Draft Minutes of the 124th Annual Parish Meeting of Wormshill

**held in the Village Hall on Tuesday April 4th 2017**

**at 7pm**

**--ooOoo--**

**Present:-** Simon Bass (chair), Jane Bass (recording secretary), Susan Smith, Rosemary Smith, James Pearce, Kevin Shilling, Alan Joy, Kate Joy, Valerie Hemsley-Flint, Patrik Garten Wendy Miller, Ian Brown, Mike Gee, Patrick Phillips, Joan Lewis and A N Other (Illegible)

**Apologies:-** Jeremy and Virginia Leigh-Pemberton, Beryl Gibbard and Nigel Field; PCSO Dave Rowley

**Basis of meeting**

The meeting opened at 19:05. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and advised the villagers that an Annual Village Meeting (AVM) is held under s72 of the Local Government Act 1972. The National Association of Local Councils is of the view that we can discuss and agree anything which the villagers believe is important and which we can if necessary influence through MBC, KCC or another public body.

The first task is to elect a chairman and vice chairman for the following year. The chair stands down for this and hopefully a villager will recommend someone and that that view is seconded. Strictly speaking the vote is for the meeting itself but a standing contact is helpful for ongoing contact with other bodies.

**1. Choice of Chairman for 2017/2018**

The Chair stood down to allow the election to take place. Patrick Phillips proposed and Mike Gee seconded the proposal that Simon Bass be chairman for the year and there being no other proposal, this was supported unanimously by the meeting.

**2. Choice of Vice-Chairman**

The chairman asked if anyone was interested as standing as vice-chairman. He explained that the duties were not onerous but that it may be helpful to have a deputy to assist if the need arose. In the absence of any volunteers the position was put in abeyance for the year.

1. **Minutes of 123rd meeting held on 12th April 2016**

Draft minutes had been made available to those attending the previous year’s meeting and the chairman stated that there had been no amendments requested. Copies of the minutes were made available in the hall and the meeting authorised the chairman to sign them as a correct record.

**4. Update by Police and Neighbourhood Watch**

Unfortunately the police had not been able to attend the meeting but had provided a crime report which stated that since October 2016, there had been three crimes reported. As has been said before, the chair pointed out that the police can only do something about crimes if they are reported and asked if anyone was aware of any that might not have been? The police had commented that currently there was very little happening here.

Patrick Phillips (PP), our Neighbourhood watch contact, said that he gets a report from Maidstone rather than Sittingbourne and as a theft in Bottom Pond Road would be classed as being in the Sittingbourne area, the Maidstone report would not cover everything.

The chair commented that the police had reported particular issues with dog thefts and of Land Rover Defenders.

PP said that he passes out all the information that he gets by email for whom he has addresses. Newer residents tend to sign up but older ones less so. Some of this, especially from the Sittingbourne side, is duplicated in the Parish Magazine.

A resident stated that she had suspicions regarding the quarry and what it was being used for. She had reported activity to the police and had a crime number. There was a large hole in the wire fence surrounding it. Other residents had also spoken to her about the state of the tip and had spoken to other locally with an interest in it. Environmental Health had been out and had commented that there was another linked site elsewhere in the Swale area which they were keeping an eye on. At present, Maidstone Borough Council were not unduly concerned as they were not burning tyres there as they had done previously.

Valerie Hemsley-Flint (VHF) commented that she had also been in contact with Environmental Health and had a letter from them regarding this.

The chair commented that he adds the occasional reports from the Kent Rural Police Action Team onto the website. These make interesting reading and shows that they do take action over some crimes including rural vehicle thefts, hare coursing, poaching etc. This action includes apprehending some villains.

**5. Report from Patrik Garten (PG), our Borough Ward Councillor.**

Looking at the minutes, he commented that many of the issues he was dealing with were similar to the previous year. The pillar box theft had been an interlude in what is generally a quiet place. He tries to represent the whole ward in the town hall. The Conservatives are the larger party but not in charge. There is a committee system with Liberal / UKIP / Independent team in overall control. In general, the Conservatives represent the rural areas, the others represent the towns. There is no money for planning enforcement - £130k extra was proposed (to be taken from Maidstone Museum which is subsidised to the extent of £10 a visitor) but this was voted down.

The Local Plan has been checked by the Local Government Inspector for validity and is now back out to consultation. This would allow 900 fewer homes than was originally proposed.

The development of farm land at Junction 8 was turned down by MBC but an appeal is planned for October 2017. Local councillors are fighting the current application for warehouses. The inspector said that there should be more office space rather than warehouses between the A20 and M20. It is not the right place to build at present. The new housing is on Sutton Road and residents couldn’t get to J8 very easily at present, certainly without the Leeds Relief Road being in place.

Fly-tipping remained a big concern of local residents. It was important to report this if it was to be addressed properly and the Borough’s website has a facility to do this. If it is not reported, nothing will be done. It is very much statistics-driven. The environment dept is working properly – PP noted there is a target for collecting rubbish which PG said was 48 hours. The quickest time to deal with a case was 7mins! You can see on a website what has been reported and what is outstanding. Wendy Miller (WM) asked if they go through fly tipping to see where it came from to which PG said that not currently but they will have further powers to enable them to do this shortly. Current evidence won't stand up in court – MBC need evidence beyond all reasonable doubt. A name or address label on a box isn't enough – that person would just get a warning. If you can get a registration number that would clearly assist.

VHF commented that Swale are better at removing fly-tipping than Maidstone. Often some rubbish is left behind when cleaning up. PG commented that the fly-tipping team have 10 mins to do a job and that some workers are not taking enough pride in their job. PG emphasised that it really is worth reporting - if don't get any joy through officers, report to him. The Chair asked if there was any correlation with the end of the freighter service? PG said there was no data as yet. He commented that rubbish had been dumped in his lane and he thought that if they've come this far to do that, why not go to the tip? WM pointed out that if you take house clearance rubbish to the tip, you will have to pay. PG asked that you should make sure you see the clearers licence if you are getting waste cleared. WM said that human nature is to pay the cheapest rate. The Chair said that ultimately you should fine the person ordering the service, not just the person dumping.

VHF pointed out that tips won't accept vans. PG said there were vehicle size restrictions and AJ added that Maidstone won't accept rental vans. However, PG added that you can register if a van is your only household vehicle. The Chair said that the council was trying to minimise the waste collected but would have to reassess if fly-tipping continued to rise. PG said that planning enforcement seems to work well.

VHF added that Maidstone don't recycle stones - Swale do. Maidstone don't recycle lots of things that that Swale do. PG said that there was a big problem in Maidstone because increasing amounts of recyclable waste were being turned away because they were contaminated with normal domestic waste. VHF can't recycle plastic sacks but PG said that as Maidstone

has an incinerator this is not a problem as plastic bags make good energy!

**6. Village Correspondence**

During the year the Chair gets a vast amount of correspondence from the county, borough and police as well as from other bodies such as the local NHS or local charities. Most is not very relevant to a small village like Wormshill but where it is he may comment or update the notice board. The main issue was the Local Plan, discussed later in the meeting.

**7. Parish accounts**

The chairman reminded the meeting that it was an ‘Annual Parish Meeting’ rather than a formal parish council since as soon as a precept was levied, it would also be necessary to have the accounts audited. This would incur otherwise avoidable expenditure. As in previous years he saw no obvious reason to change that at present.

The chairman stated that he would be returning the short form, as required, for the year ended March 31st 2017 to PKF, the auditors for small public bodies in Kent. The short form would declare that there had been no income and no expenditure during the year. The balance in the bank (Santander) was unchanged at £504.93.

The meeting supported the position of remaining a Parish Meeting rather than becoming a Council and approved the action of the chairman as regards the accounts.

However, there had been a change in the law from 1st April which meant that if expenditure within a year amounted to less than £25k, an audit would no longer be a mandatory requirement. There is about £500 in the village account and it has been there for many years. It is now within our gift to use it if we wish, eg, to give it to the village hall, should they have any particular plans such as a disabled toilet. However, we would need the authority of village if we were to do this. This meeting would be the quorum to make that decision.

He asked if he had the agreement of meeting to make such an ‘in principle’ decision – that is, to pass over the funds when positive plans for their use had been agreed. This was agreed and the meeting would be kept informed of any potential decision.

**8. Village charities**

The chair hoped that all attending were aware of the village charities and had provided copies of the accounts. In response to a question about ‘the poor’, he read out the definition of charity objectives. Previously, the Poor’s Land Charity used to provide dictionaries but this was no longer seen as relevant in the age of the internet. The trustees had tried to find ways to use the funds by buying something that youngsters could remember the village by but had not had much success. They did however fund some school uniform for a youngster last summer and contributed to a Mothers Union holiday support arrangement in the previous year. There are people in need but not always obviously so.

The Mary and Harriett Shornden charity trust for older people aimed to give practical support to older people, eg, to buy a microwave etc. It will continue with some Christmas gifts at present but the trustees would like if they could to help out older people who had specific needs but could not afford to finance them themselves.

It’s a difficult balancing act as what the trustees can do is prescribed by charity law and the charities income is quite modest.

He thanked his fellow trustees - Nicola Billing, Kevin Shilling, Ian Philips and Claire Bartlett and was always happy to hear any new ideas anyone had regarding what could be done.

Nigel Field had again kindly inspected the accounts and signed them off and he thanked him for that.

Mike Gee (MG) asked if any of the funds could be used for the village hall? The chair said that unfortunately this was not within the charity’s objects, at least not directly.

The accounts were proposed by MG and seconded by James Pearce (JP).

VHF commented that the Mothers Union holidays should be self-supporting and shouldn't need funding by the charity. The chair commented that the particular case was considered appropriate by the trustees and thus within the objects of charity, although he didn’t think it appropriate to discuss this further in a public session.

A future plan is to leaflet everyone in the parish e.g. to bring the Poor’s Land Charity to those going to university or entering apprenticeships and the Mary and Harriett Shornden charity to older people’s attention. Not everyone was aware of these charities and the trustees were keen that they were made aware.

**9. Village Hall**

Joan Lewis (JL) gave an update on village hall activities. The Committee remains very small at present so please join if you can. The AGM is on April 25th. Major expenditure is needed on the drains from the toilets to the cess pit as they need replacing - the clay pipes are cracked. The kitchen also needs updating and refurbishing. MG asked what the current financial situation is? JL said that Mrs Beatty will present the accounts at their AGM and it should be clear then – she didn't have a feeling for the figures at present. There is an investment account which is the "rainy day fund". The Chair said there are grant raising opportunities as he often got notice of such things, eg, from Tesco or Maidstone Borough Council. He would be happy to help with grant applications once it was clear what we need and what the projects are.

MG said we need a radical rethink of what we do with the hall, a new approach like Bredgar or Tunstall, although they are clearly bigger. The challenge is someone to handle the booking. SCB said the village website (provided by KCC) may have a booking facility although he was unsure about whether this could handle payments.

MG was happy to participate in looking at this. WM said that when they were on Committee, people didn't turn up to activities and it got rather depressing. JL said that they have tried lots of activities – the "Not Valentines" evening was successful but was nearly all Bredgar people. There are often empty tables at events despite lots of time and effort put in. A lot needs doing to the outside as well.

Please come along to the AGM or come to offer help if you can't join the committee. We need to agree as a village what we want for the hall. Susan Smith (SS) said the village has changed in the 60 years she has been here - when we used to have fete, EVERYONE mucked in. Mothers stayed at home and lived in rented homes. Now they buy and as they are expensive, both family members are working so families are often out at the weekend. The pace of life is much faster than ever before the whole village would come together. JL said there used to be flower shows and spring and harvest events. She's busy now but still gives up a little bit of her time. Really this was a plea for others to do so as well.

**10. Planning**

There hasn't been anything significant this year but the chair would bring it to attention of the village if there was. Maidstone’s revised local area plan is out for consultation currently. The plan noted that Lenham is a site for growth but now ‘only’ 1,000 rather than 1,500 houses. Overall, the number of houses are reduced in the plan and some areas earmarked for growth have been removed from the plan. Areas of outstanding natural beauty are hopefully protected. The Chair will respond but simply that it is noted with no comment, unless others have different views. It is important that a plan is in place as it does make growth outside the plan areas much more difficult.

WM asked if any houses were planned near Borden? The Chair said that as that is Swale he doesn’t always get details so doesn’t know the detail, PG added the same and it was unsure whether their plan was approved yet. It is rather a planning free for all until a plan is approved. The Chair will look on their website. MG said there had been a protest march over this.

Otherwise, if any application was controversial the chair said he would publicise it on the noticeboard and website – and of course Maidstone put up orange notices anyway.

**11. Highways / road sweeping**

The condition of the roads remained an issue after winter. SCB had noted white markings round holes meaning that the county had identified them for repair but in many instances the markings have rubbed off. There is a big hole by Park Lane. Kate Joy (KJ) got a puncture this week from it! – the Chair has reported it on the KCC website. PP said that the hole outside theirs has been repaired but needs doing again. VHF said this would be done by 21st May. KCC do these within 28 days from painting the lines. They may need to close the road as the whole surface is coming up by Park Lane. MG said there was a big hole on Bedmonton Lane. WM said that in terms of damage claims, you can only claim if there is no white line round the hole. VHF confirmed this.

*Mud on roads*

The issue of mud on the road was raised. SS said that a local farmer was responsible for spreading the mud and that if a contractor had spread it, they would be liable to clean up the road. She had phoned the council and they confirmed that it would be the same for a farmer, so that person would be liable. The road had been in a deplorable state - pedestrians, bikes, cars and so on were picking it up and spreading it everywhere. She had spoken to the landowner and asked if the farmer responsible would like to acquire a sweeper to clean the road? SS said that he could be taken to court and fined but that the land owner could be prosecuted if the farmer repeated the offence. However, SS said that the farmer responsible won't accept liability, whilst it would be unfair to prosecute the landowner who isn't often here.

The chair agreed that the road had been left in a terrible state and that a local cyclist had complained to him about how unpleasant it was to cycle through. The Chair said he would speak with the landowner and will write to the farmer so that he is under notice.

A resident had sent a copy of letter she had had so he knows what the law is. He has deposited piles of manure in the field by hall which was unsightly and led to flies in the summer. She also commented on his farming and animals escaping into other’s properties. Another resident had

reported dead animals. Concerns were raised over sheep laying helpless for 2 or 3 days, dying, not being treated humanely nor being numbered.

The Chair promised to bring all this to the landowner’s attention as he was unlikely to be aware of this. Concerns were also raised over fencing which needed repair, gates not shut and cows on road. Gates were locked so sheep or cattle could not easily be returned. Stock fencing was not always provided and instead he was relying on other parties fencing.

The Chair promised to add all of this to the letter.

*Litter picking*

The Chair said a number of villagers and their families had been involved in litter cleaning a few weeks ago to which he (and he was sure the village generally) gave thanks. MG commented that he and PP did some last cleaning last year.

*Other matters*

The issue of the Hollingbourne - Bredgar road closure was raised and the arrangements for the closure from White Post to Bredgar. The Chair would contact KCC regarding this. WM pointed out that you can go down one slip and up the other to get round works but this was not signposted. PG said Swanton Street would be closed for 6-8 weeks. There is very little you can take up with KCC – there is an electronic sign by motorway bridge. The impact of the closure is exacerbated by emergency works on Hazel Street.

Kevin Shilling said he would contact SE water re signage which should be now have been removed.

VHF pointed out that the pavement by the church needs cleaning. Large lorries are coming through village, destroying verges and Mrs Moore's rockery. Oak branches had been knocked off at her house. There was a lot of speeding but nobody had been killed so they won't do anything yet.

The state of Drakes Lane was raised. Users are driving round the concrete blocks and still destroying it. The sign at the bottom end had been knocked down. The question regarding the status of the byway was raised and whether vehicles were allowed. The Chair said he would follow up. WM thought there was a planning application to refurbish the lanes and asked what had been done?

**12. Trees and woodlands**

David Hill was not here so the Chair asked if there was any evidence of any more ash dieback?

SS asked about road sweeping – the big sweeper hasn't been through for months and is meant to be followed by the small one. She had rung and the big one came but only did down one side of road! She asked PG to pursue. The footpaths need doing too. It was also pointed out that the roads were getting narrower and narrower through not being cut so frequently.

The Chair said he would follow up and put the schedule on the website

**13. Any other business**

James Pearce said that BT are to replace the glass around the top of the phone box.

VHF thanked SCB for his work and for continuing to carry on next year, for which he thanked her.

The meeting closed at 20:30

**Date of next meeting – 17th April 2018 7pm**

**Approved at meeting on 17th April 2018.**

**Simon Bass - Chairman**