

HILDENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the virtual Annual Parish Meeting of Hildenborough Parish Council held via Zoom on Wednesday 10 March 2021

In attendance were all members of the Parish Council, clerk/RFO, Borough and County Councillors and of the order of 40 local residents.

Attendees had been made aware, on the invitation/agenda that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020 were available on the website. No questions were raised.

1. Introduction

The chair, Cllr Margaret Coles, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that the circumstances were very different this year and it had been a challenging year due to the pandemic. She went on to say that the Parish Council had done their best to keep their work and services provided in the Community as normal as possible but it had been severely limited due to COVID-19 regulations. She went on to thank all members and local groups and individuals for the work they had done within the community during this time and showed the Council's appreciation for all the support given.

2. Hildenborough Parish Council Annual Report

2.1 Open Spaces

Cllr Haugh reported that there had been many challenges during the past year with the Council being required to close, at times, playground, ball court, exercise equipment, and the cycle track. The Council had endeavoured to keep whatever was possible open with rules of use clearly displayed to keep people safe. There were problems with some users not abiding by these as well as illicit camps in West Wood and arson in both playgrounds.

In spite of the problems two projects had been completed, that of the picnic area on the Village Green and the installation of two benches in West Wood playground. During the coming year the Council was investigating the ponding on the Village Green and other projects which will be dependent on COVID restrictions.

The plans for the expansion of the Leigh Flood Barrier and the Embankment to protect Hildenborough were going ahead but were awaiting planning approval.

2.1.2 Open Spaces questions

Are there plans to create a path around the Recreation Ground, if so when? Response: Yes there are and it is hoped that at least a start will be made this year.

2.2 Finance

Cllr McNeil reported that the budget for 2020/21 will be slightly underspent due mainly to the pandemic. The Council is projected to spend £66,000 by the end of the year and will have received £84,000. General reserves are set aside of £65,000 including £20,000 for ash die-back.

The precept will increase for 2021/22 by what looks to be a large increase of 25% but in reality is just 17p. per month or £8.75 per annum for band D properties. He went on to say that Hildenborough Council Tax rate is one of the lowest in Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council area.

There were no questions.

2.3 Kent County Councillor Report

The chair invited Hildenborough County Councillor to give a short report. He said the County Council had a year dominated by COVID, nearly all staff were working at home, apart from those who needed to be outside in the community. It had been difficult with all libraries, community facilities for youth groups etc. closed. He gave support to get schools, parish facilities etc open in the best possible condition when possible. This year the County Council's council tax was driven by adult social services and provision for nursing homes etc. He gave his support to Hildenborough for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, the first in his Council area. He continues to give support to the development of the flood preventions measure planned for Hildenborough.

2.3.1 Questions

When will the Library be reopened? Response: It is not on the current list but this would be raised at a meeting on 11 March, although it was thought not before the end of June.

2.4 Planning

Cllr Coles reported that 107 planning applications had been considered and commented on during the course of 2020, most notably the redevelopment of the Volvo site, Berkeley Homes plans for the Fidelity site and the Raphael Hospital extension. The Berkeley Homes plans were to go to the Borough Council's Area 1 Planning Committee later in March and the Raphael Hospital extension has been withdrawn.

2.4.1 Questions on Planning

Will KCC have an allocation in the Nursing Home currently being developed on the Volvo site? Response: The places will first be allocated to those able to fund themselves and KCC would get an opportunity to take up places if any remained vacant.

There were questions on the Local Plan land for building provision: response: The Borough Council is awaiting the response from the Inspectorate.

2.5 General questions:

Are there any plans for 20mph in Hildenborough? Response: This was a KCC development which was targeted towards towns to fulfil Government criteria for spending the funds. It could be considered to be included in the Hildenborough Highways Development Plan

Any news on addressing the train hooter noise? Discussions are still underway with Network Rail who are in favour of diverting the footpath as are KCC.

Is there any update on the Parking Investigation for Hildenborough? Currently the Borough Council have all parking matters on hold but it will be considered in due course.

There were a variety of questions on speeding throughout the village, pedestrian crossing at the school and the speed bumps in Leigh Road. Residents were asked to submit more details by email to the clerk when they would all be investigated.

3. Developing a Hildenborough Neighbourhood Plan

Cllrs. Dobson, Fullbrook, Sklavenitis and Thomas presented a comprehensive introduction to what a Neighbourhood plan is and the benefits to the future of Hildenborough. They appealed for interested residents to join the Council in developing this plan asking anyone who is interested, has project management skills, or skills/knowledge in specific areas or is just interested in the future development of Hildenborough to get in touch with the clerk to be involved.

The main areas to be looked at would be:

- the natural environment of conservation and flood management including the way Hildenborough can contribute towards the control of climate change;
- buildings – housing and maintaining the character of the village;
- amenities - leisure community facilities and open spaces
- structure - economy business and employment, and
- infrastructure - transport, education and health

The Council would be working with the Borough Council, who would supply information such as population (actual and projected), maps etc, to allow the Plan to look at the best outcomes for the village in a realistic way. The plan will need the input of specialists, people who will put the interests of the village to the fore, those with skills to contribute towards the areas outlined above as well as those with just enthusiasm to develop a relevant, useful and realistic plan for the future. It will probably take about 3 years to develop. Grants will be available in due course when the Council is ready to apply for them.

The chair thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm