

BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

www.boxleyparishcouncil.co.uk

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Wildfell Close
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To All Members of the Council.

6th February 2012

There will be a meeting of the **Estates Committee** on **Tuesday 14th February 2012** at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 pm when it is proposed to transact the following business:

1. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.**
Members are requested to declare any interests or lobbying on items in the agenda.
2. **Apologies and absence.**
To receive apologies for absence.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting 13th December, 2011.**
To consider the minutes of the meeting and if in order to sign as a true record (previously circulated).
4. **Matters Arising From Previous Minutes.**
 - 4.1 Minute 2346/10 Boxley War Memorial – The novation agreement has been signed as agreed out of meeting and returned to Stonewest. Assurances have been requested regarding payment and insurances and a start will be agreed after checking with the Church. An update will be provided at the meeting.
 - 4.2 Minute 2366/11 Sandling Village Sign – the following comments have been received with regards to concern shown by councillors on the split that has appeared in the oak post holding the sign. *'Oak will shrink by 8-10% across the grain, but there's no significant shrinkage along it's length. Splits or 'shakes' will appear in timbers, depending on its dimensions and type of cut. Large timbers such as tie beams and main posts will be boxed and will split, though this will not affect their structural integrity'*. Pammie Stebbings also stated "I live in a timber framed cottage that was built in 1480 and honestly I could get my hand in some of the gaps in our beams! The splits and shakes are a characteristic of oak but are in no way detrimental to its strength. The split will probably open up even more in the summer depending on the vagaries of the English weather, but please don't worry".
 - 4.3 Minute 23665/12 Chess Club at Beechen Hall – Cllr G Smith, has confirmed that after further investigation into the feasibility of holding a chess club at Beechen Hall, has concluded that Beechen Hall is not a suitable venue for this type of activity.
 - 4.4 Minute 2366/10 Grounds Maintenance – Roundwood Roundabout the Clerk has confirmed that this has been identified under the environment committee's budget 3.3.
 - 4.5 Minute 2365/9.1 Extractor Hood/Fan for kitchen further investigations are required and this will be brought back to the April agenda for consideration.
 - 4.6 Minute 2366/9.7 Whiteboard for the Committee Room – A request for a provision in the 2012/13 budget was made by members. See report on page 3-4.

To adjourn the meeting to allow the public or press to comment

5. **Allotments** – A presentation by Cllr Bob Hinder see report on page 4

6. **Asst Clerk's Report.**

6.1 The following hire fees were received for December/January. (Brackets indicate income over same period previous year).

		2010/2011
Casual	£2,060.49	(£1,581.01)
Regular	<u>£3,035.83</u>	<u>(£2,371.56)</u>
Total	£5,096.32	(£3,952.57)
Cumulative figures for		
	2011/12	2010/11
Casual	£ 9,907.13	(£9,716.29)
Regular	<u>£15,311.72</u>	<u>(£13,167.10)</u>
Total	£25,218.85	(£22,883.39)

6.2 Marketing Plan - To receive an update.

Action	Note	Completion date	Office review Date
Leaflets	New leaflets have been designed and will be distributed with Downs Mail.	February	6 monthly
Beechen hall information	Completed		Annually- April
Website	Work in progress for new website.	Expected end March beginning April	Quarterly
Targeting other hall users	Leaflet has been mailed to local businesses	w/e 10 th February	6 monthly
Advertising External Noticeboard	New poster on local boards Advertising availability at the Hall.	w/e 10 th February	Quarterly
Planning Change Extended Hours	To be reviewed as time allows. It is considered that other work takes priority.		Bring back to agenda with report October 2012.
Review of Hire Fees	A 2% increase was agreed at December 2011 meeting	To take effect 1 April 2012	Annually- December

6.3 **Loss of Regular Hirers** – Unfortunately the hall has lost 3 regular hirers since the beginning of December. Two of the hirers used the hall on a Wednesday and were fairly new. Sling Fitness (Wednesday morning) struggled to fill her class. The other, Amateur Dramatics (Wednesday evening) lost many of the attendees due to the Panto season during December/January. The third hirer 'AllaboutW8' (weight loss group) hired the Committee Room on a Thursday evening for 1 hour. In view of this a new leaflet was designed and is being distributed with the Downs mail and also further afield. Consideration is also being given to taking an advert out in a quarterly publication.

6.4 **New and future hirers** - The hall has received enquiries for the use of the committee room for training purposes with one still to supply future dates. It has been noted that there has been a drop off in advance bookings for casual hirers and this has been addressed by the leaflet, as above.

7. **Review of Policies and Procedures.**

7.1 Review the policies and procedures list and to amend if necessary– Please see list on pages 10-11

- 7.2 Business Continuity Plan – This was extensively reviewed in 2011 and it is considered, by the office, as still fit for purpose, however if members wish to view a copy a request can be made to the office.
- 7.3 Sharps policy – This was extensively reviewed in 2011 and it is considered, by the office, as still fit for purpose, however if members wish to view a copy a request can be made to the office.
- 7.4 Terms of Reference – to review and recommend any amendments to be approved at the April meeting – See pages 11/12.

8. **Burial Ground.**

- 8.1 West corner of North Wall – A quote has not yet been received from Goodsells, however it is hoped that an update will be available in time for the meeting.
- 8.2 Graves conforming to burial regulations – to receive and agree draft family letter, advert and PR strategy (in case of bad publicity) as part of this procedure see report page

9. **Renewal of Utilities Contracts.**

The Gas contract will be up for renewal at the end of April and details will be brought to the meeting see report page.....

10. **Matters for Information**

Performing Rights Licence see report page.....

11. **Date of Next Meeting.**

Tuesday 17th April 2012 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade, Chatham commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Clerk to the Council

For information – items to be returned to agenda Minute 2021/9.2 Tombs in closed churchyard.

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Item 4.6. Whiteboard for Committee Room – *purpose of item is to consider the points below and to agree a way forward.*

At its December meeting, Members discussed supplying an interactive board for the committee room to increase its marketing potential. It was requested that £1,200.00 be placed within the 2012/13 budget.

There are several issues regarding the interactive board that were not considered at the meeting and after an initial investigation and thought (see below) a budget provision has not been made for 2012/13, however a way forward is being suggested.

- 1. Security of unit. The committee room is open to hire for any event and is regularly used for dancing and hired (along with the hall) for parties. In view of the cost of a unit (and its fragility) the unit might need to be enclosed in some form of 'cupboard'. The office can check with the insurance company to ensure that it can be insured if this is course of action is chosen. This precaution is needed because interactive boards cannot be written on with normal pens (and any such use can damage them beyond repair) and it is likely that this might be the type of thing that would happen at an event as people may think it is a 'normal board'. The committee room is not always locked and there is unlimited access if it is hired thus the board could be stolen unless it was encased. It is also believed that interactive boards can't have any pressure against the

outer skin (without causing damage) and so a cupboard would reduce this risk especially as tables are often placed against walls during hires and so any accidental toppling of something onto the board would be stopped. The down side of having a cupboard to protect the board is that it will reduce the size of the room. It will probably be expensive as it will have to be purpose built as, for health and safety reasons, it probably can't have a door that opens close to the door to the committee room. Nobody will know what is behind the doors (unless they have a window) so might break in to see if it is a large plasma screen (worth stealing).

A possible way to get around these problems are to purchase a mobile interactive board so that it can be stored in the office and wheeled through. This would probably be a better option because it could be wheeled into the hall if that is being used thus making the marketing of this area more attractive.

2. Value for money. Members need to be able to justify any expenditure so must be sure that it will be used. With the marketing of the hall this should be the case in future years, however research will need to be undertaken to ensure something purchased now won't be obsolete in 2 years, what software/type of laptop it would be compatible with etc. A wheeled unit would be more flexible as it could be used in any area however there may be storage issues.
3. It should also be considered before any wall mounted unit is purchased whether it is actually feasible in terms of layout of the committee room. If you have a fixed item then it dictates where everything else goes and as the size of the committee room is small there are issues regarding trailing leads, where the person stands to deliver the presentation (it is likely that they would actually block half the screen). Other H & S issues are also caused by cupboard doors potentially blocking access/egress to the room.
4. An interactive board connects to a computer and projector. The projector projects the computer's desktop onto the board's surface. When members have seen interactive boards (most likely in a classroom setting) they may not have noticed the projector which is wired into the system and generally mounted on the ceiling. Mobile boards with an arm holding a projector can be purchased.

Currently the office allows regular hirers to use its screen and for trusted hirers it has, in the past, let them have access to the projector and office laptop. With a new laptop it was planned to expand this availability and advertise it in the new leaflets as the old laptop is basically surplus (and can be stripped of all PC information). What is however required is a proper media trolley costs range from £50 to £100.

It is therefore suggested that a media trolley be purchased (this would be used by the office anyway) and the laptop, screen and projector be made available. This would give time to judge whether an interactive board would attract additional custom it would also allow investigation into the types available and pros and cons of each unit.

Item 5 Allotments. *Purpose of item to consider presentation and briefing note and decide on action*

Briefing Note and request for views.

Date 18th January 2012

ALLOTMENTS

1. Summary/explanation.

1.1 To explore the possibility of supplying allotments in the parish and to produce a plan of action and if necessary a 'legacy document' to create policy and procedure. It was

agreed at the 5th December 2012 Parish Council meeting (Minute 2358/8.4) that a presentation and briefing note be produced for the Estates Committee.

1.2 The work/document will, where possible, cover the entire parish and all possible eventualities (e.g. if land comes without a water supply would the PC pay for it to be put in?) so that the Council can quickly react to opportunities. As this work is underway it will allow the Neighbourhood Development Plans to be adjusted to incorporate the council's wishes etc. it would also naturally lead to a review of what land is available, where it might be found etc. It would also allow the requirements of the Land and Building Purchase Policy to be met

1.3 The National Society of Allotments & Leisure Gardeners Ltd www.nsalg.org.uk and it has provided some useful information. Where this information is used in this document it is prefixed by NSALG.

1.4 Information obtained from

- Various Parish Councils that manage allotments.
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Medway Council
- Web sites.

1.5 Questions, in text boxes, have been included that if answered by the members now would influence the draft document and set a basis for future documents. It would not result in a binding document at this stage but members' views would be helpful.

2. Summary of the decision that is required

A recommendation on the adoption of an allotment document and the scope of work to be undertaken is required from the Estates Committee to be placed before the Parish Council.

3. Background information.

3.1 Allotments do not make a profit; at best Councils can hope to break even on a regular basis with 'bad' years where there is additional expenditure (replacing or repairing fences etc.). One responder stated "*In general terms, the allotments are a benefit for the few which are subsidized by the many and I would prefer to keep the subsidy down as much as possible*". In the Clerk's opinion this is a fair 'present day' assessment however it should be remembered that expenditure on allotments can also be seen as a long term investment for present and future generations.

A Parish Council must be quite clear as to why it is choosing to supply allotments and on large scale expenditure should be mindful of the 'expenditure must be commensurate with cost' issue (see item 5.2 re PC policy).

Quality of Life will be the main reason for Parish Councils choosing to supply allotments. Allotments satisfy or fulfill a number of roles/needs mainly: cheap fruit and vegetables; exercise; leisure; and companionship. Each allotment holder will have individual reasons for renting an allotment and different expectations thus it is important that if this project continues that the policies and procedures are properly set up to deal with all aspects of allotment supply.

3.2 How much land? NSALG - One acre of land, allowing for haulage ways/paths and with standard plot sizes 10 rods (300 sq. yds./250 sq. metres) would provide 12 - 15 plots. Clerk's comments: this does not include land for car parking; Most Parish Councils have identified that it is better to allocate half plots, not only because it allows more people to rent but also because of the work involved. The Council will need to make a decision on this when it produces the policies and procedures.

<p>Question 1. Do members wish to, at this stage, identify a minimum size for land to be purchased e.g. 1.5 acres?</p>

3.3 Where to have allotments? Allotments will generally only be successful if they are located close to where people live. The main attraction of allotments is fresh vegetables at low cost. However to achieve this there must low overheads (especially petrol) and ease of access (low travel times). Land should be found close to the built up residential areas, which they will generally serve, with easy access. It might be necessary to have more than 1 allotment area if various communities are to be served.

Clerk's comments: It should be noted that the South Ward of the parish is closer to Maidstone Borough Council owned allotments at Sandling Lane and Sandling Road and it is suggested by the Clerk that the needs of these areas can initially be met by MBC. North Ward residents are not close to any allotment area and cannot apply to Medway Council as this only takes residents onto the waiting list.

Question 2. Do members agree that the search for allotments should initially be limited to the North Ward until a 'need' is identified for the South Ward? Clerk comment: The legacy document will cover the whole of the Parish and the search can be extended as needed.

Question 3. Do members agree that any land (targeted for purchase) must be easily accessible from the nearest residential area? Do members wish to identify a distance?

3.4 Policies and Procedures.

There is a lot of help and information available as allotments are fairly common. There are

Societies and Associations and of course Parish Council and Local Authorities. Based on initial contact with these sources it is considered that the following policies and procedures will need to be set up:

- **Allotment regulations covering tenancy and rules.**

A number of examples and model documents exist and they generally cover: rent; use, subletting, maintenance requirements (for allotments and adjoining paths); nuisance; termination of contract; livestock; waste and rubbish; sheds etc.

- **Procedures for allocation of plots.**

Members will need to decide whether the allotments were only available for parishioners or whether they would allow non-parishioners to apply. Of 7 parish councils that responded most do not have non-parishioners; some have this in their rules others find that with parishioners taking priority non-parishioners don't advance up the waiting list.

- **Allotment tenancy agreement.**

- **Complaints/disputes procedure.**

This could be the current Parish Council procedure or something similar.

Clerks' comment: Draft documents can be produced for members to decide on and it is not anticipated that the production of these documents will be particularly difficult.

Question 4. Do members wish to have a rule that Boxley Parish Residents take priority at least for the first intake?

Clerks' comment: Members may wish to consider, rather than allow plots to lie vacant, that non-parishioners be allowed to apply once there are no parishioners on the waiting list and after a round of advertisements to ensure there is no interest.

3.5. Management of allotments.

At some point the Council will need to decide whether to totally control the allotments or whether to allow an Allotments Association to be set up to manage the allotments and if this is the case decide what level of control would be given over to the Association.

Some Parish Councils have agreements with their Allotment Associations that they undertake all the contracts, collection of rents etc. the Parish Council only becomes involved if there are disputes or large scale maintenance work required for which they pay. However Parish Councils that follow this route do have a system where a councillor

or councillors keep an eye on the allotments. If the Parish Council decides to allow an Allotment Association to undertake the work then a formal agreement should be set up dealing with contracts, availability, collection of rent, payment of bills etc. Currently the Terms of Reference for the Parish Council has the Estates Committee responsible for allotments.

Clerks' comments: A decision is not required on this at the moment this would only be progressed after the initial successful set up of allotments.

3.6. Facilities at Parish Council allotments.

3.6.1 Water. Allotments do not have to have a water supply however if there is no water 'on tap' then thought needs to be given to how water is accessed

Borough Council allotments have water on supply and of the 7 Parish Councils 6 provided water and 1 did not. Water supply is generally a single stand pipe serving all allotments or a number of stand pipes situated so that they serve a number of surrounding allotments.

Allotments with water charge extra in their rent to cover the water bill (consideration would need to be given to either protecting these taps from freezing or turning off the water supply over winter). When taps are provided there are often bans on the use of hosepipes and sprinklers.

Question 5. Would members consider that water has to be provided if allotments are set up? What happens if there is no local water source to plumb into? Clerks comment: The cost of supplying a water supply depends on external factors so it is impossible to forecast an amount.

Where water is not 'on tap' arrangements had been made by the Council to collect water into a storage facility, owners if allowed sheds can channel water into water butts etc.

3.6.2 Parking. Of the 5 Councils that responded to this question 2 had on-site parking, 3 did not. Where parking was not provided there was adequate and presumably close by public/on street car parking.

Question 6. Do members agree that, due to the parking issues throughout the parish that there must be sufficient space for on-site car parking at the allotments? Would members expect a hard surface (not necessarily tarmac perhaps type 1 or 'grasscrete')?

3.6.3 Sheds. Of the 7 Councils 4 allow sheds (maximum size is often regulated), 3 did not but 2 of these did supply some form of on-site storage for all users (at their own risk). NSALG suggested plot holders shed size - 12 sq. metres.

Question 7. Would members have any objections to sheds being erected on a plot (at owners own risk)?

3.6.4 Green houses. NSALG suggested plot holders greenhouses size 15 sq. metres.

Question 8. Would members have any objections to greenhouses being erected on a plot (at owners own risk)?

3.6.5 Poly tunnels. NSALG suggested plot holders poly tunnel size 30sq metres.

Question 9. Would members have any objections to poly tunnels being erected on a plot (at owners own risk)?

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3.6.6 Electricity. Generally not provided on allotment sites.

Question 10. Do members agree that electricity will not be provided?

3.6.7 Fencing. There was some form of external fencing and many had rabbit proofed fencing. Some of the response noted the expense in installing and regularly maintaining the fencing.

Question 11. Do members agree that external fencing will be provided for security reasons?

Question 12 Do members require this to be rabbit proofed? If not rabbit proofed then the default will be that individual plot holders would have to install rabbit proofed fencing.

3.6.8 Site entrances/security. Most allotments have a key system to access the site. No Council reported CCTV.

Clerks' comment: A secured gate will be provided and keys issued to plot holders. One Parish Council requires a £5 deposit for keys issued.

3.6.9 Livestock. Not allowed although one Council had just agreed bee hives.

Question 13. Do members agree that livestock will not be allowed? Will bee hives be allowed?

3.6.10 Paths. Some internal path system will have to be provided on set up of the allotments. NSALG suggests that paths should be 1.4 m wide to enable disabled access. Haulage ways should be 3 m wide.

3.6.11 Toilets. Not normally provided on Parish Council allotments.

Question 14. Do members agree that no toilet facilities will be provided?

4. Financial Implications.

4.1 Expenditure.

There will be set up costs and then, if the Parish Council retains control, annual administration and maintenance costs. If water is provided then water bills would have to be paid. If the Council hands over control to an Association (which could only happen after a number of years) then agreement on how costs are paid would have to be undertaken but it is likely that as this is a not for profit type organisation that the Council will be asked to pay for repairs and improvements.

4.2 Set up costs.

- Purchase of land.
- Legal fees.
- Planning fees, if required.
- Possible soil tests to ensure land is not contaminated.
- Possible clearance of land.
- Supply of water or other facilities (e.g. parking) identified by Council.
- Erection of fencing and security gate.
- Layout of plots and paths.
- Office/admin costs.

4.3 Annual costs.

- Administrative costs.
- Membership fees for a Society/Association.
- Any additional insurance costs, see below.

- Maintenance and repairs.
- Water bills, if provided. Expenditure should be covered by charge on plot holders.

4.4 Insurance. Public Liability cover would normally be in the regular Parish Council's insurance. Individual plot holders will be responsible for their own property and anything on their plot. If a central building was provided then the Parish Council would be responsible for its insurance.

4.5 Income

4.6 An average has been taken of the annual rents (per rod) notified to the Parish Council.

4.7 The average rent is £25, for a 25 metre x 6 metre plot, £14.50 for half a plot, including water. One Council gives a 20% discount on rent for OAPs.

4.8 Grants.

A number of grant opportunities do exist and these could be applied for.

5. Legal/policy implications.

5.1 The main Acts covering allotments are Small Holdings and Allotment Acts 1908 - Power to provide, improve and adapt land for allotments.

Local Government Act 1972 - appropriation and purchase.

Allotments Act 1950

Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

Clerk's comment: it is legal to purchase land outside of the parish boundary.

5.2 Parish Council policy on land purchase

The Council will consider purchasing land* or building** after careful consideration of the following;

Where the use to which the land would be put would be primarily for the good of the parishioners. The judgment of what constitutes 'good' will be with the then Council but it is expected that the benefit to the parishioners would be recreational use, wildlife conservation or for environmental reasons either now or in the future.

Cllr Bob Hinder comment: I consider that the benefits for supplying allotments will be: improvements to health; fitness; companionship educational for children; low food miles; opportunity for all to benefit from fresh produce at a low cost.

Constitute good value for money in the context of the benefits (current or future), tangible and intangible that would accrue, in the first instance, to our parishioners. The Council would be required to obtain a land valuation, prior to purchase, and be able to justify any purchase and future maintenance costs including site security. Any decision on the purchase of land will take place at an open meeting after careful deliberation. The Council will endeavour to identify, in advance, a wish list for areas where Council held land would benefit local communities and the reasons why it is considered of benefit.

Cllr Bob Hinder comment: I understand that the initial set up costs will possibly be quite high however I would ask members to remember that this is a long term investment as some allotments have been around for over 100 years.

*Local Government Act 1972, ss 124,126,127 (Power to acquirement by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of...) Local Government Act 1972, ss139 (Power to accept gifts of land).

** Local Government Act 1972, s133, s144. Local Government (Misc. Prov) Act 1976, s19

6. Staffing Implications.

The initial land purchase and set up period will be office intensive (unless work is delegated to a working group or councillor). After the set up period the work will probably be absorbed as 'housekeeping'.

7. Social Inclusion Implications (including disabled)

The Council will work to its equal opportunities statement and the Equalities Act.

8. Environmental Implications.

A well-managed site close to the urban area (where the plot holders would generally live) would have few negative implications in fact the growing of food local to where it is needed would reduce the carbon footprint.

9. Community Safety.

The Parish Council is required to meet Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as it will be providing a new service.

10. Risk Management.

The Parish Council is required to produce risk management documents. It is not anticipated that there will be any major issues however these can only be completed once the project is underway.

11. Planning Implications.

Planning permission - it is likely that planning permission will not be required if agricultural land is purchased. Small scale sheds etc. would probably not be judged as development however the provision of hard standing for car parking might be an issue. Advice will be sought.

12. Timescale.

Estates February – presentation and briefing note to allow discussion on identified issues. This meeting to identify members views to allow a legacy document to be produced for consideration. If approved then members will need to decide whether a working group is put together for the project to progress etc.

Estates April – draft policy document on acquiring land for allotments (now or in the future) for consideration/recommendation to May Parish Council.

13. Recommendations and other information.

13.1 The Parish Council has a 'wish' to supply allotments and guidance is needed. If the initial search for land is not successful then a long term plan (a legacy document) can be produced. Such a document will allow the Council to react quickly should an opportunity to obtain land present itself. To enable this document to be produced for the April Estates Committee meeting Cllr Hinder and the parish office will require answers or guidance on questions 1, 2 and 3. It would be helpful to have opinions or a decision on question 6 as this might be pertinent if land is being looked for.

All other questions will need to be answered to enable further work on hire agreements etc. but it might be helpful to have indications of what members present opinions are.

13.2 The Estates meeting would submit a document (with a possible plan of action) and make a recommendation to the May Parish Council meeting.

Item 7.1 Review of Policies and Procedures – purpose of item is to consider the list and amend as necessary.

Estates Committee – Review of policies and procedures 2012 - 2013.

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the parish council and its office meets its duties and manages its risk effectively and efficiently. It is a rough timescale and will be subject to

change as needed. The annual review of this document reminds members and the public of the existence of the policies and procedures and also allows for members to make amendments.

Reports to the parish council will be done annually/periodically/ or only when required. Policies and procedures may also be reported to reinforce their existence even though no change/amendments may be necessary.

** review as required either due to need or change in guidance/law.

February

- Review of this document to allow adjustments.
- Business Continuity Plan**
- Sharps policy **
- Terms of Reference (to go to April PC mtg) – any amendments wanted by Committee.

(office note – fire extinguisher maintenance contract ends 31st March – automatic renewal.

Do a full equipment review [safety/undamaged], protective clothing [enough], remind staff that they need to report any damages etc. Consider a H&S rebrief/training session for all staff)

April

- Hall bookings cancellations and damage – every 2 year (even) or **
- Discount for children's clubs and clubs. – every 2 year (odd) or **
- Review bouncy castle hall usage and take up of insurance for public liability cover.

(office note – appliance service contract for boiler and oven expires July 2011 – straight forward renewal in 2011)

(Office note – review hire agreement still fit for purpose; remind regular hirers about the need to insure any of their equipment stored at the hall)

June

- Late departure of casual hirers **
- Late arrivals of casual hirers **
- Early opening of hall **
- Staff pay rise and any need to amend hours.
- Village Hall Grant Policy – annual review.
- Review of previous year H&S/accident reports.

(office note – Hall electricity supply contract with Scottish Power ends 30.11.12 start review in June 2012, Office note- start to review CCTV, alarm & sound system 12mth contract ends 22.09.11)

(office note – boiler under guarantee until 2012 boiler heat exchanger for 5 years)

August

- Clerk's delegated power powers – hall maintenance **
- Burial Grounds Regulations – every 2 year (odd) or **
- Risk Assessments for hall (Fire, Drink and Public Licence).
- Annual look at hall.
- Annual competency review- prepare report.

(office note – review the information in the hall's Information Folder – still fit for purpose?)

October

- Bouncy Castle – every 2 year (odd) or **
- Use of Boxley Green and Wildfell Close Open Space – every 2 year (even) or **
- Grounds maintenance contract – expires 31.03.14 review contract and arrange for tenders.
- Review electrical safety/maintenance contract for 2013 or 2014

(office note – review Box Trees at Village Green – still okay?)

December

- Christmas closedown period of hall for the following year.
- Lost Property Procedure – every 2 year (odd) or **

- Disposal of Lost property **
- Hall hire fees

(Office note- 2011 start to review gas supplier contract (SWALEC) ends 30th April 2012)

Item 7.4 Review of Terms of Reference – purpose of item is to consider the content and amend as necessary.

Role

The role of the Estates Committee is the effective management of council owned property* and on the instruction of the Council the acquisition and development of additional facilities.

*Property is defined as all structures, land and equipment that is owned by the Parish Council or which it has legal responsibility for.

Responsibilities

1. Parks, Playgrounds, Open Spaces, Sports Facilities and Burial Grounds.
 - 1.1 The assessment, provision, maintenance, improvements and management of Parish Council owned parks, playgrounds, open spaces, outdoor and indoor sports facilities.
 - 1.2 To manage the grounds maintenance for parish areas that the Council is responsible for.
 - 1.3 To provide and manage the Council's Burial Ground.
2. Entertainment and Cultural Facilities
 - 2.1 To undertake or arrange for the provision of facilities for entertainment and
 - 2.2 To provide parish notice boards and interpretation boards.
3. Buildings and structures
 - 3.1 To oversee all aspects of the management, maintenance, marketing, security and the day to day running of I Beechen Hall and any other future public buildings under the direct control of the Council including the determination of hire fees and terms and conditions of use.
 - 3.2 To undertake the recruitment and appointment to the Caretaker and Relief Caretaker positions.
 - 3.3 To be the point of contact for the Parish Council and take on responsibility for advising village/community halls on CCTV and all other hall related issues.
 - 3.4 To maintain and manage the War Memorial, Boxley Village Green and the Lych Gate and wall of St Mary and All Saints Closed Churchyard.
 - 3.5 Manage existing bus shelters, seats, village signs etc. that are provided by the Council and where necessary add to these.
 - 3.6 To ensure optimum energy and water efficiency, waste minimisation and recycling in the Boxley Estate.
4. Allotments
 - 4.1 To make recommendations for the purchase, sale of or appropriation of land required or held for allotment purposes, and
 - 4.2 To discharge all statutory functions in relation thereto under the Allotments Acts and to make recommendations as to the rent chargeable for allotment holdings.
5. Amenity Areas. To determine and undertake the maintenance of amenity areas dedicated to the Council.
6. Sporting Organisations. To liaise with sporting organisations with regard to the provision of sporting and recreation facilities within the parish.
7. Submission of Planning Applications. To deal with matters relating to the submission of Parish Council planning applications in respect of schemes previously approved by the Parish Council.

8. Deal with requests for grants from Village Halls.
9. Undertake an annual risk analysis for all property.
10. Development of policies and procedures for any council owned property.

Budget

1. To draft the budget and decide priority ratings for the committee and to submit budget requirements and recommendations to the Finance Committee.
2. To manage the budget and vire, where necessary, between budgets held and managed by the committee.
3. To manage, according to Financial Regulations, the contracts and tenders for any projects within the budget of the committee.

Membership

1. The Committee shall consist of up to eight councillors, including as per standing orders the Parish Council's Chair and Vice Chair.
2. The committee may appoint working parties to undertake any specific project work as necessary

Other.

The Parish Council has the right to identify issues that will be dealt with at the full meeting of the Parish Council.

Item 8.2. Graves conforming to burial regulations – *purpose of item is to receive and agree draft family letter, advert and PR strategy (in case of bad publicity).*

Draft family letter - *italics* indicate wording that might need adjusting depending on the original letter sent. Details of the original letter are given below for members information

I write with reference to the Council's letter sent to **you/the family** on **16th September 2002** (copy attached for your convenience) concerning the future maintenance of the burial ground and the Council's decision to ensure that the burial grounds regulations are adhered to.

The Council recognised that families had not been properly advised of the regulations and so decided to allow a period of time, 10 years, to pass before the regulations were enforced. As you will have seen on your visits to your **loved ones/husband/mother** grave the burial ground has been effectively managed and many of the graves have been voluntarily returned to mainly grass with a small tended area. It is hoped that on your visits to the burial ground you will have noted how well kept the area is and that the current maintenance regime is sympathetic to the surrounding area and it has created a quiet place for reflection.

The Council understands that some families may find it difficult due to undertake the work to return their **loved ones** grave to a grassed area either because of emotional ties or because they live too far away etc. The Council will help in any way it can and will be happy to arrange the work at no cost to yourself and will meet you at the burial ground if you so wish.

A small tended garden area immediately in front of the headstone is permitted under the regulations so there is still an opportunity for families to commemorate their loved ones with plants.

If you wish the Parish Council to undertake the work on the grave please complete and return the enclosed authorisation form. As you will see

Authorisation Form

Authorisation to Boxley Parish Council to undertake work on the grave of

.....

I, (give your name) authorise that Boxley Parish Council remove any articles (including any edging or shrubs) from my relatives grave and that the area will be seeded with grass and therein maintained by the Parish Council.

Unless otherwise instructed below I give permission for the Parish Council to dispose of any grave articles as it sees fit and I understand that all work will be done by hand to minimize any impact and that no work will be undertaken on the headstone.

I would like the permitted garden area in front of the headstone. Measuring 2 foot 9 inches in depth, from the back of headstone, and the width of the headstone.

I confirm that I am the next of kin or have the authority of the family to take this decision.

Address.....
.....
.....

Comment.

If you wish to arrange collection of the grave articles please state below.

If you have a statute or similar that you wish to have permission to place in the 'garden area' allowed by the Burial Ground Regulations please indicate below and the parish council will arrange for you to receive the relevant paperwork to apply for the Church's permission.

Signed.....

Date.....

If you have completed the document please return to Boxley Parish Council, Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Chatham, Kent ME5 9RU

2002 letter.

I write with reference to your *fathers/mothers etc.* grave.

The Parish Council has noted that an increasing number of graves in the burial ground are being tended by families and include plants, statues and bowls. This is against the regulations of the burial ground but it is recognised that these may never have been made known to you. The Parish Council is aware that this type of care is very important to many grieving families and wishes to resolve the situation in a caring and sensitive manner. In view of this it is felt that permission to continue tending the grave for a further ten years can be granted. However after the year 2012 you are respectfully asked to ensure that the flowerbed on the grave conforms to the Rules and Regulations of the Burial Ground, a copy of which is enclosed. May I assure you that it is not the wish of the Parish Council to cause you any further grief or distress but it is hoped that by enforcing the Rules and Regulations the Burial Ground will remain a place of dignity and serenity. Your co-operation would therefore be appreciated.

The parish council is currently looking closely at the burial ground and there are a number of issues that it wishes to see resolved.

- Issue of health and safety within the front churchyard and burial ground. A safety audit of all the gravestones is being undertaken. The parish council will write to individuals should there be a problem with a headstone.
- There are provisional plans to replace the broken fence/hedge to the north side of the burial ground.

- The consecrated area will be divided from the non-consecrated area by a small box hedge.
- Hopefully you will also have recently seen some improvement in the ground maintenance and the cutting of the nettles.

The parish council is writing to all the families of those within the burial ground to request that it be notified of any changes to the address to which correspondence should be sent. It is hoped that the erection of a noticeboard will also allow this parish council to keep the families of the deceased informed of any changes or plans for the burial ground.

Should you have any queries, or wish to discuss the situation, please do not hesitate to contact Pauline Bowdery, Clerk to the Council.

Advert.

Boxley Parish Council –Notice of work at the Parish Council’s burial ground, (rear of) St Mary and All Saints Church, Boxley Village.

Notice is given that the Parish Council will be undertaking work to ensure that non-conforming graves meet current burial ground regulations. Further information, for families that have not been contacted by the Parish Council, can be obtained from the Parish Office, Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Chatham, Kent ME5 9RU 01634 861237, Bowdery@boxleyparishcouncil.co.uk.

Pauline Bowdery

Clerk to Boxley Parish Council

PR stratgy

- Letters sent out, adverts placed.
- Press policy to go to Estates Chairman and Vice Chair (as a reminder). Press policy states “The Clerk will normally be the contact for press enquiries on appropriate issues, but will refer to the Chairman of the Council or appropriate committee for specific quotes as and when required. The Clerk/Chairman will be responsible for issuing all press releases and for dealing with enquiries from the press in an efficient and timely manner. Press releases will normally be approved by the Chairman of the Council or Committee chairman when there are direct quotes used”.
- Prior agreement of a number of stock statements along the lines of “The Council sincerely apologies for any distress caused to families. It understands that many years ago families had been allowed to ignore burial regulations but in 2002 families were notified that in 2012 the Council wished to see all graves conforming. Over this period of time many families have allowed the graves to be grassed over and the Parish Council has offered to arrange and pay for the work”.
“The Parish Council is not banning plants but ask that they be kept within the small area that is allowed in front of the headstone”.
“This is not only about ease of maintenance but also about the safety of visitors to the burial ground. This is an isolated area with minimal space between headstones if grass is not cut and there are hidden obstacles then someone falling and hurting themselves is in danger of not being found.”
- If there is any adverse press or contact from journalists then the Estates Chair and Vice Chair will be informed and a response made. A report on the response/issue will be e-mailed to all parish councillors.
- Any response from families that might create bad publicity will be dealt with by the office with the Chair and Vice Chair being notified.

Query – who will brief the Chairman of the Parish Council to keep them informed.

Timeline

Burial Ground – Graves conforming to burial regulations.

October 2011	Build into budget cost of 2 adverts in KM to advertise work.
Feb 2012	Estates Committee – draft family letter, advert and PR strategy (in case of bad publicity) Discuss issue with Church

Mar 2012	Write to families of non-conforming graves.
Apr/May 2012	Meet with any families objecting to proposal.
June 2012	(end of) First KM advert
July 2012	(beginning of) Second KM Advert
August 2012	
Sept 2012	Work undertaken.

Item 9. Utilities – *purpose of item to notify members of the situation and ask members to discuss allowing the parish office to manage the situation.*

The Clerk is requesting that delegated powers be given to the parish office to manage the contracts for hall utilities (gas and electricity). The parish office is reviewing the current suppliers as contracts are coming to an end and 3 quotes are being sought. This is not an easy task as quotes only last for 24 hours and there is a need to identify a workable system that is not too onerous for everyone. Due to the changes in the international markets there is also a need to be able to react quickly and so it will generally not be possible to bring any quotes to a meeting.

Whilst it is understandable that members wish to get the best possible deal the market is very volatile and nobody really knows from day to day what is going to happen and a quote from a company/broker only lasts a short time.

A contract generally lasts for 2 years and at times the Council has been with a single company and at other times it has contracts with 2 companies.

Currently Utility Wise (broker), Barry Jacobs (Broker recommended through SLCC), LASER (local authorities company) and a 4th company that contacted the parish office have been asked to submit quotes.

It is suggested that the following process could be used.

- Parish office starts search. During discussions with brokers the office will try to ascertain what the markets are up to and will try to ensure that it doesn't sign a contract at a market peak.
- Parish office identifies a day when it will ask companies to submit their quotes. The Chair and Vice Chair will be notified of the date.
- On that day the parish office will attempt to contact the Chair and Vice Chair with the quotes and a recommendation for which company to accept – normally the lowest quoted prices.
- A decision is taken.

If members are concerned about the above procedure it would be helpful if they could identify their concerns so that these can be considered when drawing up another procedure.

If a procedure is agreed then it is suggested that if a 'good deal' on any other 'contract' (refuse, telephone etc.) is identified then after notice/explanation to the Chairman and Vice Chair this procedure could be followed.

Item 10 Performing Rights Licence – *purpose of item: information. Members were previously notified of a change in legislation that would affect the hall.*

Notification has now been received on how the change to the legislation will affect the Council. Basically the previous PRS License was calculated as 1% of income however the Parish Council will now come under a tariff system and will have to pay per event that uses music. A calculation of likely cost will be brought to the meeting.