



**Full Council Meeting
Birchington Parish Council
Tuesday 25th February 2025 at 18.30 hrs
at the Library, Birchington**

Present: Cllr Marcel Pooke (Chairman)
Cllr. Nick Blankley (left at 8pm)
Cllr. Colin Brown
Cllr. Neville Hudson
Cllr. Jim Moore
Cllr. Bob Prebble
Cllr John Tiley
Cllr. Linda Wright

Jane Bevan – Parish Clerk
Bill Anderson – Deputy Parish Clerk

8 x Members of the Public

FC/2024/146 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Max Houghton and Phil Fellows and Community Warden Jason Gordon.

FC/2024/147 Declarations of Interest

None.

FC/2024/148 Minutes

The minutes were **Agreed** as a true record.

FC/2024/149 Chairman's Report and Public Participation

A member of the public asked three questions – firstly, was it true that there were private WhatsApp groups amongst Parish Councillors and was Council business being conducted on the group chats; secondly, was the rumour true that there was a plan to co-opt 3 new councillors on to the Parish Council who would be favourable to the current Chairman and ensure he continued as Chairman after the election in May 2025; thirdly, they referred to a volunteer who had been arranging wellness walks for residents for the past 18 years in Birchington and Westgate but was not invited to the recent volunteers reception and felt they had been treated appallingly by the Parish Council.

A member of the public said she was pleased to announce that double yellow lines had been painted on the junction of Ingle Close and Alpha Road which would prevent cars parking on Alpha Road making it difficult for exiting vehicles from Ingle Close.

Action

A member of the public referred to item 8 on the agenda and the proposal for a sub group to look at the library proposals and asked when the strategy would be known in detail and when the Heritage Trust would be formally consulted. They also added that they were still awaiting the outcome of the valuation of the library in January 2025. The Chairman noted the questions. The Chairman reported that there had been a successful reception for the volunteers who contributed so much for the village and to the Parish Council. He formally thanked Cllrs Wright, Hudson and Tiley and the Clerk for their contributions to the organisation of the event. FC/2024/150 Ward Police Officer Report No report submitted FC/2024/151 Committee Reports The Chairman said that as advised at the recent training workshop, the Full Council did not have to formally agree the minutes from the various committees. Their minutes were agreed at the subsequent meeting of each relevant committee. At the Full Council meeting these minutes would just be noted as agreed. The agreed minutes from the Planning Committees of 7th and 28th January were noted. The Chairman asked for reports from the Committee Chairman. Planning Cllr Blankley presented his report (see Attachment A) Finance Cllr Prebble presented his report (see Attachment A) Environment Cllr Tiley presented his report (see Attachment A) General Purposes In Cllrs Fellows absence, the Clerk read out his report Cllr Brown reported that the Health and Wellbeing sub-group had been successful in a grant application. FC/2024/152 Establishment of a Staffing Committee The Chairman said that at the KALC training workshop it was suggested that a staffing committee be established which would be responsible for all staffing/HR issues. He said at this stage he was asking members for agreement in principle to the setting up of this committee. He was mindful that there were members who were not present this evening. He suggested that if there was agreement the Clerk would draft the terms of reference and at the next Full Council meeting to seek nominations to sit on the committee and also to agree the terms of reference. Agreed FC/2024/153 Parish Council Office The Chairman said that there two aspects to this agenda item (i) a discussion as to whether the current premises were fit for purpose which would be discussed and (ii) regarding the availability of a commercial property in the village which was a potential contractual matter which would be discussed later in closed session following the exclusion of the press and public. Cllr Prebble referred to his paper that had been circulated to members. It was agreed unanimously that the current premises were not suitable and it was agreed in principle to look at other alternative accommodation as and when they became available.	Clerk Clerk
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FC/2024/154 Live Streaming of Full Council Meetings The Chairman said that Cllr Brown had requested that Full Council meetings were streamed live. The Clerk had undertaken research into this and had distributed a paper for members. The Clerk said there were advantages and disadvantages of live streaming and had submitted her research for members to discuss. Cllr Tiley said he supported the proposal and described the technical aspects of undertaking it. Cllr Blankley said he agreed in principle but there were a number of issues raised in the Clerk's paper that needed to be debated first. Cllr Brown said he wanted firm timescales to be put in place. It was agreed to have a working group to take the proposal forward.	Clerk
FC/2024/155 Proposed Application for Public Right of Way (PRoW) Brunswick Road to Park Lane Cllr Blankley referred to the access road/footpath between Brunswick Road and Park Lane by the allotments. He said the road did not appear to be under any ownership and he was mindful that there had been an unsuccessful planning application for development on adjacent land. He said there were three options available to the Parish Council to protect the road/footpath: To do nothing; seek designation as a Public Right of Way or to seek ownership of the land forming the route. It was agreed for Cllr Blankley to investigate further.	Cllr Blankley
FC/2024/156 Proposal to increase the number of Parish Councillors Cllr Pooke presented a case for increasing the number of Parish Councillors. He said this would be driven by an increase in population if the proposed development went ahead. He said he had written to TDC to ask if the Parish Council could request an increase in the number of Parish Councils. He said he had proposed an increase of 3 to make the number of Councillors an uneven number so that decisions were reached when voted upon. The Chairman said it would be a long process involving either elections or co-options and needed to be thought through. Cllr Blankley said requesting an odd number of Councillors was irrelevant as an odd number could become an even number if a Councillor did not attend a meeting. He referred to Councillor Fellows' report from the General Purposes Committee where the recommendation was to write to TDC to find out about the process, although the Chairman had already written to TDC requesting a further 3 Councillors. Following further discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would contact TDC Democratic Services regarding confirmation of the process.	Clerk
FC/2024/157 Parish Council Website The Clerk provided an update following discussions at the recent General Purposes Committee. It was proposed to set up a small working group to look into a suitable website provider. Cllr Tiley said he had spent some time researching Parish Council websites. He said many were a lot worse than the Parish Council's current website. It was agreed to investigate website providers who could provide at reasonable cost an improved website.	
FC/2024/158 Birchington Library – Update The Chairman said that the Parish Council had arranged a valuation of the library in January. The valuer has subsequently submitted a number of questions about the future use of the library and the involvement of KCC. He emphasized that at this stage the Parish Council was just looking into the possible implications should KCC decide at some time in the future to sell the library. He said the major objective had always been that the library building, and library service was maintained in Birchington. The Chairman said he wanted to meet with the valuer to discuss in detail.	Clerk

FC/2024/159 Events to commemorate VE Day – Update Cllr Wright provided an update. She said she was currently working on identifying veterans in the village to attend the afternoon tea on 8th May 2025 and also evacuees. She was also hoping to source photographs from families to use as part of a video reel during the afternoon tea. In the evening the lighting of the beacon at Epple Bay would take place. At this stage it was not yet known whether the May Day Bank Holiday on 5th May 2025 would be an official day for street parties to commemorate VE day. FC/2024/160 Birchington Memorial Recreation Ground Charity Status – Clarification of role Cllr Prebble provided clarification of the Charity Status. He said the CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) was set up as the land covered by the recreational ground was donated to the residents of Birchington and its key function is to safeguard that land for recreational purposes. The function of the Parish Council as owner of the land, was to manage day-to-day issues on the recreational ground. The other benefit was that as a charity it could apply for grants that were only available to charities. FC/2024/161 Reports from District Councillors The Chairman said that in her absence, Cllr Emma Dawson had submitted a short report on parking which the Clerk read out: ‘In the next couple of weeks officers will be working on their quick wins. The first is the zoning work. This will be initiating where signage will go to direct traffic to suitable car parks and info on where the car parks are. Some signage will be electronic, these will flash up how many parking spaces are available in that particular car park. They will also be looking at residents' permit policies and working with residents to produce schemes. Working initially on a trial to see how it goes then developing across Thanet. Curb lips will be going into Botany bay to prevent vehicles parking dangerously on pavements and there are now 9 active traffic officers in Thanet. We have found that motorists are repeatedly paying their fines and still continuing to park without purchasing a ticket. The ticket penalty fee is £25 and £35 in certain cases if paid within a certain period of time. We still need to look into the behaviour of motorists which will be continuing over a longer period of time. There has been a massive effort to educate parents to park sensibly outside schools. And by summer we do want to have those electronic boards up and running. The council are starting the zoning work within the next two weeks, this is to identify the best visual place to project the info. Any further questions please email me. Thank you’ FC/2024/162 Reports from KCC Councillors None FC/2024/163 To receive and approve the Monthly Bank reconciliations with payments for January 2025. The Clerk presented this for signature .Agreed and signed. Under Clerk’s correspondence for members of the public, the Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received a donation of £150 from Quex Estate. She said a nice letter had been received from one of the volunteers who had attended the recent reception who wanted to pass on her personal thanks to the Parish Council for inviting her and adding that she thoroughly enjoyed the reception and meeting with other volunteers. The Clerk also reported that an acknowledgement letter had been received from Buckingham Palace in respect of a letter sent by the Chairman and Cllr Wright requesting that a plaque be installed on Dog Acre in honour of the King. The Clerk said the Parish Council had been approached by an organiser from the ‘Kent Extravaganza’ offering Town and Parish Councils the opportunity to have a stand there. A fee would be payable	Cllr Wright
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and the event was being held at Manston Airport on the 29th June 2025. The Clerk said this might also be of interest to the Heritage Trust.

FC/2024/164 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC The Committee is requested to pass a resolution to exclude the Press and Public from the remainder of the meeting pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

1. Clerks Correspondence

Following discussion on outstanding annual leave and time off in lieu for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, agreement was reached when this would be taken.

2. Parish Council Office.

In the second part of discussions on the Parish Office it was agreed not to proceed with an offer of alternative accommodation due to the high annual rental.

FC/2024/165 Date of next meeting

Tuesday, 18th March 2025 at 6.30pm in the library.

The meeting closed at 20.15pm

Signed by Parish Clerk

Jane Bevan

Dated: 5th March 2025

Full Council Meeting 25 March 2025

Attachment A

Committee Chairmen Reports:

Planning

Cllr Blankley said that out of the proposed three planning working groups so far only the Neighbourhood Plan working group had met. There were still ongoing discussion relating to the Local Plan and Southern Water which were the remaining two working groups. He referred to the Conservation Area Appraisal and said that TDC had been in contact, and it was likely that consultation would commence after the May 2025 elections. He referred to the Local Heritage Lists and reported that TDC had now decided that because it formed part of the Neighbourhood Plan it would be for the Parish Council to deal with. Cllr Blankley said he had prepared a media release regarding SP16 which had been circulated to members and proposed it was released. **Agreed.**

Finance

Cllr Prebble thanked the Clerks and Councillors for helping to work through the budget setting process which enabled agreement on the precept for the financial year commencing in April 2025. The precept agreed was £190,154.00 which equated to £46.44 per every Band D household which was less than 90p a week. He said the Parish Council strived to support residents, local businesses, volunteers and to maintain council assets such as the sea shelters, the recreation ground and Dog Acre community space. He said all of this is supported by the precept income. He said bringing back the recreation ground to life since last September had enabled 312 young people to take part in football which can only be beneficial for their personal health and welfare and for our whole Birchington community.

Cllr Prebble said that as the first level of local government, the Parish Council worked with District, County and National government authorities. National government was

currently seeking to re-organise all of this. It was not yet clear as to when and what the outcome would be. Cllr Prebble said that in the meantime, the Parish Council should be prudent and to be careful when considering any new financial responsibility. There had to be a tangible cost benefit, value for money in everything that was done and not financial expenditure where there was only a 'maybe' that something might happen. He referred to the agenda items and said there were some tangible benefits, some 'haves' and some 'maybes'.

Environment

Cllr Tiley said there was not too much to report as there has not been an Environment meeting since the last Full Council Meeting. He said new planters were being constructed for Station Road and that the Parish Council was in contact with KCC to confirm the permits were all OK. It was hoped the new units would be rolled out in toward the end of March ready for the new planting season.

The Memorial Recreation Ground had been well used by the general public and also the football teams. Some small works were being done to drainage and the car parking area entrance had been reinforced to make it more resilient. He said they were waiting to hear from KCC for confirmation on the refurbishment of path from the school in Park Lane. Cllr Tiley said that the beach shelters would start to be re-painted and maintained as the weather improved and that there would be a more active programme this year as the Parish Council's maintenance operative will have more capacity. He said volunteers reception evening earlier in the month was very successful where the volunteers were recognised for all they do,. He said everyone enjoyed themselves and positive feedback was received. He said the allotments were fine and a new permanent sign had been ordered to show where the water meter was located. The Parish Council would also be pursuing the establishment of a full right of way along the entrance track as would be discussed later in the meeting.

General Purposes

In Cllr Fellows absence, the Clerk read out his report based on the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 17th February 2025.

Events

Cllr Wright thanked everyone who helped at volunteers evening. Event went well. Recommended that volunteers list is kept up to date for future events. Event cost was £449.14. Some wine left over for future event. With regard to VE Celebration, checking to see if it is still 8th May or moved to Bank holiday weekend. Cllr Wrights plans in full swing. Member of public, Alexandra Gilbert, came along to give us a presentation on an interactive Heritage event in September to celebrate 130 years of Station Road. Was well received and committee with her luck with it. Hope to hear more as it progresses.

Health and Wellbeing

Cllr Brown informed us of all the activities that they are pursuing and involved with. Seawalk, making businesses accessible, parish magazine in voice form, presentation at Parish assembly, podcasts, promoting their social media. He thanked Cllr Tiley for his help with DAB, all linking up with Health and wellbeing.

Projects

Library - Finalising valuation

MRG - 2 teams currently, actively looking for more Digital - Tech advice being sought

Resilience - Paper being rewritten following information that TDC is the lead on this.

Possibly look to put together a list of known vulnerable residents

Training

Clerk to ask at Parish Forum if Parish Councillors can attend any of the training sessions at TDC.

Lots of training offered by KALC. Maybe look at their schedule.

Additional Councillors

Long discussion on this. Recommend that this goes on Full Council Agenda to get approval to officially approach TDC to find out the process.

Public Engagement

Discussion around reopening the Parish Office at The Library to alleviate some issues at Albion Road office. Our official contact desk is not used anymore. GP does recommend that this is utilised. It was questioned if there was a use for it. Clerk to keep a tally on how many public visits we have.

With regards to Website/Socials, look to see what other councils are doing regards websites. Ours is woefully inadequate, needs upgrading. Look to also see where our social media presence is.

Speedwatch

Only a couple of responses to our advert for volunteers. Without reasonable interest it is not really worth investing in new equipment at this stage. Will enquire about existing equipment at next TAC meeting to see if we can trial that before spending any money.'