

## KING'S CLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Public Meeting of the Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2003 in King's Cliffe Memorial Hall

**02/184 Present:** Councillors W. Court (Chairman), N. Ford, B. Howard, L. Crane, M. Day, J. Dixon and I. Hetherington,

**Apologies:** Councillor A. Howard

**02/185 Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed the members of the public who were attending this annual public meeting

### **02/186 Chairman's Statement**

Councillor Court said that the last 12 months had been very difficult. The Government introduced, or in fact imposed, a new Code of Conduct which has been described as a "sledgehammer to crack a nut". In his 30 years of experience on this Parish Council he has not been aware of any dishonesty by a Councillor, and the very few examples of slightly doubtful behaviour have been very rare and frankly not of any significance. Councillors here have always been unpaid non-political volunteers who have given their time, expertise and often money to carry forward the business of the Council and the promotion of the village. Two Councillors, Bob Wyles and Adrian Urquhart resigned on principle. Others signed the agreement reluctantly because the alternative would not be in the best interests of the village. The Council has nothing to hide. But we now have to work with a system of impractical and unenforceable rules and the legal requirement to report any other Councillor who we think has infringed these rules. This creates confusion and anxiety and is completely negative in its outcome. I feel sure that the Regulations will have to change and will be changed, just as some recent rules about auditing accounts were found to be so expensive that they had to be changed.

The Parish Council acts as a link to the District and County Councils and also deals with the following specific matters:

Maintenance of the Churchyard and management and maintenance of the Cemetery. This is primarily under a subcommittee called the Burial Board. Mr Colin Smith cuts the grass of the Churchyard and brings other skills to the village and is generous with his help. Mr Arthur Wooding has the basic care of the Cemetery and we appreciate the good job he does there. We are working through a number of repairs and improvements, partly through voluntary labour - "pensioner power!" Repairs to dilapidated graves are delayed because of the complex and expensive procedures which have to be followed. The new Cemetery site at the Pitchell is being kept tidy and attractive by Councillor Jenny Dixon and her sheep.

We also deal with almost all street lighting. A few additional lights have been installed and more could be considered.

We have some allotments which are virtually fully tenanted at present. These come under the Amenity subcommittee which should be reconstituted with the new Council. They also deal with Pocket Parks, Greens, litter bins, public seats and the like.

The Parish Council is invited to comment upon all Planning Applications in the village. This is a sensitive matter because the Council may sometimes feel that in the interests of the village as a whole they may have to make an objection to some proposal. The present requirement that Councillors must declare any prejudicial interest (as it is called) may mean that it is difficult to assemble a quorum to make a valid comment. But I think that the Parish Council should always try to express a view, otherwise these matters will be decided by Planning Officers and/or a committee at Thrapston which has no real knowledge of the village and the consequences of any decision. Another real difficulty arises from the rapid turnover of staff at the District Council and what appears to be serious understaffing.

The Public Safety subcommittee should deal with street lighting and policing and Neighbourhood Watch. Crime is all too common here and public support for an active Neighbourhood Watch would be a great help to the police. Crime would also be reduced if we recognised reality and did not leave valuables such as laptops or handbags in cars, sometimes even failing to lock the cars! We were sorry to lose PC Kevin York through illness, and we have had a spell with PC Jeavons, but a more permanent appointment is expected soon.

In response to a petition we have formed an *ad hoc* committee of about one, to handle a proposal for a skateboard park. This is at the Planning Application stage which will give an opportunity for detailed discussion of the scheme, whether it is appropriate, whether funding can be found and whether there will be supporters prepared to manage the project.

Another major problem highlighted at the meeting last year was the urgent need to build about 15 affordable houses as part of development of the KC1 site north of Wood Road. The District Council owns some land there and has prepared and approved a well thought out Design Brief. The need is urgent and we thought that progress would be swift, but because of poor planning in the past and complex rules and regulations we seem to be impeded at every turn. For example Government guidance says that any development of this size should be on a "brownfield site", that is recycled derelict industrial land. This is a very good idea, but the man in Whitehall may not realise that although towns may have brownfield sites, villages generally do not. In fact during the last thirty years this village we have built houses on the brickyard site, the transport yard, and a number of other industrial plots. Now there are no more left in the village. In the last fortnight the Chairman has had two meetings at Thrapston and is seeking a meeting with our MP on this urgent matter. It should be added that our District Councillor, Roger Glithero, has also been present and has been very supportive.

Highways continue to be a problem. Penny-pinching continues, the department had allocated funds actually taken away from them halfway through the year, so that it has been impossible to get a proper programme of maintenance and repair, let alone improvement. We must however say that they have put a new stormwater sewer down Forest Approach which should assist with flooding from Willow Lane.

The Slipe Waste Pit is a fact that we now have to live with. There are some problems here such as mud on the road, queuing lorries and blown litter, which will be more fully reported on in the Council meeting following.

The Golden Jubilee events went well and these were almost entirely organised by the Parish Church, and we would have liked to poach some of their efficient members for the Parish Council.

So there have been ups and downs. It is perhaps time for the Council to look again at its structure of subcommittees because it must be said that generally co-opted members are better than Councillors at turning up for meetings. There is a lot of support out there for the Parish Council to harness.

Councillor Court said that he regarded the work of the Village Design Group as very important. This Group had been diverted by the problems of the KC1 site during the last year but it must now spend time on a Village Design Statement, which can be accepted by the District Council as part of the Design Guidance available to developers, architects and householders, who are considering building or altering buildings, and will set out what is good about the character of the village and provide a framework for maintaining these features. This need not be, and some say, should not be a function of the Parish Council but should have widespread support in the village. As a parallel exercise they can also prepare a Parish Plan for improvements and ideas.

Finally he wished to remind everyone of the many amenities which we have in the village, including shops, post office, parish church with resident priest, Community Association with sports clubs, King's Cliffe Players (with a little help from Apethorpe), Memorial Hall, Resource Centre, King's Cliffe Heritage, good schools and playgroup, almshouses, the list could go on and on. We, the people of King's Cliffe, must all pull together to make this village function. If we leave the work for other people to do these things will surely fade away. This is the challenge. We can shape our destiny if we work together. He wished good luck to the new Council and hoped that younger people would play their part.

## **02/187 Open Discussion**

Mr. Bill Wyles raised the issue of excessive standing water on Wood Road which regularly resulted in pedestrians being drenched in water when passing cars drove through the large puddles. The Chairman explained that the Parish Council regularly reminded NCC about the state of this road, but by some anomaly this road is classified by NCC as a "Local Distributor" road and although upgrading was requested more than five months ago, no action has yet been taken by the NCC (W S Atkins), despite reminders. It is of course the responsibility of NCC to maintain this road and not the Parish Council. The Chairman said he realises this was an unsatisfactory answer but he was unable to give any other. It was suggested that Mr. Wyles should contact Mrs Priscilla Padley, the County Councillor, with his views. Councillor B. Howard totally endorsed these comments.

Miss Catherine Ibotson presented the Council with a letter, petition and file setting out ideas for a play area for young children in the village. The Council requires notice to allow them to study this document, and the Chairman recommended that it be put on the agenda of the next meeting.

A parishioner commented on the number of heavy goods vehicles using the village. The Chairman replied that there were three categories of lorry coming through. The first group related to current building works near Apethorpe and this should be only a temporary problem. The second group are lorries that have got lost going to the Slipe pit because of insufficient road signs. The Parish Council have been pointing out this problem for well over six months, and have offered to fix the signs if they can be provided by Atlantic Waste. Councillor B Howard stated that he would ensure that a direction sign was placed at the foot of Wansford Hill on the Plantation fence. Finally there were other lorries taking a rat run through the village. Unfortunately there was no weight limit in the village and previous attempts to get one have failed because almost all other roads are restricted.

The Chairman invited members of the Public to stay for the remainder of the meeting if they so wished.

### **02/188 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**02/189** The minutes of the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2003 were accepted and signed.

Proposed: Councillor N. Ford

Seconded: Councillor B. Howard

### **02/190 Matters Arising**

- 7.1 Councillor W.Court had sent a letter of protest to ENC regarding the offensive leaflet "Councillors Behaving Badly?"
- 7.2 Slipe Clay pit will be discussed later in the meeting.
- 7.3 The Elephant Trap at the top of Willow Lane is still not emptied.
- 7.4 The planning application for a new fence at 16-22 Park Street had been misunderstood and a clarification will be sent to ENC by the architect.
- 7.5 The new sign in the cemetery has been erected.
- 7.6 The siting of a further litter bin in West Street will need to be discussed at a future meeting, but ENC will be asked to provide an additional bin at the bottom of Willow Lane.
- 7.7 The new street lighting has been completed.
- 7.8 Some litter-picking has been carried out by Corys.

## 02/191 Accounts Payable

The following accounts were approved for payment: -

Curator's Salary (April 2003)	£ 135.80	
Clerk's Salary (April 2003)	£ 187.50	
A.B.B. Lighting	£ 298.99	
Powergen Energy charges	£ 424.63	
W.R.Court (March expenses)	£ 31.49	
Smith Hetherington (various)	£ 275.00	
Colemans of Stamford	£ 6.99*	
ENC : Rates for cemetery	£ 88.27*	* Items additional to agenda

Proposed : Councillor I. Hetherington

Seconded : Councillor J. Dixon

## 02/192 Planning

### **Ground and first floor extensions 23 Park Street EN/03/00275/RWL/PMAP**

As this is a renewal, it was decided to refer the Planning Committee to the comments given with the original application. In addition, it was considered that the roof over the extension should be lined up with the existing roof. The chimney stump would be better removed. The "out of character" kitchen window should be replaced with a window to match existing windows.

### **Change of use to nursery at 66 Park Street (amended) EN/02/01059/FUL/PMAP**

The invitation to the Planning Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April at Thrapston, regarding the decision on the proposed Nursery School at 66 Park Street was offered to Councillors; Councillor Hetherington hopes to be able to attend and speak. A letter from Allan Davies of Howard's Meadow objecting to this application was read to the meeting; Mr. Davies will be advised to send a copy of this to the Planning Authority.

**Various granted and refused Planning Applications were noted.**

## 02/193 Slipe Clay Pit

Councillor Court had circulated a written report on events on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March when he had received complaints about mud on the road.

Councillors W. Court and M. Day attended a meeting at the pit on 31<sup>st</sup> March. It was specified that only two councillors from each relevant parish could attend; Mr. William Fenn, whose land is adjacent to the pit asked to be allowed to attend, but the PC were unable to assist him in this and he was referred to the NCC.

On this visit it could be seen that there was what was described as "industrial waste" which clearly

included paper and plastic material which was blowing out of the site and into Collyweston Great Wood. The fencing was ineffective and the management agreed to reposition a fence on higher ground and endeavour to collect what had blown away. Councillor Ford confirmed that this had just been done. They said they could not take action about inadequate netting or sheeting down lorries.

Nothing has been done to fence off soft ground at the side of the exit road, but the building work had finished. The danger was that with drier weather nothing more would be done before next winter. It was further reported that the water in the wheelwasher was itself dirty. There were requests again for sufficient road signs, with or without permission from the NCC.

The Chairman had written subsequently to NCC to ask for clarification of new usage for the pit. It was stated at the meeting that from 2004 the pit would be for hazardous waste only, and not for mixed materials. He asked when this had been notified to Parish Councils and what it would mean in practice.

Councillor B. Howard again advocated the need for upgrading the road from the A47 to the pit.

### **02/194 KC1 Site**

The Chairman had referred to some of the delays and problems here in his annual report. It appears that no progress has been made with purchasing an access from Wood Lane. The developer had not yet produced a layout, meaning that it was difficult to make comments because the scheme was undefined. The problem that could be foreseen was that a proposal of this size would be called in and because it was not on a brownfield site would have little chance of success. It was clearly necessary to prepare a scheme which would occupy less than 5 hectares to try to avoid calling in. Various suggestions had been made at the meeting, but the Planning Officers had said that did not have the resources to advise the developer. It must be for the developer to put forward a suitable scheme. The Chairman had suggested that if we could anticipate the problems we should have our counter arguments ready, such as showing the areas of brownfield site which have already been utilised in the village. It was regrettable that the ENC had produced a draft village boundary plan which omitted the whole of the KC1 site as this gave an ambivalent message to the Ministry.

The Chairman has asked for a meeting with Phil Hope MP to discuss this matter urgently. He also asked Councillor B. Howard for the minutes of a meeting called by County Councillor Jim Harker on 8<sup>th</sup> April at Kettering regarding the Government's housing plans. which Councillor Howard had attended. Councillor I. Hetherington stated that Government policy is clearly now to build affordable housing on urban, preferably brown-field, sites. This makes the KC1 development much harder. A further suggestion that the PC should liaise with the developer to find a reputable Planning Consultant to prepare a consultation paper to assist in this matter, because he felt that the best chance of success was to produce a "conforming" scheme as far as possible and not rely upon special pleading.

## **SUB-COMMITTEES**

### **02/195 Burial Board**

A meeting of the Burial Board was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Three members attended.

Instructions have been given to Mr Colin Smith to set upright 4 or 5 gravestones in the Cemetery so that we can evaluate what is involved and so that he can quote firm prices for further similar work. To date no further progress has been made with the Churchwardens for re-setting work or stone repairs in the Churchyard. The quotation from Hetherington-Smith for grass-cutting in the Churchyard has been accepted by the P C. The P C has agreed the suggested remuneration for the Curator.

Arrangements have been made for the spoil heap to be removed to the pit in the grounds of the adjacent house plot with the kind permission of Mr Barker. Tools and equipment have been overhauled.

Several applications for memorials were discussed at length and approvals given subject to detailed comments.

It will be necessary to go through the Faculty procedure for major work to graves in the consecrated area. This should be done in the coming year. The hedge and small trees along the south-east end of the Cemetery need to be cut back severely or a row of grave spaces will be lost.

Work in Churchyard: Tenders to be called for repainting gates. The Churchwardens had said that the iron west gate needed attention. In our view this had not changed for the last 20 years, but it was agreed to seek a price for adjusting this and also to replace sundry finials which are missing from the iron railings. Colin Smith to be instructed to protect gravestones when strimming by putting some hardboard against the stones. Chairman to contact the ENC Tree Officer regarding a replacement yew tree.

Church Walk Future Cemetery: The documentation on the licence needs to be brought up to date. It was agreed that it was impossible to forecast when it might require to be brought into use as a Cemetery, but one might think in terms of five or six years. A more detailed plan was produced for the well head, which should be capped this year for safety reasons.

A quotation for pollarding the trees in the Cemetery drive and treating weeds in the gravel was received from Smith-Hetherington and accepted in the sum of £300.00.

Proposed: Councillor N. Ford

Seconded: Councillor I. Hetherington

### **02/196 Village Design Group**

The KC1 site has been dealt with in **02/194**. The Group should now give full attention to the Village Design Statement.

## **02/197 Amenities**

Nothing to report.

## **02/198 Street Lighting**

The supply of new street lights is virtually completed. It was decided that one further light should be installed in Forest Approach, close to the Dog Litter bin. A quotation will be obtained, and a separate quotation for replacing the wooden pole in Hall Yard by a small "pillar". The cost of the latter item should be met by the District Council.

## **02/199 Community Safety & Neighbourhood Watch**

Councillor B. Howard stated it is essential to find out when our new permanent Community Police Officer will begin work, who he or she will be and how many villages will he have to serve. A letter will be sent to this effect also stating that the very valuable work started by PC Kevin York and PC Andrew Jeavons must not be allowed to slip.

## **02/200 Proposed Skateboard Park**

The plans for the proposed park have been submitted. As there has been further vandalism on the Kings Mead site, the PC suggests that parents of the youngsters responsible should make it their duty to warn their children that this kind of behaviour will only impede any decision by ENC to allow this application to proceed.

## **02/201 Other Correspondence Received**

Peterborough Homes: Correspondence regarding a proposed planning application on land on the Blatherwycke Road.

Information Commissioner: Freedom of Information Act.

Royal British Legion: Request for funds for a memorial plaque.

The three items above will be brought forward at the next meeting.

NCC: Local Transport Plan Consultation documents were given to Councillor B. Howard for his perusal and report.

Correspondence from WSAtkins (Highways) regarding the re-siting of the grit bin from Hall Yard will be challenged by letter.

ENC: Election information regarding new councillors was noted.

NCC. Waste Deposit Plan: documents given to Councillor M. Day for study.

English Nature: A letter was received regarding the litter nuisance in the Hornstocks. ENC will be informed of this; Atlantic Waste will also be asked to deal with litter which originates from the Slipe Clay pit in this area.

NCC: A copy of a letter sent to Mrs. Christine Scotney regarding cancelled bus services was noted.

A letter from Mr. Tony Peacey regarding an unsafe roof and wall in Park Street; repairs to the roof have been set in motion. The wall is a Parish Council responsibility.

The Volunteer Centre: Copies of a letter received regarding their mini-bus services to Oundle will be sent to Mrs. Scotney and Mrs. Wade, the Bus Warden.

**02/202 Any Other Business**

Councillor J. Dixon raised the point that two new houses in West Street had brown stain, as opposed to painted windows, which she believed was contrary to the approval. The Clerk will check original plans and conditions, if any, in the Permission.

Councillor L. Crane had received a complaint from residents in Station Road regarding ball games being played in the hollow in front of the houses. The Housing Association will be asked to supply a sign forbidding ball games in this area.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

Signed..... Date.....

The next meeting will be at 7.30 pm in the Parlour of the Memorial Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2003.