

**Minutes of the Environment Committee on Monday 9 September 2014 at
Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.34 p.m.**

Councillors present: Mr P Dengate (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks, Mr Ivor Davies, Mr M Hinchliffe, Mr Hollands and Mr A Springate together with the Assistant Clerk.

1. Apologies and absences

Cllrs Wendy Hinder, Bob Hinder, Ann Spain and Maureen Waller (holiday).

2. Declaration of Interests, dispensations, predetermination or Lobbying

Cllr Dengate declared that he was predetermined on item 12 Proposed development at Gibraltar Farm.

All councillors except Cllr Hinchliffe declared that they had been lobbied on MA/14/0387 Highmill and all councillors declared they had been lobbied 14/502252 Land at Junction of New Cut Road and Bearsted Road.

3. Minutes of the Meetings of 18 August 2014

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

4. Matters Arising From Minutes

4.1 Minute 2674/4.1 Westfield Sole Road additional signage. KCCH&T has agreed to arrange 'unsuitable for HGV' signs to be placed at the ends of the road. The date for erection has been requested from KCCH&T and the office has been advised this could take up to 6 months **Noted**.

4.2 Minute 2677/9.1 Part-night lighting. The Office is awaiting a response from County Councillor Paul Carter about whether KCC is monitoring any rises in crime in areas subject to the new regime and whether if there is a rise the turn off will be reviewed for that particular area. A response was not available for the meeting. Cllr Dengate informed members that the Kent Messenger had run an article stating that Kent Police did not endorse this initiative.

4.3 Minute 2677/9.2 Bollards Boxley Road, Walderslade. A site visit with MBC took place and it was suggested that a further two bollards were needed for this area. Members **agreed** to an additional £100.00 which is to be allocated from the Street Maintenance budget.

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

5. Planning Applications and Appeals for Consideration

5.1 14/0387 Amended plans. Erection of a single storey rear extension at Highmill, Tyland Lane, Sandling. *Do not wish to object.*

5.2 14/502028/TPO. Prune back to boundary the overhanging branches of 5 trees at 5 And 6 Greenways Weaving Kent ME14 5JU.
Do not wish to object but defer to Landscape Officers view.

5.3 14/502252/OUT/ANHE. Outline application for a development of 8 no. houses with access considered at this stage and all other matters reserved for future consideration at land at Junction Of New Cut Road And Bearsted Road Weaving.

Wish to see refused and reported to the Planning Committee for the reasons set out below:

- Out of keeping with the street scene as the site forms part of the landscaped boundary fronting this area setting the boundary to the urban area and the change in development would alter this character (page 795 of the MBC Land Allocation document 2014 Housing site assessments). The trees adjacent to the watercourse and at the back of the close to the east of the site make a

significant contribution to the amenity of the area and this will be destroyed/compromised if development is allowed to go ahead.

- Development is on a previously undeveloped greenfield site that it is believed had protected flora and fauna. The reptile survey carried out in 2012 is out of date and there is concern about the breadth and depth of the investigation as it appears that only part of the site was surveyed.
- Development of the site would see the loss of some significant established grassland with ecological potential (page 795 of the MBC Land Allocation document 2014 Housing site assessments).
- Site is an extremely important wildlife corridor connecting Mote Park/VVNR to the surrounding countryside including Weaving Heath , Horish and Popes woods. A large and thriving population of Great Crested newts were recently unexpectedly found in Horish Wood and it is therefore not inconceivable that these protected species have migrated.
- The site is crossed by a vitally important stream that feeds into the lake at VVNR. Water also drains from Weaving Heath and feeds into this stream. Interruption of this water course and water source and any contamination from pesticides etc. will adversely impact and irrevocably damage the wildlife habitats and ecosystems in the nature reserve.
- There is concern about flooding should the development take place and it is felt the site is unsuitable due to its low level and to make it suitable will result in the loss of habitats and ecosystems.
- There are also concerns about the location of the site's access and egress so close to an extremely busy roundabout and an M20 feeder road.
- There is grave concern about pedestrian access to Grove Green facilities and bus services. The layout of footways around the roundabout will require a pedestrian to cross and re-cross busy roads and junctions to reach a footpath that will allow them access to public facilities.

5.4 14/502735/FULL/GFBR. Formation of 6 car parking spaces and installation of associated supercharged electric vehicle charging plant, canopy, access and landscaping at Eclipse Park Sittingbourne Road North Maidstone Kent. *Do Not Wish to Object.*

Local Plan update – Members **received** the Clerk's report and **agreed** to the following Councillors attendance at the meeting on 27 September: Ivor Davies, Wendy Hinder, Bob Hinder together with the Clerk. An agenda will be forwarded prior to the meeting.

6. **Planning Decisions, Appeals and Appeals Decisions**

None received.

7. **Neighbourhood Development Plans**

Noted no further action.

8. **Volunteer Groups**

Walderslade Woods Group - Cllr Springate confirmed that work still continues with the management of the woodland and plateaux. He also informed members that the quarterly meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 16 September, 2014.

9. **Highways and Byways**

9.1 Speed limit Walderslade Woods Road to consider KCCH&T's response. Members **received** the Clerk's report and discussions took place covering the current speed limit, the change in driver's behaviour since the installation of the islands and their perception of the speeds being driven at the moment. Members **agreed** that since the islands were installed the speed has decreased and junctions have become safer, as overtaking is restricted by the islands. However they asked if the

clerk could investigate the original correspondence from KCCHT prior to the installation of the islands to clarify if they had committed to do a follow up speed survey after the road improvements. Members **agreed** they could not support KCC's request for funding of a speed survey on the grounds that only one complaint has been received and as such expenditure would not be commensurate with gain. **Action Clerk.**

- 9.2 Bus route 130. Members **received** the Clerks report which highlighted a resident's concern regarding the timetable change on this route and the plight of school children arriving home at least an hour later than normal. An email has been sent to the bus company by the Parish Council supporting these concerns.

Members were also asked to consider the possibilities of enforcing the 20 mph speed limit in Boxley village. After careful consideration Members **agreed** that although it was very sympathetic there was little the Parish Council could do particularly as the police view the speed humps are self-enforcing.

10. Policy and procedures review

- 10.1 Pre Application discussions. Members **agreed** the current policy was still fit for purpose.
- 10.2 Retention of planning applications Members **received** the Clerk's report and requested further clarification on the retention rules for Maidstone Borough Council including the electronic plans. Members **agreed** that plans for larger developments and sites with a planning history should be kept and for how long would be decided by the environment committee at the time the application is reviewed. Members requested this item be returned to the October agenda. **Action Clerk.**
- 10.3 Planning Rota. Names were **agreed** and a rota will be drawn up and circulated to the committee. **Action Clerk.**

11. Proposed development at Gibraltar Farm

An outline application for 450 houses has now been submitted to Medway Council. The Assistant Clerk informed members that the office had despatched 1400 leaflets to be delivered with the Downs Mail in the parish areas of Lordswood and Walderslade urging residents to make their own representations. Cllr Dengate updated members on the current situation he explained Medway Council's planning portal had failed when he tried to submit an objection. He also stated that there is insufficient room for responses with a limit of 1000 characters. Cllr Springate congratulated Cllr Dengate for his effort in bringing this issue to the Parish Council's attention.

12. Matters for information

- 12.1 Extensive gardening works to the Yew Tree PH. Members **received** and **noted** the Clerk's report.

13. Next Meeting

Next full environment meeting 6 October 2014 at Beechen Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m.

14. Enforcement and Section 106 updates from MBC

None received

Meeting closed at 8.59 pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman.....Date.....