



# BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

www.boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk

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**It has not been possible, due to limitations on this website, to include some documents. Copies can be obtained by contacting the parish office.  
The parish council apologies for any inconvenience.**

To Parish Councillors, members of the public and press.

27 November 2012

Members are hereby summoned and notice is given that a **Meeting of the Parish Council** will be held at **St John's School, Provender Way ME14 5TZ** on **Monday 3 December 2012** commencing at 7.30 p.m. when it is proposed to transact the following business:

- |  | Time guide |
|--|------------|
| 1. <b>Apologies and absences.</b>  | (7.30)     |
| To receive and accept apologies for absence.   |            |
| 2. <b>Declaration of Interests or Lobbying.</b>  | (7.31)     |
| Members are required to declare any interests or lobbying on items in this agenda.   |            |
| 3. <b>Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 5 November 2012.</b>  | (7.33)     |
| To consider the minutes of the meeting and if in order to sign as a true record (pages 3-5).   |            |
| 4. <b>Matters Arising From the Minutes.</b>  | (7.46)     |
| 4.1 Minute 2475/4.1 Round Wood/Walderslade Woods; see report (page 6).   |            |
| 4.2 Minute 2475/4.4 Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard; see report (page 6).  |            |
| 4.3 Minute 2475/4.5 Concurrent Functions/Parish Services Scheme: Awaiting response from MBC.   |            |
| 4.4 Minute 2475/4.6 Speedwatch: see report (page 6).   |            |
| 4.5 Minute 2476/9 Cuckoo Woods: see report (page 6).   |            |
| 4.6  |            |
| 5. <b>Report from the PCSO and Police Issues.</b>  | (7.54)     |
| 5.1 Crime statistics (page 6).   |            |
| 5.2 To consider the draft resolution that <b>"As, after due notice, it has not proved possible in negotiations with Kent Police to obtain an assurance of 100% dedicated PCSO cover for Boxley Parish, this council will give six months' notice of withdrawal from the relevant contract with effect from 1 January 2013"</b> . A copy of Chief Inspector Bumpus's response is enclosed in members folders. |            |
| <b>To adjourn to enable members of the public to address the meeting.</b>  | (8.10)     |
| 6. <b>Draft Minutes of Recent Committee Meetings.</b>  | (8.20)     |
| For the parish council to receive the minutes. Members are allowed to ask questions of the Committee Chairmen but may not initiate a discussion.   |            |
| 6.1 Environment Committee meeting 5 November 2012 (page 6-7).  |            |
| 6.2 Environment Committee meeting 12 November 2012 (page 7-10).  |            |
| 6.3 Finance Committee meeting 13 November 2012 (10-13).  |            |
| 7. <b>Finance.</b>   | (8.25)     |
| 7.1 To note payments made out of meeting 06.11.12 – 26.11.12 (pages 21).   |            |
| 7.2 To note receipts for the period 23.10.12 – 26.11.12 (pages 22-23).   |            |
| 7.3 Account balances as at 26.11.12 (page 23).   |            |

- 7.4 To authorise payments of accounts (list to be supplied at meeting).
- 7.5 Members are reminded that they should not sign blank cheques or authorisation letters; the need to check invoices against cheques when signing cheques; and that cheque stubs must be initialled by both signatories. Members also need to keep their register of pecuniary interest updated.
- 8 Land at Sandy Lane, Boxley. (8.31)**  
The legal paperwork is awaited from the solicitor's. Should any confidential information be received that the parish council needs to be notified of the Chairman will move to exclude the public and press for the duration of the item.
- 9 Annual Competency Reports. (8.35)**
- 9.1 To receive the Clerk's report on the annual reviews of committee competency, (see page 13-15).
- 9.2 To review the matters raised under item 10 of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of 13 November (see page 12).
- 10 2013/2014 Draft Budget. (8.45)**  
Members have an opportunity to submit projects or issues for funding in the draft budget.
- 11 Policies and Procedures Review. (8.48)**  
There are none scheduled for review.
- 12 Matters for Decision. (8.49)**
- 12.1 To receive/agree the 2013/14 meeting dates (enclosed in members' folders).
- 12.2 Guidance is sought on the format of the Annual Meeting of the Parish.
- 12.3 The Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Annual Civic Service – Tuesday 12 March 2012 Maidstone All Saints Church at 11.00am.
- 12.4 Parish tour. Members have been asked to supply details of any dates that they are not available in February or March in order that the tour can be arranged.
- 12.5 Additional Parking in Boxley Village. To note the feasibility study prepared by a group of interested residents (and any subsequent comments received) and to decide how to proceed (copied supplied to members).
- 13 Reports from Borough and County Councillors. (8.54)**  
To allow the councillors to report and discuss matters affecting the parish (page 15).
- 14 Reports from councillors/office. (9.04)**  
Representatives who attended any meeting on behalf of the parish council are invited to give a brief summary.
- 14.1 Cllr Perry's report on the Friends of Boxley Warren task day on 11 November 2012 (page 16)
- 14.2 Chairman's verbal report on the employment of a temporary office assistant at the parish office.
- 14.3 Chairman's report on the KALC AGM on 17 November (page 16-17).
- 14.4 Cllr Bob Hinder's report on Maidstone KALC meeting (page 17).
- 15 Improving Local Government Transparency consultation. (9.10)**  
To consider the response see report (page 18-20).
- 16 Matters for Information. (9.20)**  
Information contained on page 20.
- 17 Next Meeting. (9.22)**  
Monday 28 January 2013 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade. Councillor requests for agenda items are to be submitted no later than 20 January 2013.

Clerk to the Council.

Items to be returned to a future agenda: Quality Parish Council application.

In accordance with policy the meeting should close no later than 9.30 pm but the Chairman has power to extend it by 30 minutes.

**Item 3 Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held at the European School of Osteopathy, Boxley Village, on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November commencing at 7.32 pm.**

Councillors present: Mr Ivor Davies (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr V Davies, Mr P Dengate, Mr T Harwood, Mr Bob Hinder, Mr D Holmes, Mrs K Macklin, Mr K Perry, Mr G Smith, Mrs A Spain, Mr A Springate, Mr P Sullivan and Mrs M Waller together with the Clerk, Borough Councillor Butler and 2 members of the press/public.

**1. Apologies and absences.**

Cllr Wendy Hinder (MBC training) and PCSO Hawthorn.

**2. Declaration of Interests or Lobbying.**

Cllr Spain declared a pecuniary interest in item 8.

Cllr Harwood declared that he had been personally lobbied on item 9. All Councillors declared collective lobbying on item 9.

Cllrs Bob Hinder, Ivor Davies and Perry notified members that they were part of the Friends of Boxley Warren item 12.2.

Cllr Vic Davies reminded members that he is a Governor at St John's School item 14.1.

**3. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 1 October 2012.**

The minutes of the meetings were, with a grammatical error corrected, **agreed** and **signed** as a correct record.

**4. Matters Arising From the Minutes.**

4.1 Minute 2461/4.2 Round Wood/Walderslade Woods. Members **noted** the report and **received** the briefing note.

4.2 Minute 2461/4.3 Website. It was **agreed** that as the work was now mainly 'house-keeping' reports would, in the future, only be submitted to the parish council if there was a specific need.

4.3 Minute 2461/4.6 Community Project Grant. **Noted** the judging group considered that the two submitted applications did not fully satisfy all the relevant criteria. It was **agreed** that no award would be made in this financial year but that appropriate provision would be made in the next financial year after reviewing the scheme and amending the criteria as necessary. **Action: office and judging group.**

4.4 Minute 2461/4.7 Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard. **Noted** the issue regarding the dog waste bin had been resolved and MBC will continue emptying it. The revised legal agreement was being prepared.

4.5 Minute 2461/4.8 Concurrent Functions/Parish Services Scheme. The Chairman gave members a verbal update on the situation and members **noted** that Maidstone KALC was awaiting a response from MBC. Borough Councillor Butler expressed his support for the current concurrent functions scheme.

4.6 Minute 2463/11.1 Speedwatch. Members were reminded that if they wished to have training they had to notify the parish office of the dates that they were available. **Action: Councillors.**

**5 Report from the PCSO and Police Issues.**

5.1 **Received and noted** crime statistics and report. Members welcomed the speed check along Boxley Road/Beechen Bank Road.

5.2 PCSO Contract. Lengthy discussion took place covering: the original discussions with the Police; the PCSO cover the Police are required to provide; the benefit of having a dedicated PCSO; the financial cost; whether to continue with the contract; and the excellent service from PCSO Hawthorn. Cllr Bob Hinder proposed a resolution, seconded by Cllr Macklin. Cllr Harwood proposed an amendment to the original resolution which was agreed by the proposer and seconder. The resulting resolution was **"If Boxley Parish Council is unable to negotiate satisfactorily to the benefit of the community to have 100% PCSO cover for Boxley Parish then it will have no alternative but to give six months' notice of withdrawal from the contract. To this**

**effect a resolution will be placed on the December Parish Council agenda to give notice of withdrawal unless Kent Police accede.”** This was **agreed** (9 for, 1 against with 4 abstentions). **Action: office and Chairman.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8.09 pm to allow a member of the public to request a salt bin for Grange Lane. The resident was asked to liaise with the Clerk to request funding from County Councillor Carter. The meeting reconvened at 8.12 pm.

## **6 Draft Minutes of Recent Committee Meetings.**

### **Noted and Received:**

- 6.1 Finance Scrutiny Committee meeting 4 October 2012.
- 6.2 Environment Committee meeting 8 October 2012.
- 6.3 Estates Committee meeting 10 October 2012.

## **7 Finance.**

- 7.1 **Noted** payments made out of meeting 02.10.12 – 29.10.12.
- 7.2 **Noted** receipts for the period 26.09.12 – 29.10.12.
- 7.3 **Noted** account balances as at 29.10.12.
- 7.4 **Authorised** payments of accounts.

## **8 Land at Sandy Lane, Boxley.**

The confidential update was **received** by members without comment or discussion. In view of this Cllr Spain did not leave the meeting.

## **9 Cuckoo Wood.**

Lengthy discussion took place covering: public access to and across the site; value of the Ancient Woodland; potential cost of purchase and long term management; grant funding; partnership working; why the residents were asking the parish council to purchase the site; and would the benefit be mainly to people living outside the parish. Cllr Harwood proposed seconded by Cllr Springate that “The parish council contacts The Crown Estates to obtain a purchase fee for the site” this was defeated (4 for, 7 against with 3 abstentions). Cllr Holmes proposed a resolution seconded by Cllr Spain. The Clerk raised a point of issue and Cllr Harwood proposed an amendment to this resolution which was agreed by the proposer and seconder. The final resolution was **“There is a need to undertake further investigations including: the possible partnership working with Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership, KCC, MBC and other appropriate groups; future maintenance costs; grant opportunities for the purchase and maintenance of the land.”** Agreed (8 for, 5 against and 1 Chairman’s abstention). **Action: Clerk.**

## **10 2013/2014 Draft Budget.**

Members were reminded that they could submit projects or issues for consideration for funding in the draft budget. The Clerk’s report on the suggestion for additional equipment at Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard was **received, no further action.** Cllr Smith requested the purchase and erection of “Slow children playing” signs at closes to slow traffic. **Action: Environment Committee.**

The Chairman suggested a seat at the north end of Boxley Road on the small area there. **Action: Estates Committee.**

Cllr Vic Davies requested a litter bin by the new seat at Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard. He also requested an additional seat within the actual orchard area. **Action: Estates Committee.**

## **11 Policies and Procedures Review.**

- 11.1 Freedom of Information and records management policy. **Agreed** as still fit for purpose.

## **12 Matters for Decision.**

### **Noted.**

- 12.1 KALC AGM Sat 17 November 9.30 – 3.45 at Ditton Community Centre.

12.2 Friends of Boxley Warren. The Clerk's report on the request for the volunteer group to be covered by the parish council's insurance was **received**. After discussion and clarification on some issues the request was **agreed**. **Action: Clerk.**

12.3 Royal visit commemorative plaque at the hall. **Agreed in principle. Action: Estates Committee.**

12.4 Yew Tree and damage being caused to the listed wall, closed churchyard, St Mary and All Saints, Boxley. Lengthy discussion took place on how to retain the tree but mitigate future damage to the wall and what guidance needed to be given to the Clerk. Cllr Harwood proposed seconded by Cllr Perry that "**the council obtains the cost of root pruning in order to retain the tree**". **Agreed** (8 for, 1 against and 6 abstentions). It was **agreed** that the issue would be then considered by the Estates Committee. **Action: Estates Committee.**

It was **agreed** that the issue of whether parish council responsibility for the Closed Churchyard should be passed over to MBC would be taken up by the Finance Committee. **Action: Clerk and Finance Committee.**

### 13 **Reports from Borough and County Councillors.**

Cllr Butler gave a report on issues relating to the parish. He expressed concern that the PCSO contract might be cancelled and also about the concurrent function grant issue. He notified members that he had been receiving complaints about the lack of shrub bed maintenance. He was informed that the parish council's Environment Committee was looking into this and he could advise residents to check the council's website.

Cllr Wendy Hinder's report on issue relating to the parish including: salt bins, dropped kerbs and parking issues was **received**.

### 14 **Reports from councillors/office.**

#### **Noted and Received:**

14.1 Cllr Perry's report on the St John's School Expansion Consultation meeting.

14.2 Boxley Warren. October update and also Cllr Bob Hinder report on a recent task day.

14.3 The Chairman's report on Maidstone KALC Finance Information Event, 20 October 2012.

14.4 The Chairman's report on Maidstone Rural Neighbourhood Police/Parishes Forum, 25 October 2012.

### 15 **Consultation on Council Tax Base.**

**Ratified** the Clerk's response after consultation with members.

### 16 **Matters for Information.**

16.1 CPRE – AGM Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December notification and Fieldwork issue Autumn 2012.

As it was 9.30 pm the Chairman used his devolved powers to extend the meeting by 30 minutes.

16.2 Oast to Coast magazine issue Autumn 2012.

16.3 KALC Maidstone Committee - minutes of meeting held on 26 September 2012.

16.4 ACRK Rural News issue 122.

16.5 KALC Parish News issue 364.

16.6 Open Spaces Magazine Autumn 2012.

16.7 Kent Downs AONB Orchard issue 22.

16.8 Boxley Warren Action Day – Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> November – 10am to 2pm.

### 17 **Next Meeting.**

Monday 3 December at St John's School, Provender Way, Grove Green.

Meeting closed at 9.31 p.m.

**Item 4 Matters Arising From the Minutes** *Purpose of item: information.*

**Item 4.1** Round Wood/Walderslade Woods.

The 21 November meeting of the KCC Members Regulation Committee Panel was cancelled as it clashed with a planning meeting. A meeting will be arranged in in January or February.

**Item 4.2** Minute 2475/4.4 Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard.

MBC was reminded on 20/11/12 that the legal agreement had still not been received. Chairman will be asked to escalate the issue if the document is not received prior to the meeting.

**Item 4.4** Speedwatch:

Insufficient councillors volunteered to attend the suggested November date so a new date will be requested and other parish representatives invited to attend. A reminder of the request for a safety audit on the two Boxley Roads and Beechen Bank Road has been sent.

**Item 4.5.**

Minute 2476/9 Cuckoo Woods: Information has been requested from the Burleigh Drive Residents Association and The Mid Kent Downs Partnership Unit. It is hoped to supply a briefing report to the January 2013 meeting.

**Item 5 Report from the PCSO and Police Issues.** *Purpose of item: information.*

**Item 5.1 Crime figures for Boxley 21/10/2011 to 20/11/2011**

Theft

01/11/2012 Old Mill Lane, Aylesford, Metal stolen from yard.

05/11/2012 Forstal Road, Aylesford, Number Plates stolen, Car Dealership.

05/11/2012 Forstal Road, Aylesford, Plant machinery stolen.

Theft from a motor vehicle

08/11/2012, Premier Inn, Sandling, Theft of fuel from a lorry.

14/11/2012 Badger Road, Chatham, Attempted fuel theft.

**Item 6. Draft Minutes of Recent Committee Meetings.** *Purpose of item: To receive.*

**Item 6.1 Minutes of the Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 5th November 2012, at the European School of Osteopathy, Boxley commencing at 9.33 p.m.**

Councillors present – Mr K Perry (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr P Dengate, Mr B Hinder, Mr D Holmes, Mrs A Spain, Mr A Springate, and Mrs M Waller together with the Clerk.

**1. Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.**

There were none.

**2. Apologies and absences**

Mrs W Hinder (MBC training).

The meeting was not adjourned as there were no members of the public present.

**3. Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration.**

3.1 MA/12/1781 erection of a rear conservatory at 9 Forestdale Road, Walderslade ME5 9NB. *Do not wish to object.*

3.2 MA/12/1794 ground Floor extensions and other alterations at The Hermitage, The Street, Boxley ME14 3DR. *Do not wish to object.*

3.3 TA/0165/12 TPO Application. TPO No.1 of 1969 an application for consent to remove 1 No. cherry tree and crown lift 2.No Oaks to 6m and crown thin by 15% at 23 Olivine Close, Walderslade ME5 9NQ.  
*Do not wish to object defer to the Landscape Officer's views.*

#### 4. **Next Meeting.**

Next full Environment Committee meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Meeting closed at 9.38.

### **Item 6.2 Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.33 pm.**

Councillors present; Mrs W Hinder (Chairman) Arrived during item 5) , Mrs P Brooks, Mr I Davies (left during public adjournment and returned during item 18), Mr P Dengate, Mr B Hinder, Mr D Holmes, Mr K Perry (Chairman for items 1-5), Mr A Springate and Mrs M Waller together with the Assistant Clerk.

Cllr Holmes notified the meeting that as there was a vacancy on the committee he was interested in becoming a member. The Chairman welcomed him to the committee.

#### 1. **Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.**

Cllr Holmes informed members that he had a pecuniary interest, due to its proximity to his property, in item 4.7.

#### 2. **Apologies and absences**

Cllr Spain (family commitments). Cllr Wendy Hinder' gave apologies that due to a Maidstone Borough Council meeting she would have to absent herself for part of the meeting.

#### 3. **Minutes of the Meeting of 8th October 2012.**

The minutes of the meetings were **agreed** and **signed** as a true and correct record.

#### 4. **Matters Arising From Minutes.**

4.1 4.1 Minute 2467/4.1 marker at Cossington Lane. Members previously queried whether this road was private as the existing waymarker points this out. The office had received confirmation from Kent Highways that the first 21 metres has been adopted with the remaining 104 metres being private. Therefore it is classed as a private street and as such the public have the right to pass and repass over the entire length without interference but it is maintained privately either by the land owner or the frontage owners. Members **agreed** not to purchase or install a sign. However Cllr Bob Hinder **agreed** to measure the road to see if the existing sign is within the first 21 metres he would then report back to the office. **Action Cllr Hinder/Office**

4.2 Minute 2467/4.2 PRow Round Wood valley. Members **noted** the loss of paperwork by KCC and await the final decision.

4.3 Minute 2467/5.4 Boxley Road/Grange Lane movement of speed restriction. There has been a Police objection to KCCH&T's consultation on this. KCCH&T has been contacted with a request that it looks at other possibilities. Members were not satisfied with the information received so far and requested the reasons for not moving the sign and to provide other alternatives. **Action Office.**

4.4 Minute 2467/4.4 additional white lining Boxley Road/Beechen Bank Rd. KCC have booked this work in. It is weather sensitive so may take some time to complete. **Noted.**

4.5 Minute 2467/4.6 Beechen Bank ownership investigation. The Parish Office received confirmation from land registry that this area has highlighted 31 plots that are registered there wasn't a map to show where these plots of land are



and to gain further information members **agreed** to spend a further £5.00 per search. Members also recommended writing to MBC to register this area as a local green space before waiting for the consultation on The Development Delivery Local Plan. **Action – Office.**

4.6 Minute 2467/4.7 Saracen Fields open area. Members **noted** the situation and await a response from County Councillor Paul Carter.

4.7 Minute 2469/8.1 & 8.3. Trees leaning over Walderslade Woods Road and other work as identified by Councillors (vegetation cut back on: footway adjacent to Boxley Road North of M20; footpath that dips into the trees at Round Wood roundabout between Lordswood Lane and Boxley Road) have been reported to Cllr Paul Carter with a request that he considers using his devolved budget to pay for work. **Noted.** Members asked if this would be done before the snow season and wanted to know how often Kent Highways surveyed the trees and vegetation. **Action office.**

## 5. Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration.

5.1 MA/12/1627 – Retrospective application for change of use to private taxi booking office and associated workshop to maintain taxi vehicles at Tyland Corner, Tyland Lane, Sandling. **Ratified** the Clerk’s decision, after consultation with members, *No objection to a booking office which will only attract occasional visits by taxi drivers. However wish to object to the application should the classification allow any expansion of the booking office to include a driver’s rest area or a taxi rank. Due to the lack of specific on site car parking any expansion to a simple booking office could have an adverse impact on the quality of life for residents as the booking office is a 24 hour operation.*

*Wish to object to the possible 24 hour opening of the workshop, no objection if there a condition restricting the hours of the workshop for example 8.00 – 17.00 Monday – Saturday.*

*The Parish Council would welcome further discussion with the Planning Officer should the Council’s response mean that the application has to be reported to the Planning Committee. The Parish Council does not approve of retrospective planning applications.*

Cllr Wendy Hinder arrived at this point and took over as Chair of the meeting, the time was 7.55pm.

5.2 MA/12/1856 erection of a single storey rear extension at Appledore, Weaving Street ME14 5JJ.

*Do not wish to object.*

5.3 MA/12/1883 erection of a two-storey rear extension and installation of first floor windows to the side elevation (resubmission of MA/12/0609) at 16 Trotwood Close, Walderslade ME5 9JU.

Members wished to see this application refused and reported to the planning committee if the officer is minded to approve for the reasons set out below:

- *Adverse impact on the street scene due to odd roof line visible over the garage;*
- *The bulk and size of the extension will, it is felt over power the original design of the house.*

5.4 MA/12/1898 erection of a single storey front extension at 42 Lombardy Drive, ME14 5TB.

*Do not wish to object.*

5.5 TA/0135/12 Tree Preservation Order application: TPO No.1 of 1969: an application for consent to fell one Hornbeam Tree (T1) and coppice one Oak Tree (T2) at 15 Greensands, Walderslade ME5 9DQ.

*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views*

5.6 TA/0151/12 application for consent to crown reduce by 20% one Sweet Chestnut tree at 11 Micawber Close, Walderslade ME5 9JZ.  
*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views.*

TA/0171/12 Tree Preservation Order application , TPO No.24 of 1987 application for consent to crown reduce 3no Ash trees and 3no Leylandii tree to 5m above ground level at Sandhurst, Grove Green Road, Weaving ME14 5JT.  
*Do not support this application unless the landscape officer deems the trees deceased or dangerous.*

5.7 TA/0176/12 Boxley Conservation Area notification of intention to crown reduce and thin the crowns of 1(no) Oak tree and 1(no) Ash tree by 25% at Parsonage Farm, The Street, Boxley ME14 3DX. 1  
*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views.*

5.8 TA/0177/12 Tree Preservation Order application: TPO No.1 of 1969: an application for consent to crown thin one Wild Cherry tree by 20%and crown lift to 4m above ground level at 2 Iris Close, Walderslade ME5 9QD.  
*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views.*

5.9 TA/0178/12 Tree Preservation Order application: TPO No.1 of 1969: an application for consent to remove branch of one Silver Birch tree overhanging at 10 Violet Close, Walderslade ME5 9ND.  
*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views.*

5.10 TA/0179/12 Conservation area notification of intention to reduce the height of a group of Laurels to 2.4m above ground level and fell 10 No. cypress to ground level at Court Lodge Farm, The Street, Boxley ME14 3DX.  
*Do not wish to object but defer to landscape officers views.*

## 6. **Planning Applications and Appeals Decisions**

Members noted the report from Cllr Bob Hinder MA/11/0791 The Oaks, Westfield Sole Road. Cllr Springate requested a change in the MBC policy for the period of landscaping to be increased from 5 to 10 years to reflect the decision made on this application, and has asked for it to be brought back to a future meeting.

## 7. **Neighbourhood Development Plans**

Members **received** the briefing report and **agreed** to proceed further in order for the committee to submit the neighbourhood development plan as needed rather than wait for the response to the draft core strategy.

Members **received** and amended the audit on Lordswood and Walderslade however due to time constraints it was agreed that Cllr Perry would look at the audit for Grove Green and Weaving Street and circulate his recommendations to the NDP sub-committee. Members also requested a six monthly review of the audits. **Action Cllr Perry/NDP Sub Committee/Office.**

## 8. **Walderslade Woods and Volunteer Group.**

Members **received** and **noted** the report/update on the group's recent activities.

## 9. **Highways and Byways.**

9.1 Cllr Waller reported that hedgerows required cutting back and wooden posts had been knocked down and needed replacing along Grange Lane, Sandling. **Action Office.**

9.2 Highway vegetation maintenance. Members **received** and **noted** the Clerk's report. Members were also informed that of all the issues that had been reported in the last month about 60% had been resolved.

9.3 Westfield Sole Road. Members **noted** Cllr Smith's request for 'improvements' along this road. White lining and road sweeping have been requested and Cllr Smith has been notified of previous but unsuccessful efforts by the committee to

get improvements. Members also **noted** that as there is currently no funding for additional white lining Cllr Carter is being approached to request some of his devolved budget be released. **Action County Cllr P Carter.**

- 9.4 Weaving Street. Members **agreed** to write to MP Hugh Robertson in support for the Grove Green Lane Residents Association petition to KCC asking for something to be done about the Weaving Street/Grove Green Lane junction as this may help their case. **Action office.**
- 9.5 Members **received** and **noted** Cllr Bob Hinder's report on the KCC Highways and Transportation conference held on 7 October 2012.
- 9.6 KCC Highways and Transportation Survey. The deadline for response is 12 December 2012. Cllr Bob Hinder agreed help the office complete the survey and will await confirmation from the office of a convenient date and time to do so. **Action Cllr B Hinder/office**
- 9.7 Abigail Crescent, Walderslade. Members **received** and **noted** the reasons for this road not being adopted by KCC.
- 9.8 Highway Maintenance Budget. Members agreed to look at costs for producing a 'use on public highways only' sign for salt bins before authorisation from this budget could be made. **Action – Office.**
- 9.9 Dog fouling Walderslade Woods. Members agreed to make use of the dog fouling signs the Council had available. **Action – Office.**
- 9.10 Maidstone Studios audience parking on Grove Green. Members **agreed** to write to Maidstone Studios inviting Geoff Miles to a meeting with Cllrs Wendy Hinder, Ivor Davies, Kevin Perry and the Clerk to discuss a way forward on the issue of parking problems in Grove Green. **Action – Office.**

As it was 9.30 pm the Chairman used her devolved powers to extend the meeting until 10.00 pm.

#### 10. **Policy and procedures review.**

Pre application discussions members agreed to Cllr Ivor Davies suggested amendments to this policy. **Action - Office**

#### 11. **2013/14 Budget – draft.**

Members **agreed** to set a draft budget of £2,500 for 2013/14. Members also asked the Assistant Clerk to forward a copy of the 'street maintenance' policy for guidance when suggesting potential future projects.

Cllr Smith requested more 'slow children playing signs' however members pointed out that there were signs already in place and therefore no action was taken.

#### 12. **Matters for information.**

12.1 Heritage at Risk – Members **agreed** they would like St Andrews Chapel added to the register but also asked if there was a list of Grade II listed buildings either in the office or with Maidstone Borough Council that could be considered at the next environment meeting. **Action – Office.**

12.2 Members **noted** the procedure for requesting street sweep or litter pick and directly reporting highways faults with KCC.

12.3 Members **noted** the up and coming government consultation entitled 'Technical review of planning appeal procedures consult'.

#### 13. **Next Meeting.**

Next full environment meeting 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.

#### 14. **Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC.**

**Noted** no update had been received.

The meeting closed at 9.58 pm.

**Item 6.3 Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade on Tuesday 13 November 2012 commencing at 7.34 p.m.**

Councillors present – Mr I Davies (Chairman), Mrs. P. Brooks, Mr Vic Davies, Mr Bob Hinder, Mrs Wendy Hinder, Mrs K Macklin, Mr. K Perry and Mr. G Smith together with the Clerk.

**1. Apologies and non-attendance.**

All members were present.

**2. Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.**

Cllr Vic Davies declared an interest in item 12.1 as he was a Trustee of Vinters Valley Nature Reserve (VVNR)

Cllr Ivor Davies notified members that he was a member of the Walderslade Woods Group (WWG), item 12.2.

Cllrs Ivor Davies, Bob Hinder, Wendy Hinder and Perry notified members that they were members of Friends of Boxley Warren (FoBW) item 12.

**3. Minutes of the meeting of 11 September 2012.**

The minutes of the meeting were **signed** and **agreed** as a correct record.

**4. Matters Arising.**

4.1 Minute 2452/4.1 Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard lease. **Noted** the issue regarding the dog waste bin had been resolved and MBC would continue to empty it. The Clerk was asked to contact MBC to ensure the revised legal agreement was completed and sent to the parish council. **Action** – Clerk.

The meeting was not adjourned as no members of the public were present.

**5. Financial report.**

5.1 The Income/Expenditure report of 5 November 2012 was **received and noted**.

i) Code 6 Photocopier lease; investigation into an apparent budget overspend. Members **noted** that the invoices should have been split between 2 codes and this had not taken place but had now been rectified.

ii) Discussion took place on whether expenditure over budget should be balanced by a vire from the contingency budget to individual codes. After consideration members **agreed** that rather than vire sums across to codes they would prefer any agreed expenditure from the contingency budget to be shown under that code. It was **noted** that the budget information document would need to be kept up to date to ensure an administrative and audit trail was available at the budget setting time. **Action** – Clerk.

5.2 **Noted** reconciliation of accounts report of 7 November 2012.

5.3 A failure, in October, to reconcile the Cooperative Bank General Account by 54p was brought to members' attention. After a search failed to locate the error a balancing entry had been made into SCRIBE as any further search would not be cost effective. It was **noted** that the Independent Internal Auditor had been notified of the discrepancy and the balancing amount was clearly shown in the accounts so that should the discrepancy come to light the accounts could be amended. Members' accepted the explanation and action.

**Received** and **signed off** reconciliation of accounts as at 7 November 2012. It was **noted** that the council was awaiting notification from Santander that the 18 month bond had been set up. This did not therefore appear in the report. The Chairman asked to be notified when confirmation was received.

5.4 Santander mandate for the investment bond. Members considered the mandate required to set up the investment bond. Concern was raised that Santander was requiring the parish council to agree to an overdraft facility. This was neither possible with an investment account nor permitted by law. The Clerk said that she had explained this to Santander, however the bank remained adamant that the wording of the mandate could not be altered. After discussion and to break

the log-jam, members **agreed** (with 1 abstention), Cllr Vic Davies proposed Cllr Brooks seconded that **"It is resolved that the parish council mandate contained in the Santander application forms be completed by the chairman and clerk with any two of five parish councilors being authorised signatories."** **Action** – Chairman and Clerk.

6. **Policy and procedures reviews and adoption.**

- 6.1 Grants policy & procedure, it was **agreed** that it was still fit for purpose.
- 6.2 Reserves policy. Discussion took place on the possible cut in the concurrent functions grant and it was recognised that this might affect the policy. **Agreed** to review in January 2013. **Action** – agenda.
- 6.3 Independent Internal Auditor 2013. Members expressed confidence in the current holder Kevin Funnell and approved the extension of his appointment.
- 6.4 Annual review of H&S/accident book. A confidential report on accidents in the previous 12 months was **received**. The issue of staff on certificated sick leave returning to work on restricted duties before being signed off was discussed. The Clerk assured members that this was permissible if a member of staff requested such a return providing that risk assessments were undertaken and the situation closely monitored.

7 **Investments.**

This item was covered at item 5.3.

8 **Payment of Staff Salaries by BACS** The Clerk's report was **received** and it was **noted** that the issue had been discussed with the Independent Internal Auditor. It was **agreed** (with 1 abstention) that, subject to Finance Committee approval of the procedure for signing and processing payment authorisations, BACS payments for staff could be made and that a fax machine could be purchased for this purpose.

9 **Independent Internal Audit.**

**Received** the report on the internal audit undertaken by Kevin Funnell on 15 October 2012. It was **noted** that once again it was a very positive report.

10 **Annual Competency Report.**

**Received** the Clerk's report on the work of the committee. Discussion took place on two outstanding issues high-lighted in the report:

- The importance of identifying an action when a decision is made and, where appropriate, naming the person responsible for ensuring the work is progressed. **Agreed** this had been overlooked and should be put in hand immediately.
- Chairmen to ask committee-members for feed-back after meetings. This had no support as members **agreed** that it was entirely up to individual Chairmen to decide on how to approach and identify possible improvements to the work of their committees.

An area of common concern identified in the latter discussion was the length of meetings. This was often caused by councillors coming not having read their papers or not following correct committee procedure. After discussion it was **agreed** that discipline at meetings was down to the relevant chairman to manage but the Chairman was asked to raise the issue at the next parish council meeting. **Action** – all chairmen.

11 **2012/13 Draft Budget.**

The draft budget was discussed in detail and individual amendments were identified. Members undertook a review of expenditure on the Downs Mail and **agreed** that no change to the expenditure or delivery arrangements was needed. **Action** – review in 12 months.

Additional projects identified were:

- An annual award to recognise a significant community contribution the parish. This was agreed but with no specific budget awarded as it was initially to be funded from the chairman's civic budget.
- **Noted** Friends of Boxley Warren might request the purchase of a brush cutter.

As it was 9.30 pm the Chairman used his devolved powers to extend the meeting by 30 minutes.

**12 Grant Request.**

12.1 Vinters Valley Nature Reserve request for release of their additional budget for footpath work. It was **agreed**, proposed from the chair, that £937.58 be released. **Action** – office.

12.2 Walderslade Woods Group request for release of their additional budget to pay Kent Wildlife Trust to update the Walderslade Woods management plan. It was **agreed**, proposed by Cllr Perry seconded Cllr Vic Davies, that £937.58 be released. **Action** – office.

12.3 Victim Support. It was **agreed**, proposed Cllr Vic Davies seconded Cllr Brooks, **to award a grant of £100.**

**13 Walderslade Woods Group – Earmarked Reserves.**

**Received** the WWG Chairman's report and the request that the group be allowed to build up reserves to purchase a wood chipper. It was **agreed**, proposed by Cllr Macklin and seconded by Cllr Vic Davies that the **WWG be allowed to roll over any unspent grant to purchase a wood chipper and that this be showed in the parish council's earmarked reserves.**

**14 Matters for Information.**

There were none reported.

**15 Date of Next Meeting.**

Tuesday 8 January 2013 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

**Item 10 Annual Competency Reports.** *Purpose of item; information and to decide whether to make a statement on the competency of the council.*

Clerks report.

Boxley Parish Council has set itself an aim not to stagnate and always to seek improvements in the way it works and responds to its residents. As part of this aim each committee is required to undertake an annual review of its work, procedures and efficiency and make a competency report, highlighting any weaknesses and omissions, to the Parish Council. By undertaking such a public health check the parish council is:

- a) Operating in an open and accountable way,
- b) Showing that it is willing to challenge its operating procedures' and
- c) Has a procedure which highlights that the parish council or committee has ownership of and responsibility for its decision making procedures.

Reviews were undertaken by committees:

- Environment Committee on 9 July 2012.
- Estates Committee on 14 August 2012,
- Finance Committee 13 November 2012

Each committee received a report on the methods, procedures and reviews by which it worked. Members discussed issues highlighted under the possible weaknesses section of each report and appropriate actions were identified.

Environment Committee.

Many issues were 'housekeeping' type changes and this has work been undertaken by the office/committee. A request was made that a planning and environment page should be added to the website and this will be considered by the working group. A specific issue was raised about the way a planning decision was taken and an amendment was made to

a laminated document, which is available at the meeting, to remind members of their 'rights'.

**No major issues or concerns were raised or identified and thus it is considered that the review confirmed that the committee is competent.**

#### Estates Committee.

Clarification was sought on how a councillor could request a new agenda item and this resulted in an e-mail to members and slight changes being made to agenda as a reminder.

**No major issues or concerns were raised or identified and thus it is considered that the review confirmed that the committee is competent.**

#### Finance Committee.

Two main issues were identified: a 2011 decision was not followed through as no action was identified; the length of time that some council meetings were taking. Action has or will be taken to deal with these issues.

**No major policy or procedure issues or concerns were identified and thus it is considered that the review confirmed that the committee is competent.**

#### Parish Council annual competency review.

Parish councillors receive copies of all agenda and the majority sit on one or two committees; the parish council chairman and Vice Chair sit on all committees. As members will be very familiar with the competency reports already issued the following sections have been omitted from this report;

- Procedures; which lists what the office definition of "housekeeping" is etc.
- Competent; The need to appoint a competent Proper Officer (Clerk and in her absence Asst. Clerk) and for councillors to also be responsible.
- Statement of Clerks competency to produce such an overview.

To ensure that it is effective and efficient the parish council manages the work of the council by operating a committee system; it also retains control of some areas. The parish council retains the right to take responsibility for an issue back from a committee.

The parish council also uses a style of agenda that incorporates reports and background information allowing councillors and the public to be adequately briefed before a meeting.

Part of the work allocation and monitoring process operated by the parish office is the production of review diaries listing the policies and procedures which include the scheduled for review date. The parish council and committees receive the relevant diary early in the New Year. Included in the diary are also *office notes* which are another way that councillors can check that work is scheduled and takes place.

The following lists all the different methods, procedures and ways that are used by the office to ensure that any identified work and regular reviews of policy and procedures takes place. The list cannot be exhaustive and there will always be irregular or one off situations that will need to be dealt with as they arise. Part of the review (effectively a health check) will need to be a judgement that there are correct policies and procedures in place to be able to identify and deal with odd or unforeseen situations.

#### Risk Assessments (RA), policy and actions taken to control and alleviate/control any potential issues

- Member numbers for committees (policy).
- Terms of Reference for Committees (policy).
- Standing Orders, Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations (RA and policy).
- Equal Opportunities Statement (policy)
- Replacement Procedure (for project not managed by parish office) (policy).
- Protocol for attending p.c. and committee meetings (policy).
- Quarterly reminders to members are reminded that they should not sign blank cheques or authorisation letters, they needed to check invoices against cheques

when signing and cheques stubs needed to be initialled by both signatures. They also need to keep their register of interest updated (RA and policy).

- Chair to do minimum standards check (RA, action and policy).
- Receives copies of all committee minutes (policy).
- Complaints re Code of Conduct (policy).
- Guidance notes for site visits and lobbying (policy).
- Parish Councillor Allowances (policy).
- Press Policy (policy)
- Land & building purchase policy (policy).
- Internal Complaints (policy).
- Community Engagement Strategy (action and policy)
- Freedom of Information (policy)
- Records Management Policy (policy).

The parish council has a new website and as many policies and procedures as possible are included on the site. Councillors are reminded that they can visit the site to refresh their memories on what has been adopted by the parish council.

#### Health Check.

Members need to undertake a health check on the parish council to identify

- Are its own current policies and procedures enough if not where are there weaknesses?
- Is its management of issues, through a committee system, operating effectively and efficiently?
- What improvements they think there could be to the way current policies, actions and procedures are managed.
- Are there procedures in place to be confident that one off or irregular issues are dealt with by the office under housekeeping or referred to the Committee in a prompt and correct manner?

#### Weaknesses identified by the Clerk whilst undertaking the report

No parish council weakness was identified. However a weakness in the way the Annual Competency report is reported to committees was identified. Changes will be made, by the Clerk, to the next reviews so that every committee has to make a statement about its review.

#### **Statement of competence.**

Members must decide whether they wish to make the following statement for inclusion in the minutes.

**Boxley Parish Council and its committees have undertaken an annual review of its style of management and methods of work. It is considered that decisions are taking place in an open and accountable way and that the public can a) understand how a decision was reached; b) monitor the work of the parish council and c) recognise that the parish council is acting legally and fairly.**

**Item 13. Reports from Borough and County Councillors.** *Purpose of report; information.*

Wendy Hinder report

The drop kerbs for Boxley Road, Walderslade are currently being installed. I have received a complaint about a private road sign at Cossington Lane which is being referred to the Environment Committee.

I have been involved with several other issues that residents that have brought to my attention. It is a busy time of the year with various meetings being fitted in before Christmas but I'm about to be spend some enjoyable time at St Johns School with carols and naivety plays. May I wish everyone a Merry Christmas.



**Item 14. Reports from councillors/office. Purpose of report; information.**

**Item 14.1 Cllr Perry's report on the Friends of Boxley Warren task day on 11 November 2012.**

A day spent clearing fast growing vegetation from around our recently planted Box trees. Eleven volunteers and one dog spent a great day in the sun shine on the steep slopes of the downs. The box trees have established themselves well and are all looking healthy. Two minutes respectful silence was observed at the appointed hour before work resumed. Steve wright guided and over saw the work expertly and during a discussion over a cup of tea mention that the purchase of at least one "brush cutter" would be a valuable tool to aid the group. I asked him to discuss this at the next friends meeting and present the costings of purchase and training to the parish office. If the group do not have the funding for such a tool I would ask if the Parish council could consider this to go in to our budget for next year please.

**Item 14.3 KALC AGM, Ditton Parish Hall, 17/11/12 Report by Ivor Davies**

Well-attended but 13 parishes not represented (only five absent last year).

Guest Speaker: Matthew Nix, Asst Chief Constable, Kent Police

Much was a reiteration of that heard at the Rural Police Forum, previously reported.

Other points of interest:

Ann Barnes, the new PCC, has strategic direction of the police but Chief Constable retains operational control. Police welcome her oversight of partner agencies and the courts.

Chief Constable keen on PCSOs. Redistribution of wards now complete. Understand parish concerns but no further reallocation expected unless dictated by budgeting issues.

Working with key agencies has proved successful in reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB) leaving noise (difficult to control) as the only growth area,

Rural crime a problem, particularly metal and oil theft. Now have a Rural Crime Advisory Board, on which the NFU and landowners are represented. Farmwatch, Lorrywatch and other rural watches proving productive. Police again promoting Neighbourhood Watch.

New 101 number successful: 229,000 calls since 1 April (and 155,000 999 calls). Co-location with Kent Fire & Rescue has proved mutually beneficial.

Guest Speaker: John Burr, Director, Highways & Transportation, KCC

Financial situation difficult. No capital funding for major infrastructure works. Grass-cutting reduced from twice to once a year but weather conditions have caused problems. Extra spraying and weed-cutting next year. Pothole back-log almost cleared. Ringway replaced by a new contractor, now paid by the job rather than by time taken.

Three-year programme of clearing all gullies in the county will be completed next year (previously only cleared when blocked) but Highways will no longer respond immediately to call-outs for gullies unless houses threatened or there is a health & safety issue as not economic.

Well prepared for winter, unless again exceptional, but lessons learnt. Salt bins full. Householders not liable for accidents caused by their clearing snow from pavements – unless they have worsened the problem by e.g. pouring hot water on path in icy conditions.

Death & serious injuries still falling, bucking national trend. Aware of local road-safety concerns, but national policy dictates that safety work cannot be undertaken solely because a serious accident might happen; it has to happen first. Parishes will soon be consulted on switching-off some street lighting in the early hours, which experience has shown does not increase either crime or road accidents. More 20 mph zones coming.

Proud of what he has achieved in the two years since his appointment. Morale noticeably better.

#### Motions Considered

NALC to lobby Government to ...

- Ensure parish councils represented when principal authority hears a Code of Conduct complaint against a parish councillor
- Give parish councils statutory rights to object to vehicle operators licence applications
- Provide the 'missing' slip roads at the M26/M25/A21 junction
- Review the current definition of 'gypsies and travellers' and size limits for caravans.

All were successful. KALC also adopted Maidstone KALC's draft polytunnel policy.

A motion proposing that major planning applications should go straight to a Planning Inspector for an independent public hearing was defeated (undemocratic/ poor drafting).

#### **Item 14.4**

#### Report of area KALC meeting

21<sup>st</sup> November 2012

Attendees – Cllr's Ivor Davies and Bob Hinder

The meeting opened with an update on current position of the Core Strategy and the fact that the Integrated Transport section had been "thrown back" by the JTB.

Locality Boards mentioned as was the new 4 areas of provision for the Youth Services. Our parish will be in "area South" and the provider will be Project South. Funding was discussed but no figures in the public domain "commercially sensitive!"

Libraries situation outlined – secretary will be sending to the clerk all the various consultations - would like feedback to know if this is useful.

New initiative led by the High Sherriff on rural crime and is mainly for the farmers.

Lorry Watch and the new Freight Strategy – welcomed by everyone.

Next meeting date is the 6<sup>th</sup> February – did clerk respond to request from KALC for info on future dates for meetings ?

Main Item – Concurrent Functions.

Now have 3583 signatures on petition which will close at the end of the week.

No response from the Cabinet member to a letter sent on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

Will submit the petition to the Council one week before the Full meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December where they want as many councillors and general public attending to support. Hoping that the Mayor will call a debate and allow a vote – this is at the Mayor's discretion !

Discussion the a recent meeting with John Wilson and Zena Cooke where the press reported a figure of £250,000 was given for next year. This was stated to be incorrect by JW and ZC but they have obtained a written confirmation from the reporter that this was correct. Long discussion on the future and it is clear that some PC,s who have involved themselves with Ellie Kershaw are now in the position of having figures which they can use for calculating Precepts – I believe we do NOT.

Bob Hinder

**Item 15. Improving Local Government Transparency consultation.** *Purpose of report; information.*

The Communities and Local Government Improving Local Government Transparency consultation documents can be downloaded from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/makingthecode>. The deadline for response is 20 December 2012.

Summary from NALC Policy Briefing note. The Clerk's comments are contained in[]

- "The Government is consulting on making regulations to require local authorities to publish data falling within certain descriptions of information specified in the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency ('the Code'), which was issued on 29 September 2011 under section 2 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980;
- This would therefore apply to local councils with an annual budgeted spend or income of £200,000 or more, as proposed in the original Code; [*the parish council is on the cusp of breaching this limit*].
- The regulations will also require authorities to publish information in the manner and form specified in the Code; [*the Code's requirement is very restrictive in the format required and it is not clear whether this could easily be met. Expenditure or contracts over £500 will have to be displayed in an 'open and machine readable format'. Advice will have to be taken but the format and manner are included in paragraphs 14 & 15 of the code which is an appendix to the consultation document*].
- The Code is concerned with making data generated by authorities available and accessible to the public;
- The authorities to whom the Code applies, and to whom the regulations will apply, are listed in section 2 of the Act (and are set out in paragraph 4 of the Code);and

***The National Association is minded to support the proposals contained in the Government's Improving Local Government Transparency consultation, provided the minimum budgetary threshold (at this stage) of an annual budgeted spend or income of £200, 000, is retained.***

KALC has yet to make a decision on its response.

Comments are invited on proposed amendments and additions to the Code; and the regulations. In particular:

**Question 1: What amendments or additions could be made to paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Code to aid compliance?**

*Para 10. Local authorities should build and maintain an inventory of the public data that they hold so that people are able to know what is available to them. If public data would be released under Freedom of Information it should be included in the inventory. As this inventory is highlighted to the widest possible audience demand should grow and local authorities should expect to publish more.*

*Para 11. These inventories should be registered on data.gov.uk to support a single point of access for all public data from national and local government.*

**Suggested response.**

This parish council is not against this provision in principle. A list of the data it holds already accompanies its Freedom of Information Schedule which is on its website. However there is concern that these additional requirements will be a burden to small parish councils such as our own when they only just exceed the £200,000 threshold.

**Question 2: What data streams could be added to the Code to aid transparency where services are contracted-out; and help greater access to contract information?**

**Suggested response.** The parish council has no suggestions to make.

**Question 3: Are there other data sets which would be useful to the public which could be added to paragraph 12 of the Code? In particular, is there any data that would:**

- **Support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and local businesses**
- **Support the release of surplus Local Authority land and property?**

*Para. 12. As a minimum, the public data that should be released are:*

- *expenditure over £500, (including costs, supplier and transaction information). Any sole trader or body acting in a business capacity in receipt of payments of at least £500 of public money should expect such payments to be transparent;*
- *senior employee salaries, names (with the option for individuals to refuse to consent for their name to be published), job descriptions, responsibilities, budgets and numbers of staff. "Senior employee salaries" is defined as all salaries which are above £58,200 and above (irrespective of post), which is the Senior Civil Service minimum pay band. Budgets should include the overall salary cost of staff reporting to each senior employee;*
- *an organisational chart of the staff structure of the local authority including salary bands and details of currently vacant posts;*
- *the 'pay multiple' – the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the authority's workforce;*
- *councillor allowances and expenses;*
- *copies of contracts and tenders to businesses and to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector;*
- *grants to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector should be clearly itemised and listed;*
- *policies, performance, external audits and key inspections and key indicators on the authorities' fiscal and financial position;*
- *the location of public land and building assets and key attribute information that is normally recorded on asset registers; and*
- *data of democratic running of the local authority including the constitution, election results, committee minutes, decision - making processes and records of decisions.*

**Suggested response.**

Our parish office has a staff of just two part-time officers, on whom the production and maintenance of such information would be a huge burden. There appears to be no understanding of the impact and likely extra cost to small minor authorities and their taxpayers of this proposal. For instance, the parish council's website does not currently conform to the machine-readable aim and conversion seems an unreasonable expense.

A caveat should be included that, as is the standard in the Freedom of Information Act, should the council not be the originator of the information (for example parish councils do not manage Parish Council elections) then it would not need to produce such information. Also, as our parish council minutes detail decisions made and these are freely available on our website, there should be no requirement to produce separate paperwork. This would avoid unnecessary duplication and expense.

**Question 4: Is the description of minimum standards and proposed timing to achieve them correct?**

**Suggested response.**

This parish council could not post the information in 'real time' (an aspiration of the code). It has a stated aim to place draft minutes on the website within seven working days. This allows for officers' other duties and Chairpersons' employment and other activities and, in our view, provides sufficient transparency.

**Question 5: Is the process of what will happen if the Code is to be enforced clear?**

*Paragraph 19. Local Authorities should comply with the Code. We will make a specific reference in the Code that authorities should not routinely use the Data Protection Act or the Freedom of Information Act as a justification for not being transparent on spending.*

*Paragraph 20. We propose to take a considered approach to non-compliance, to allow authorities to work with the department. If necessary, the Secretary of State has the power to seek an order from the courts that an authority is in breach of its obligations, and/or an order that it must comply with its duties.*

**Suggested response.** Yes and this seems a reasonable approach.

**Additional comments.**

There is concern that the rules governing the publication of information will be so precise that it would actually be extremely expensive to comply. It is likely that this parish council would have to purchase additional software and increase staff hours to comply.

The only income for many parish councils is its precept and so the burden of these proposals will fall on residents. It is not apparent that the benefit to the public of this extra transparency would be commensurate with the cost.

As parish councils are now having to provide additional services to compensate for cuts by principal authorities, more will breach the spending threshold even without these additional costs. This small council is on the cusp of so doing now. It is therefore considered that the £200,000 threshold is set too low; and that it should be exceeded for three years before the regulations become mandatory.

**Item 16. Matters for information. Purpose of report; information.**

16.1 Cobtree Country Park newsletter Oct-Nov (e-mail 14/11/12).

16.2 Thank you from VVNR and WWG for the released grants.

16.3 Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority draft plans for the future "Towards 2020 Update" is available on [www.kent.fire-uk.org](http://www.kent.fire-uk.org).

**Item 16.4. Financial update from NALC.**

"Following a request from a Finance Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council this morning, I thought we should confirm two points about the way in which precepts are set for the 2013-14 financial year;

- 1. *Smaller local councils should continue to liaise directly with their Billing Authorities in terms of the process of precept-setting for 2013-14; and***
- 2. *Local councils are still not formally covered by the Referendum on Excessive Council Tax Increases – we will let the sector know if and when they are.***

These two points can be made with some certainty at present. NALC Policy Briefing P39-12 was intended to be a well-meaning holding position nationally for the way local councils of all sizes set their precepts for the 2013-14 financial year. It has clearly generally been a financially uncertain time for local government in recent months. The National Association will know more when the Draft Local Government Finance Report is published (probably on or around 6/12), and will alert the local councils' sector to any changes after that point".

**Item 16.5 Office arrangements over Christmas/New Year holidays**

Mon 24 - 27 December 2012 – closed.

Fri 28 December – open.

Mon 31 December 2012 – open.

Tues 1 January 2013 – closed.

Wed 2 January 2013 – service resumes as normal.

16. 5 CPRE Countryside Voice Winter 2012 edition.

16.6 KWT Wild Kent Winter 2012/13 edition.

16.7 Friends of Boxley Warren minutes of 20.11.12.