

MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of Bekesbourne with Patrixbourne Parish Council was held at 7.30pm on Monday 20th April in Bekesbourne Village Hall.

The following Parish Councillors were present: Cllr Nicholson (Chair), Cllr Duplock, Cllr Sladden, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Muggridge, City Councillor Cook (arrived late as running Cubs), County Cllr Michael Northey. The Clerk was Gail Hubbard and there were 13 residents.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Eve Pearson, Cllr Julia Maltby, Cllr Pauline Pritchard, PCSO Lisa Williams, PCSO Toby Coburn, Community Warden Gary Moore, Jill Thomas, Christine Dufield, David & Jane Millyard.

CHAIRMANS WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and then introduced all the present Councilors to the meeting. The Chairman also mentioned the vacancy on the PC for another Cllr, please speak to the Chairman or Clerk for further details.

MINUTES (APRIL 2014)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman read her report as follows;

Introductions and thanks offered

- The present Council consists of Graham Duplock, Julia Maltby, Pauline Pritchard, Christine Sladden, Alan Gibson, Eve Pearson and David Muggridge.
- I would like to thank all the Councillors for all their hard work over the year. They have attended on your behalf, a Canterbury District Police Rural Engagement Meeting, Kent Highways meetings, Kent Association of Local Councils' meetings and meetings of the Little Stour and Nailbourne River Management Group and a CPRE meeting on Flooding held at County Hall. They have also been involved in the Speedwatch campaign and in the preparation of our Emergency Plan. Some Councillors have received training to become Flood Wardens.
- A big thank you is also due to Gail. Her role is vital to the functioning of our Parish and is always subject to change. An example is that we are now required to have more documentation available on our website, another is the new accounting and auditing procedures that small Parish Councils must in future follow. We are fortunate in that Gail has the skills to cope with these changes and implements them so efficiently. I would like to thank all those who care for the allotments, the Village Hall, and the Recreation Ground. I would also like to thank Zan Clifford our internal auditor, who has given great care to the auditing of our accounts for many years, and is now retiring from the role. Thank you for all your service to the Parish.
- Thanks to Michael Northey our County Councillor and Simon Cook our City Councillor for all their help and input into our villages.
- Thanks must also go to our Community Warden and local Community Police Officers, and our Neighbourhood Watch members, who all help to ensure that we feel safe and secure in our villages. I have just heard today that we have a

new PCSO officer Toby Coborn on a temporary basis, so I hope you see him round our villages soon.

- A special thanks must go to Jill Thomas who has worked tirelessly with all the relevant agencies to try to bring about some necessary improvements to help prevent the level of disruption as seen during the flooding of last year. This year we have survived without flooding but Jill kept everyone informed of the rapidly changing groundwater levels especially when it was feared that the floods would happen again this spring. A relatively dry period since Christmas has helped to keep us safe this year.

Finally thank you to everyone here tonight for making our villages such a friendly and vibrant place to live. I look forward to hearing all your reports.

So what has the Parish Council been doing this past year?

- As you can see from the recently delivered Polling cards this Parish is now in the Little Stour and Adisham Ward. Last year we responded to the electoral review consultation to say that we wished to remain in a ward with Bridge Parish and this was supported by the City Council. The Election Commission however deemed that should we be in the newly formed Little Stour and Adisham ward and have not changed that view despite our protestations. We are now sending in our opinions on the wards for the County Council elections. We think we should be in the same KCC Council area as Bridge, as traffic issues, and the fact we share a school, mean we have more in common with Bridge than with other neighbouring villages. We await the decision.
- The Recreation Ground. We have successfully applied for a grant to help with the costs of the refurbishment of the kitchen area at the clubhouse and given the go ahead for some repairs to be carried out at the children's play area. At some point in the future it will be necessary to resurface the play area as the current surface is suffering from wear in certain areas. We have started to budget towards these costs. We received a request for a skate park on the recreation ground from a young Parishioner, but couldn't take this forward because of the high costs involved. We have however researched the feasibility of providing a temporary facility during the summer holidays and have approached neighbouring councils to see if they would be interested in joining us in such a venture.
- Roads. Potholes and the state of the road surfaces continue to be a problem in our Parish. We report new potholes to KCC and we urge parishioners to do so too via the clerk or direct to the KCC website. Flooding on Station Road and School Lane has caused severe disruption this year. At the end of March KCC undertook a major cleanout of the Station Road drains and we hope this helps with the road flooding during periods of heavy rain.
- Speedlimits. We were invited to request a lowering of speed limits in some of our village areas. We proposed a speed limit of 20mph through Patrixbourne and lower speed levels along Bekesbourne Hill. Our requests were turned down on the basis that there was not a safety issue along these routes and therefore we would not receive priority funding to change the speed limits. To help us with any future submission please could everyone report back to the council any accidents or incidents of 'damage' only so we can keep up-to-date records of all traffic problems in our area to use as evidence for any future submission.

- We have helped fund the new cupboards in the Village Hall for the storage of the Millenium Boards and Parish Archives.
- We have continued to work on formulating our Parish Emergency Plan and have incorporated a number of points learnt from recent flooding, both within our parish and elsewhere, into the final version. We have been heartened by the good response we have received from parishioners to assist during any Emergency event. We hope to publish the final version of the plan soon.
- We have continued to send our views on local planning applications to the City Council. This last year has mostly been applications for alterations to individual homes. We have recently been consulted on the initial stages for a new development of Housing Association properties at the rear of current homes at Aspinall Close. Before this application can be taken forward the housing association will survey all local residents to ascertain the likely demand for such homes in our Parish. These homes will again be restricted to people with a local connection and a proven housing need.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Northey read his report as follows;

It's April time, the winter is over and gone, the blossom is on the trees and it is time for the Annual Parish Meeting. First, a word of tribute to Andrea who does so much and all the parish council team. It is a pleasure to work with you and many thanks for your help over the past four years.

Every year it seems that I have to say that KCC has had to make savings yet again – this year it is around £86 million. KCC would like to do so much more. I keep asking for more to be spent on Bekesbourne Lane in particular and the general maintenance to roads and the solving of drainage problems. There has been some good work in Bekesbourne Lane and Bekesbourne Hill and some excellent gully clearing a few weeks ago. A word of thanks also to Jill Thomas and all her colleagues for their work on flooding problems. Thankfully these were not so severe this year, and there is great preventative work going on

For September 2015, 86% of Kent primary school children got their first choice of school and 96% got one of their top three choices. At secondary school 81% got their first choice and 96% one of their top four. The appeals system will further improve these figures.

Every so often someone will complain that they receive 'nothing' or 'very little' for their council tax. A good response might be to simply list the 300+ services Kent County Council provides. Of course not everyone uses all the services – there's no compulsion to visit a library, download an e-book or visit a country park. But there are other services that everyone uses such as our roads and disposal of your waste (and paying the government landfill tax of £80 a tonne on that waste). Some services might be considered more as 'insurance' such as emergency planning, gritting the roads and provision of salt bins.

Much of Kent County Council's budget (and your council tax) is spent on school buildings and transporting children to and from school. If children are at their nearest appropriate school then KCC is obliged to pay for this but we also provide a £9m annual subsidy to make a deeply discounted bus pass available to all 11 – 16 year olds. KCC subsidises some uneconomic rural bus services, to keep them open. These and other transport services cost around £70m a year.

Then there are the services you would not want yourself but would surely want to see provided such as the coroner's court, trading standards, help to those fleeing domestic abuse and youngsters needing help to get off drink and drugs. KCC's biggest area of expenditure (over £400m) is on social care for adults – the elderly, the mentally ill, the disabled and those with learning disabilities and for children – keeping them safe from abuse, arranging adoption or care. You personally may get very little of these services but we would surely be appalled if they weren't provided. The district/city council, Kent Police, Kent and Medway Fire Authority and the parish/town council also set their precepts and the district/city council then sends out the council tax bills on behalf of them. This year KCC agreed a rise of 1.99% (just under the referendum level) and I do hope that local residents feel that it is worth it.

Cllr Northey mentioned the state of the road surface on Station Road and Bifrons Hill, basically from the A2 slip road along to Littlebourne. He will keep pushing but asked everyone to put forward their complaints to KCC Highways and keep logging all the potholes etc.

Cllr Northey was asked about the flooding issue on Station Road, Mr Arman said that Highways had now agreed to find the pipe across the field, Cllr Northey could not confirm this at this stage.

Cllr Cook arrived.

CITY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Simon Cook reported this was to be his farewell speech to this Parish, as due to the boundary changes to the City Council wards he would not be standing for this area from May. He said it had been a privilege to be our Cllr over the last 4 years, the PC does a great job and works hard for the residents.

Over the past few months Cllr Cook has been working hard to get better funding for the parishes, he has just finished chairing the review in an aim to get more funding for rural areas.

The Local Plan has been very much in the forefront of discussions, but nothing will happen now until after the elections. Cllr Cook has been involved in lobbying on residents behalves to keep the green gap between the villages and south Canterbury.

The Chairman expressed out thanks to Cllr Cook for his work over the last four years.

REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

There were reports from the following local groups;

Village Hall Management Committee – Pauline Fagg's report follows;

Members of the VHMC are; Pauline Fagg, Chris Kinsey, Tara Fisher, John Street and Graham Duplock.

- The AGM was held on 14th April.
- The cisterns and taps have been changed in the toilets and the water heater in the gents.
- The new cupboard is now in place, which has tidied up the corner nicely.
- There were some mouse problems, and the floor was being damaged, hopefully this is now sorted.
- Bookings are good at present.

- Chris Kinsey, Chairman and Treasurer is to stand down as he is moving out of the village. Thank you to Chris and we wish him and his family all the best. New members are needed.

Bekesbourne Parochial Church Council – (read by Clerk) Jane Millyard's report follows;

This report comes from Jane Millyard, who has not stood for re-election as Churchwarden this year. However, Jill Gillanders continues as a Warden.

There have been two major events at St Peter's Church in the last 12 months. The first was the arrival of our new priest, Canon Jonathan LLOYD last spring and he is gradually getting to know his 5 churches. He would have liked to be here this evening, but unfortunately this meeting clashes with a confirmation service in Bridge Church.

Services continue in their normal pattern and full details are available on the Bridge benefice and on the Bekesbourne parish council websites. The Vicar welcomes enquiries from anyone, even if they don't attend church, about baptisms, weddings and funerals.

The other major event was our Flower Festival in September on the theme of 'A History of Bekesbourne in 20 Objects'. About 40 volunteers helped to make the 3 day festival a great success. We welcomed over 450 people who admired the imaginative displays of flowers in the church, took part in activities, enjoyed homemade teas and bought lots of plants. The new toilet (which the Parish Council helped to fund) was a great asset over that weekend.

The church building continues in reasonably good shape and we have not had to undertake any major repairs. We are grateful for all the fundraising activities of the Friends of Bekesbourne Church and everyone who supports them. The bells are rung regularly for services and weddings and our band of ringers has been increased by 3 new adult learners.

The Parish Council's grant towards the maintenance of the churchyard enables us to pay for regular grass mowing during the summer and we are grateful for this too. Regular working parties of volunteers are also organised by Jonathan Cowans to maintain other areas and we welcome anyone would like to help.

Finally, Gail has some leaflets about the launch of our new Churchyard Trail on Sunday 10 May. We hope to see you there!

Friends of Bekesbourne Church (read by Cllr Duplock) Christine Dufield's report follows;

I would like to give you a brief report on the first rate work the Friends undertake, and I am very happy and proud of the work the Committee has undertaken in 2014. I would like to welcome two new members Martin and Shelia Gall, who are already proving to be a great asset.

The Friends of Bekesbourne Church was formed in 1994 when a nucleus of like-minded villagers strongly believed action was needed to protect the future of the Church building, and this has been the Committee's commitment ever since.

At the same time we are very keen to encourage all villagers to be involved and support the events we organize throughout the year. These events also bring

together newcomers and encourage them, and the stalwarts, to enter into the community spirit, which we also endeavor to achieve.

We would like to thank the villagers who have supported our events during 2014 with their generosity in giving of their time, we hope they continue and more villagers will follow in their example in 2015.

The events organized included, the very popular wine and wisdom and the jumble sale in January. We held a classical concert in St Peters Church featuring music by the Galliard Trio on 7th June, together with an after drinks and canapé gathering which proved highly successful. For the first time we held the boot fare on the recreation ground, which worked well and the Christmas bazaar in December netted the best recorded profit.

Thanks to Steve Thomas, a resolute supporter, with his organization of the '100 club'. Many thanks Steve.

The above mentioned people are but a few, and the committee would like to thank all who have supported us, and hope you will continue to do so. We have new exciting and innovative ideas for 2015 – so watch this space.

Patribourne with Bridge Parochial Church Council - Cllr Nicholson's report follows;

The major project to restore the wheel window and north valley gutter finished in late summer, 2014. A thanksgiving service was held on 21st September, when the Dean came to preach and the singing was lead by choir boys from the Cathedral. Many thanks to the local people who contributed to the project.

Since then we have installed under pew heating and are starting to develop a plan to build an extension to the church to include a meeting room, a kitchen and toilet facilities. This will enable us to welcome not only our congregation more but also more visitors.

We have joined the Green Pilgrimage Network especially with a view to welcoming additional numbers of visitors walking the Via Francigena. Also enhanced facilities will allow 'champing'.

More than 80 people congregated in the churchyard on Easter Monday for the start of the youth pilgrimage to Canterbury. They were lead by Archbishop Justin Welby.

Friends of St Mary's – (read by The Chairman) Cllr Pritchard's report follows;

The Friend's have had a relatively quiet fund-raising year last year as St Mary's had a lot of building work which restricted our access to our main venue. In other words, we spent what we had been raising!

We now have new rainwater gullies and the Norman wheel window has had its stonework repaired and its glass spruced up. None of that would have been possible without the contribution of the Friends. Courtesy of the VAT man, we also then had enough in the fabric fund to install under pew heating at Christmas time, so we no longer have the coldest church in Kent!

We did have a most enjoyable Midsummer Garden party last June with wonderful music provided by Royal Destiny, our own local gospel choir. In October, we had a concert by Canterbury Voices who have since appeared in Top Choir Kent. However, our efforts at a fun raising quiz had to be cancelled through a lack of quizzers.

This year, we have some musical events planned for later in the season so do come along and help us raise money to get the clock going, repair the woodpecker damage and do something about our toilet facilities.

Recreation Ground Management Committee – (read by the Clerk) Jill Thomas's report follows;

Main events this year were:

Finally managing to persuade the Church Commissioners to cut back the branches overhanging the pavilion roof – our Chairman, David Hillier, pushed this through so big thanks to him.

An open discussion as to whether to allow Canterbury Croquet Club to play at the ground and the decision was made not to proceed.

Hosted FoBC boot fair because Parsonage field was flooded and there are plans to do so again this year because both stall owners and visitors appreciated the level ground and the WC facility. The FoBC managed the potential traffic issues and there were no complaints

Our clerk, Gail, successfully negotiated a capital grant towards putting in a new kitchen – thank you Gail – which should happen this year. The Cttee must contribute 40% of the cost - has sufficient funds to do so and it is part of the ongoing schedule of works to improve the pavilion – however we are yet to agree the expenditure – any opinions welcome.

As a direct result of the croquet discussions we received a donation of £100 from a Patrixbourne resident towards an unspecified improvement at the ground – Cttee will decide what it will be at its next meeting. Possibly four more silver birches trees or contribution to new kitchen.

Our AGM is at 7pm on May 7th in the pavilion – all are welcome. After the AGM it is the usual practice to hold an Extraordinary Meeting to elect the trustees who form the Management Committee. We can co-opt as many trustees as we want and anyone wishing to stand is invited to speak to me asap. The whole AGM event typically takes about half an hour. We then have a business meeting with full agenda soon after, typically in June

St Mary's continues to use the ground for parking for weddings, funerals and other events at the church with the full co-operation of the Sports Club for which thanks again.

I am giving this report as the Secretary of Bekesbourne Recreation Ground Management Committee.

Neighbourhood Watch (read by the Clerk) Jill Thomas's report follows;

Functions mainly as a communication group receiving messages from the district NHWatch team/police and passing on those most relevant to us via a cascading e-mail network.

Anyone wishing to be added to this network can e-mail me on Cobhamcourt@btinternet.com.

Relatively quiet year no major incidents or initiatives. Our villages continue to be relatively crime free – thank goodness.

Good response to request for link people to help with Emergency Plan – of which more later I expect.

I am giving this report as the NHW Co-ordinator for BwithP.

River group (read by the clerk) Jill Thomas's report follows;

The Group which was formed after the floods of 2001 has continued to be pro-active this year and has worked with the agencies for significant improvements in the valley.

I am giving this report as the Secretary of the Group.

Following the difficult events of last winter 2013-2014 we had our fingers crossed most of this winter 2014-2015 and heavy rainfall in autumn 2014 kept the groundwater levels high. However, a dry spring has been most helpful and we have now moved into the period when the groundwater levels are falling and we are enjoying a benign and welcome flow in the Nailbourne.

The River Group has membership of two multi-agency groups: one seeking long-term solutions to the sewer issues; and the other seeking solutions to the fluvial and groundwater flooding issues. We use our position on both these groups to keep our issues at the forefront and drive progress forward. We are seen nationally as an exemplar flood group with longevity and trust which is an important profile.

Viv Pritchard, resident of Patrixbourne, St Mary's Road, ex CCC, is the Independent Chair of the sewer MAG and I am its Secretary. Throughout this winter we have received weekly reports from Southern Water on the levels in the sewer and what SWater has been doing about it.

The pumping station in School Lane which takes all the sewage down the valley from south Barham, was completely refurbished last summer/autumn and this seems to have been a success. The residents in Patrixbourne were all fitted with non-return valves and no one had any problems this winter despite higher than normal groundwater levels.

There were difficulties in Bishopsbourne and you may have seen the tankers bring sewage from Bishopsbourne to the pumping station in School Lane twice a day for a period of weeks around February and March. This caused (I believe) minimal disruption for us and saved the tankers joining the congestion on the ring road in Canterbury at peak traffic times.

Southern Water is committed to resolving all the sewage issues in the valley and the MAG is meeting again on June 10th to discuss progress on the long-term solutions.

Max Tant, an officer of KCC, (forgive me Max I forget your formal title) is the Chair of the flood MAG and his colleague Joseph Williamson is the Secretary. We greatly appreciate their support and the support of the elected members of KCC who have taken an interest in our flood issues and helped the River Group in its work including Cllr Harrison, Cllr Vye, Cllr Northey and Cllr Vickery-Jones. Also Julian Brazier, MP.

The River Group was the catalyst for a long list of short-term measures were put in place last autumn in the valley with some excellent collaborative working between CCC, the EA and KCC. The Group is now working on the medium term and long term measures. Funding has been allocated for 2015-2016 to model river flows in the Little

Stour and Nailbourne valley and there will be a workshop in July(ish) to discuss the options resulting from this modelling.

The EA also provided throughout the winter of 2014-2015 very helpful daily updates on the groundwater and river levels and a five-day forecast on what might be on the horizon.

The EA has now given permission for works to be carried out collaboratively by the residents in Patrixbourne at St Mary's river/road bridge to straighten the channel there and we will be meeting the EA in May to further this. The Japanese knotweed on the site is an issue but not insurmountable.

One option to help alleviate flooding of the houses at the centre of Patrixbourne is to raise the footbridge at the bottom of Keeper's Hill or to rebuild it with a new structure. Obviously any changes here will need to be informed by community input and it will need the approval of Historic England (the new name for the part of English Heritage which oversees listed structures). We are working on a Heritage Statement in this respect and will be seeking to work with Patrixbourne residents to develop a community-supported plan.

Bekesbourne History Group (read by the Clerk)- Jill Thomas's report follows;

Bekesbourne History Group comprises the small team which produced the book on the history of Bekesbourne published in 2013, and again in 2014, under the editor/authorship of the two Davids – David Gilmour and David Millyard.

On behalf of the Group I would like to say thank you for the generous grants and permissions from the Parish Council, the Village Hall Management Committee, and Bridge and District History Society which have enabled the building of the new cupboards at the back of the hall.

These are to house the parish exhibition boards and other archive material held by the History Group and also the Parish Council.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN

The Chairman thanked all those who have already returned their Community Plan response forms, every household in the parish should have received a letter and response form. The Emergency Plan is on track to be complete by this summer.

LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING

The Chairman explained that we, alongside Southern Housing and Action with Communities in Rural Kent would be carrying out a Local Housing needs survey, to assess the local needs, with a view to potentially building some additional homes for rent in the parish. The surveys would be going to all houses in the parish in the next month or so.

MOBILE LIBRARY

The mobile library currently visits our Parish at the following times;

Monday 4-4.30pm outside Bekesbourne Village Hall - weekly

Monday 4.40-5pm Aerodrome Road - weekly

Tuesday 9.25-9.55am St Mary's Road - fortnightly

There is a move by KCC to turn the library service into a charitable trust. Only a few people are making use of this service and it would be a real shame to lose it with the reorganization of the libraries. Please use it or risk losing it!

AOB

Resident Gill Moon asked Cllr Northey when the road from Bekesbourne to Littlebourne would be resurfaced, Cllr Northey said it was not currently on the programme but urged residents to write to him and highways direct about the poor state of this road.

Several residents raised the question of a possible newsletter for this parish, or perhaps details from meetings in On the Nail, as Bridge PC do. It was agreed this would be looked into further to see what could be arranged.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....