at the recreation ground has dropped. On inspection, it appears that the gate post has rotted away at ground level, the straps securing it to the adjacent concrete post have loosened, and the hinges are worn. Mr Lane has requested a quotation from John Wells Fencing to attend to this.

An additional key has been provided to David Cator of Shorne Football Club. Mr Cator has paid £10 for the key, which will be used to purchase a replacement spare key.

14 Shorne Common Rough Signage (90c)

At the previous meeting, it was suggested that the existing ‘village green’ signage at Shorne Common Rough could be re-sited, and/or additional signage obtained. Mr Lane has inspected the existing village green sign and does not consider it is worth re-siting. Mr Lane has obtained a quotation for additional signage at a cost of £90 each including carriage plus VAT. The Committee agreed to the purchase of an additional sign.

15 Any Other Business

Mrs Lindley reported that Highways England has requested a drop-in session for people affected by the Lower Thames Crossing Option C decision. The session has been provisionally arranged for Thursday, 20 July 2017 between 6pm-7pm in the Village Hall, to be confirmed. It was noted that Shorne School leavers’ party will also be taking place in the Village Hall on that date.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.49pm.