

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING/ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF RIVER PARISH COUNCIL

Held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 4th May 2021 by video conference

PRESENT: Cllr. Taylor (in the Chair), Cllr. Dixon, Cllr. Beresford, Cllr. Buhlman, Cllr. Eyre-Jackson, Cllr. Gunzi, Cllr. Jones

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. A. Denyer (Parish Clerk), Dist. Cllr. Rose joined the meeting at 8pm

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. Atkins, County Cllr. Collor

52. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr. Buhlman proposed that Cllr. Taylor continues as Chairman of the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr. Jones and, there being no other nominees, all agreed and Cllr. Taylor was duly elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year. The acceptance of office will be signed in due course.

53. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cllr. Eyre-Jackson proposed that Cllr. Dixon continues as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr. Gunzi and, there being no other nominees, all agreed and Cllr. Dixon was duly elected as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

54. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

- i) Cllr. Beresford was appointed as Chairman of the Planning Committee.
- ii) Cllrs. Atkins and Eyre-Jackson were appointed as Joint Chairs of the Events Committee.
- iii) Chairman proposed that the Parish Council continue with current practice and that all Parish Councillors will be invited to attend all Committee Meetings. This was agreed.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

56. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13th April 2021 had previously been circulated. Cllr. Beresford proposed that they represented a true record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr. Eyre-Jackson and all agreed.

57. ANY UPDATES FROM THE MINUTES

Item 42b(ii) River Co-op Parking Area: It was confirmed that the buildings to the rear of River Co-op are owned by the Co-op Property Group. Cllr. Gunzi will pass the details on to the Clerk. He will also keep the Branch Manager informed.

Item 42b(v) London Road Pothole Repairs: Cllr. Jones reported that the pothole repairs on London Road seem to have been completed and there is a marked improvement in the surface.

Item 45d Paving Slab Artwork: works to mount the slabs are now complete. Chairman said that he would like to go ahead with a formal opening event and will be circulating details in due course.

58. REPORTS

a) Chairmans Report

Chairman reported briefly on the previous year including the outcomes of holding meetings by video conference. He reported that Parish Council meetings will return to face-to-face from next month. This report will be published in full in the June issue of 'Rivall' magazine and appended to these minutes.

b) District and County Councillors

Reports from District and County representatives were restricted by pre-election purdah.

Dist. Cllr. Rose joined the meeting at 8pm. He praised the Parishes for taking meetings online during the Covid19 pandemic and felt that maintaining a remote option was a positive step. The online access available for DDC services has been a huge success. He looked forward to working with the Parish Council in the forthcoming year. He has also provided a written report which is appended to these minutes.

c) Parish Councillors

- i) Cllr. Beresford noted that the local case numbers for Covid19 have risen a little over the past few days.
- ii) Cllr. Eyre-Jackson reported that a local contractor has volunteered to work on the BT phone box. River Co-op also may become involved.
- iii) Cllr. Jones said that CCTV cameras would be of great benefit on London Road. The first question asked by the Police and insurance companies after any traffic incidents was whether any CCTV footage was available.
- iv) Cllr. Gunzi asked whether future meetings could be hybrid, allowing people to join in via video. Chairman responded that this has been discussed and it is hoped that we can maintain live streaming of the meetings.

d) PCSO/Policing

Cllr. Eyre-Jackson has been in contact with the PCSO. She has been tied up with matters in Aylesham recently and has also been involved with traffic problems outside River School. Cllr. Eyre-Jackson is to meet the PCSO to discuss the issues in River. Chairman said that River School had contacted the Parish Council this week about traffic issues and that he will meet with the Headteacher in due course.

59. QUESTIONS

No questions received.

60. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Renewal of KALC Membership

It was agreed that the annual subscription to KALC be renewed at a cost of £1,109.

b) Renewal of Insurance Policy

The brokers have only provided one renewal quote. Two other companies declined to quote because of the uncertain status of the Recreation Ground cottage with the pending renovation as a Coffee Shop.

The current quote of £4,199 is a renewal with current insurers PEN. Brokers have said that the insurance market has hardened so there have been cost rises.

It was agreed that renewal be deferred, and the final decision be made at the forthcoming Recreation Ground Management Committee meeting to allow time for additional quotes to be obtained.

61. PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2020/21

Clerk gave a presentation of the accounts for 2020/21 (subject to audit). These will subsequently be published on the parish website.

62. ANY ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Chairman requested that the minutes show thanks for the outstanding services provided by the Village Handyman during the year. Particularly, the works outside Crabble Corn Mill and the renovation of the bench at the former Bus Terminus.

Meeting closed at 8.36pm

APPENDICES

District Councillor Mark Rose – Dover District Council Summary Report

Obviously and sadly the Covid pandemic has taken up most of our time, but I am very happy to report as the digital lead for DDC, that the roll out of our digital services being in place, just in time via the modernisation program, have been invaluable to the East Kent region. It also greatly benefits all residents, including those not online, because many friends and neighbours have engaged to report their key issues. I am pleased to say all issues reported to us directly, have all been dealt with.

Myself and David have also worked hard to encourage all parishes to be online, which was completed very effectively, with the last parish completing a few months ago. DDC will be offering the remote options on all meetings going forward, we need to do this to keep a plan B in place. I would encourage all parishes to make sure this option is available and tested live for each meeting, it does give access to residents who cannot attend or are otherwise housebound, so we would all support full transparent online access.

We have also ignored the previous culture flying around to not ever deal with offenders in the area and have ramped up local ward online reporting and evidence/images being submitted to us both, so we can take action on your behalf, this has proved to be very effective, as planned, recent cases include Scotland common

joint operations with DDC, Police CSU and the MOD, as well as effective bike and noise reporting. As a direct result of recent cases DDC is focussing on its enforcement and a speedier system internally elsewhere. Repeat offenders will be dealt with and several have been charged or fined recently, much to the benefit of residents locally. We will continue to focus on repeat offences in your AONB rural ward.

Lastly, we at DDC, alongside our MP Natalie Elphicke do very much welcome the 150 local new jobs and the presence of a managed Inland Border Force Facility (IBF) in Whitfield (see below statement link), this will help manage the area like never before, and we have already seen a great road update to benefit the tired and worn out Whitfield roundabout, long, long overdue.

DDC also look forward to supporting the progress of the Rapid Bus Transport (RBT) system and we have both supported the applications many months ago to progress for the wider benefit of Dover, this will prove to be a success and the usual negative comments and rumours will slip away onto something else no doubt. Lastly, I will support to see more positive progress with KCC going forward with a much more 'can do' attitude in place, so we can achieve important and basic highways maintenance and road repairs far easier locally.

The important focus here, post the pandemic, is to take forward current Parish Council digital capacity and online meeting options via Zoom or Microsoft teams for all working or housebound residents enabling full access and engagement at home or with younger families. It has been extraordinary to see the much bigger input and views since being online, proving this option is now very popular across the wider ward of Dover Downs and River, which includes the villages of River, Temple Ewell, Denton, Wootton and Lydden. Thank you.

Chairmans Annual Report (published in the June 2021 issue of 'Rivall' magazine)

Continuing our established custom these jottings are based upon my annual report to be given to the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

The past twelve months, as I am sure you do not need me to remind you all, has been dominated by the effects of the Covid pandemic.

Our regular April Meeting and Annual General Meeting in May last year could not be held and thereafter it was necessary to hold our Meetings by video conference. Although it took us a little time to adjust to the different techniques involved it quickly became evident that these meetings were extremely popular with local residents as well as many other followers who also tuned in regularly.

After the Annual Meeting this year we will be reverting to face to face meetings.

Recreation Ground (Owned and maintained by River Parish Council)

General Maintenance

Our contractors continue to keep the grounds in an excellent condition and many favourable compliments have been received from local residents.

Coffee Shop

Covid restrictions have unfortunately prevented a start on the renovation work.

Local Clubs and Organisations

If your group would like some publicity or advertise forthcoming events this can be placed in the Community Section of the Dover Express. You may also be interested in hiring our Club Room at the Recreation Ground that is available at very reasonable rates. For information please contact Mary Eyre-Jackson (email supplied).

Dogs

A reminder that it is prohibited to bring dogs into River Recreation Ground that is covered by a Public Spaces Protection Order. Notices at each entrance to the ground carry warnings of fixed penalties for offences.

Kearsney Parks Project

Main Building Work

We have now been advised that it is not intended to open the new café until May although the external toilets were opened recently.

Temporary Café

In the meantime the popular Park Café will therefore continue to provide light refreshments to visitors to the park.

Eyecatcher Bridge

The new bridge at the end of the boating lake is now open restoring the attractive circular route around the lake.

Russell Gardens

Work has now been largely completed and the grounds were opened to the public in time for Easter on 1st April. This has proved to be very popular and consequently the extended car park has been full to capacity on many days over the school holidays.

Traffic Issues

Parking Restrictions

Double yellow lines were installed last Autumn to address the long-standing problems of inconsiderate parking on roads around Kearsney Abbey.

20mph Zone in Lower Road

Following their successful speed survey carried out by Kent Highways invited River Parish Council to make an application to create a 20mph zone between the Minnis Lane and Valley Road junctions.

We carried out a survey over four weeks to 18th December that received good support from local residents and an application for a Highway Improvement Plan has since been submitted to Kent Highways.

Electric Vehicle Charging Point

We have been advised by Dover District Council that after a successful grant funding bid they will be installing 49 vehicle charging points at 18 locations across the district as part of their commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

It is now understood that two will be installed at the Lewisham Road bus terminus.

Brickwork Repairs

Local residents may have noticed the damaged brick wall at the bus terminus that it is believed occurred when an HGV was turning to return along Lewisham Road.

Happily this was repaired by Kent Highways contractors in January and I hope you agree that what an excellent job they have done.

Commemorative Slabs

Arrangements have been made for the slabs to be erected this month at a location in the village as a permanent memorial of what we all endured last year.

It is our intention to arrange a formal opening and dedication as soon as possible on a date in accordance with government public assembly guidelines.

Crabble Corn Mill

Discussions took place last Autumn during which River Parish Council offered to renovate the front railings, gates and wooden footbridge at the front of the Mill.

The work has now been completed by Robin, our handyman, who has also formed an attractive garden area as well. (See photograph for the difference this has made).

Commemorative Bench in Chilton Way

This has been completely refurbished by our handyman recently. Following discussions with the daughter of the original recipients a replacement plaque was also acquired and installed. (See photograph of the renovated bench)

The Cuts, Steps

Following reports of accidents from some local residents here towards the end of last year River Parish Council contacted Kent County Council who acknowledged the poor condition of the steps and advised that repairs would be prioritised.

As some of you may have noticed the work was carried out during March including the provision of a new metal handrail. (See photograph of the renovated steps).

Dover Film Society

We have recently been contacted by Mike McFarnell, a local resident, who as many of you may be aware is also the chairman of the Dover Film Society. The Society relies on the ticket income from the Silver Screen Cinema to cover cost that has been badly affected during the Covid pandemic. Mike has asked me to encourage River residents to become members of the Society for a one-off payment of £10 and enjoy the 20 Dover films from 2001 to 2020. For further details go to www.dover-film.com

Parish Meetings

River Parish Council normally meets on the second Tuesday each month except August and December. However this year it has become necessary for us to hold `virtual` Meetings on-line that have proved to be very popular with many local residents and other followers regularly joining us. Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **4th May** this year following the same format.

If there is something you would like to raise, please contact our Clerk who will arrange for this to be discussed at our next Meeting.

Details of our Meetings are placed on our notice boards and also outside the Village Hall in Common Lane.

Finally may I thank all my fellow councillors and our clerk for their continuing efforts as well as our contractors who maintain both the recreation ground and other areas throughout the village.

Please keep up to date by visiting either our Facebook page or our website www.riverparishcouncil.org.uk