

**MINUTES OF GREAT MONGEHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON  
THURSDAY 7 MARCH 2019 at 7.30pm**

Present: Councillors J Gatland I Lawrence T Madgwick C Saville  
P Swales P Hambrook T Ridyard

S Wells (Clerk to the Council) 13 Members of the public Dist & County Cllr S Manion  
Dist Cllr Kenton

Cllr Gatland opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

These had been displayed on the Parish Notice board, the Web-site and were available on entrance to the meeting.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Why have the contractors that cut back the vegetation in Church path dumped the waste in the adjacent field? The Clerk had contact PROW and they had agreed a course of action with the land owner.

The Telephone has been removed from the Kiosk in Mongeham Road, when will the kiosk housing be removed. The Clerk had contacted BT and the kiosk had been removed.

Concern was raised about the wall on Mongeham Road belonging to the derelict farm buildings, of Church Farm Buildings. The Clerk had contacted DDC building control.

### **4. PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

Information on the forthcoming elections was available to all those present.

The next Parish Council elections will be held on 2 May 2019 and now is the time to discover whether you've got what it takes to be a parish councillor. You don't need to be a member of any political party – but you do need a genuine interest in what happens in Great Mongeham. Councillors come from all walks of life, age groups and backgrounds, so don't rule yourself out just because you think you don't fit the councillor 'mould'.

Great Mongeham Parish Council meet 10 times a years, on the first Thursday of the month. We don't meet in Jan or Aug. The meeting start at 7.30pm and usually end by 9pm. In addition to the monthly meetings members may also be asked to attend occasional meetings with other authorities and organisations, Dover District Council, Kent County Council or Kent Association of Town and Parish Councils.

Great Mongeham Parish Council has 7 seats and an Annual precept of £8800.00. We employ a part time Clerk who is the Proper Officer of the Council and the Responsible Finance Officer. As a relatively new Council (formed in 1996) we do not own any land or buildings, however we do make a difference to local people.

Last year in partnership with Ripple PC we ran the Battles over event, we also paid for the Christmas tree and carols round the tree refreshments. Sponsored the Bouncy castle at the Annual Fete and paid for the window box plants at the Pariah Hall. In addition to this we pay for the mowing of the village green and gave a grant to the Village Newsletter.

If you are interested in becoming a Councillor please speak to the Clerk or one of the current members for more information.

## 5. PILOT SHUTTLE BUS SCHEME

Presented by Cllr Chris Saville as representatives from Kent County Council had dropped out at very short notice.

### The History of the Project

18 months ago Stagecoach withdrew the local service of the number 14 bus. As far as I am aware, from comments made at meetings, this was not a loss making service. Due to the convoluted route it took, entering Deal, Eastry, Sandwich and Canterbury, a round trip for the 14 took over 3 hours and three to four buses and drivers to provide the service. These buses could have been put to far more profitable use running around any of the towns - in the same time the buses could have made four times the number 14 journeys on shorter urban routes. Thus Stagecoach removed our village bus, despite extensive objections.

It should be made clear that Kent County Council has very little control over bus services throughout Kent. 97% of the services running in Kent are independent of KCC control. Kent County Council's budget is, however, around seven million to run and/or subsidise the other 3% of services. Some of these rural subsidies are extremely inefficient, with KCC stating it costs close on £18.00 per head on some journeys. KCC wanted to investigate how these subsidies could be spent more efficiently, hence the 'Big Conversation' bus consultation was born. The 'Big Conversation' proffered three ideas: firstly a feeder bus service, secondly a dial-a-ride scheme and thirdly a taxi bus scheme. Half a million pounds were allocated to the project. Representatives from Staple, Northbourne and our Parish Council attended Big Conversation meetings and lobbied KCC on behalf of our villages. I am pleased to say Great Mongeham, Northbourne and Staple were chosen by KCC for a year's pilot scheme of a feeder bus service starting in June 2019. The other four pilot schemes will all be around the major towns in Central and West Kent, so we were very fortunate to be the only villages in East Kent chosen for a pilot.

So, what is a feeder bus scheme? The idea behind a feeder scheme is to make far more efficient use of a small bus by running through the villages but not going into major conurbations. Traffic can be terrible in Deal, especially at the junction out onto the A258 at Sholden, Sandwich has train gates and very narrow roads, without even mentioning Canterbury. The feeder scheme would reinstate a bus service through the villages, but only with the aim of getting passengers to a site where an existing Stagecoach service operates, with good timetabled hook-ups. What KCC view as essential is an hourly timetabled circular service, which allows use of bus passes and where through ticketing will be possible. Also, travel information display boards and bus shelters will be available at the interchange points. This way a service can once again be provided, more frequent and with far less outlay.

The dial-a-ride and taxi bus schemes did not support bus passes or through ticketing and involved a membership payment with half the number of feeder bus journeys. We did not think either of these viable in our case.

In November 2018, the first working group meeting for the feeder pilot scheme was held in Northbourne. KCC offered a service running from Staple to Sholden, via Ash, direct to Northbourne and then on to Great Mongeham and Sholden new estate. All three parish councils, i.e.: Staple, Northbourne and Great Mongeham, felt that this was a route from nowhere to nowhere, via nowhere, asking that KCC consider using Sandwich as a hub, as Sandwich has the best bus connections to the surrounding towns.

The next meeting was held in December and nothing was achieved. KCC and the Parish Councils were diametrically opposed on whether or not the route should go to Sandwich.

At the following meeting in January 2019, KCC turned up in full strength. It was made quite clear that, unless the parish councils agreed to the original route, KCC would take the pilot elsewhere. KCC explained that, under no circumstances were they prepared to replace the number 14 bus

service. The budget KCC had was for a year's trial of a totally new bus concept, the feeder scheme, and no money would be spent to replace just another rural off peak bus service. Plus, if the villagers wanted a bus service, we would have to accept the KCC pilot feeder scheme offering. Sholden Parish Council attended this meeting and were vehemently opposed to extra traffic being generated through Sholden, when they are fighting further new development, with gridlock being one of the principle concerns. KCC agreed to look at our suggestion of utilising Saint Nicholas's close as a potential Eastern end point for the feeder bus service. KCC also agreed to three monthly reviews on how the pilot scheme was proceeding and, at these meetings, nothing would be off the table. Rather than lose the pilot scheme, I reluctantly agreed to KCC's proposals, knowing that, if the pilot scheme hit trouble, we would be able to review every three months. Hopefully all would not be lost.

### **What is Proposed**

The village will, once again, have an hourly weekday bus service through the village in both directions, but only between the hours of the Stagecoach school runs to Sandwich.

The proposed route is:

- Staple to an interchange point at Gilton bus shelter, just West of Ash.
- Around the Ash bypass and Sandwich bypass to Northbourne Road.
- Then on to Northbourne and Great Mongeham, but not via Circular Road or Eastry, as the old number 14 went.
- Through Great Mongeham on the old 14 bus route, turning right at St Richards Road and then immediately left to get to St Martins Road and St Nicholas Close where it would terminate at the St Nicholas Close bus shelter.
- The return journey would be the reverse of this.

The entire single journey would only take around 20 - 25 minutes starting every hour and returning on the half hour. The bus is expected to be a small single decker or a large minibus with facilities for the disabled. This is a far quicker schedule than the old number 14 and would compensate, in part, for the need to change buses to get to any of the towns in the Sandwich direction.

- The Stagecoach school bus services to Sandwich would remain in place.
- The three parish councils would consider subsidising, if economical, an extra round trip service after the afternoon school bus run.
- Bus passes and through ticketing arrangements would be honoured.
- All existing Stagecoach bus stops along the route would be serviced.
- Designated interchange points with shelters and live information boards would be set up at Gilton by Ash and at Saint Nicholas Close.

The Gilton interchange has Canterbury/Sandwich buses every 20 minutes in both directions. The timetable would be adjusted to meet the half hourly 82 service into Deal at Saint Nicholas Close.

The service would run week days all year round, including school holidays when the Stagecoach school service does not run.

The pilot will run for a year with three monthly review meetings.

KCC would canvas feedback from passengers on their opinion of the pilot feeder scheme. That will be your chance to help us lobby for improvements to the service.

What is the definition of success of the pilot? KCC expect to have to subsidise the pilot, probably throughout the year. The definition of success will be when the amount of subsidy necessary for the

operator to cover costs drops to a level where KCC feel they are getting value for their money. The feeder scheme does not need to make a profit, but it must be used sufficiently for the KCC subsidy to be reduced to an acceptable level.

**So what happens next?**

Sholden village as an end point and central Ash as an interchange have been discounted at meetings but we await confirmation of the finalised route. Tenders will then be invited for the service. The Parish Councils hope to receive, imminently from KCC, the costings for the extra late afternoon service.

**To Summarise,**

I realise that many former passengers on the number 14 will have long since made other arrangements, but when the pilot scheme starts in June, please give it a try and let the Parish Council, and especially KCC, know of your opinion. A lot of hard work has been undertaken by the three parishes, It is unlikely we will get another chance of a regular timetabled bus service through the village in the foreseeable future. The initial service may not be viewed as ideal, it is important to understand what KCC are trying to achieve via this new concept of a feeder bus. It is the only option to begin with, please try it. A regular bus service in the village is a good feature when it comes to property value. I don't like the expression but 'Use it or Lose it' really does apply in this case.

Before I throw the meeting open to questions, Steve Manion is our local County Councillor and has also been heavily involved in representing our parish's interests, on behalf of the village, thank you Steve. There are displays on the wall of the proposed route and the interchange points. Questions were then taken from the floor and answered where possible.

**6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr John Gatland**

This is my first year as chairman so please forgive me any shortcomings. Over the past year the Council has been involved in a number of events and activities.

Starting in the summer of 2018 the Parish Council paid for the bouncy castle at the Summer Fete on the green. The event is run and organised by volunteers for the good of the parish so the Council felt it was only right that they should make a contribution to the afternoon. Thanks to Tracey Ridyard for making the fete so successful. The Council in partnership with Ripple PC organised the Battles Over event that took place on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 2018 to commemorate the 100 anniversary of the end of WW1. Christmas 2018 saw the carols round the tree evening with the Parish Council paying for the Christmas tree and the refreshments.

A grant of £110.00 was given to the Village News to allow for the continued production of this very important publication that give useful information about the parish to everyone that lives within the boundary.

In addition to contributing to events the council pays to have the Village Green mowed, the price of this has increased quite considerable in the coming year, and for the plants in the Village hall window boxes. I would like to thank Ian and Lesley Lawrence for planting and maintaining the boxes.

You may have noticed the provision of a new bridge over the EE38. The Parish Council has been asking Public Rights of Way for this bridge for over a year and are pleased it has finally been completed.

I also would like to mention speed watch, Chris Saville leads on this matter and together we run the watch sessions, however we need more help, so if you can spare a few hours a week please speak to myself or Chris. I would like to thank Chris for all the work he has undertaken on Speed watch and for the huge amount of time and effort he has put into the bus pilot on behalf of everyone in the parish.

Finally I would like to say thank you on behalf of myself and the local community to those Cllrs who have decided not to stand in the next elections, Peter Hambrook who has been on the Council since its formation in 1996, managing a total of 23 years. Terry Madgwick who joined in 2007 and served as Chairman for 10 of his 12 years. Penny Swales who has been on and off the Council a few times but managed a total of 14 years' service with two years as Chairman.

## **7. REPORTS**

### **a) Finance Report – Sarah Wells Clerk to the PC**

The Clerk reported that as this Annual meeting was early this year due to the upcoming elections there was not finance report yet as we had not reached year end. However she could report that the precept for 2019/20 had been set at £8800 the same as last year and represents a 2p a year decrease in the Parish Council portion of the Council tax.

### **b) County Councillor – Steve Manion**

The pothole blitz has seen over £15 million in pothole repairs to damaged roads over the last two years. The issue remains the number one priority for Highways and dedicated teams are assigned their own district to focus the work.

KCC continues to run adult social services as well as dealing with fostering and adoption, we also help asylum seekers. Education is also a major function of the County Council Once again, pupils in Kent have excelled in their Key Stage 2 assessments, achieving higher than the national average for the three main subjects combined.

Work has been ongoing to preserve library services, this means that although we do not plan to close any libraries the opening hours may be adjusted depending on local usage.

Budgetary constraints continue to be a struggle. After producing savings of £640 million over the past eight years, the council has risen to the challenge of finding another £73 million to fund rising spending pressures during 2019/20.

Despite the financial limitations we are able to continue to deliver many non-statutory services, so highly valued by our residents.

These include:

- Subsidised bus services – £6.2 million
- Economic Development – £2.3 million
- Member Grants – £1.2 million
- Housing related support for the most vulnerable – £7.1 million
- Community services including community wardens, arts and culture, country parks – £6.5 million
- Children in need of family support – £9.8 million
- Young Person's Travel Pass – £8.1 million on this non-statutory service.

Cllr Manion then took questions from the floor.

### **c) District Councillors – Steve Manion and Nick Kenton**

Council Tax levels for 2019/20 have been agreed. The average total bill for a Band D property for 2019/20 includes an element of Council Tax for Kent County Council (£1,299.42), the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent (£193.15), Dover District Council (£187.29), Kent Fire and Rescue (£77.76), and an average for Town and Parish Councils of £65.20. DDC continue to maintain the delivery of vital Council services, and increasing the budget to key areas like tourism, while keeping the increase in the district council part of the bill to 2.7%, and keeping Dover District Council's Council Tax the lowest in East Kent.

The Council is committed to investing in tourism and have launched a Town Centre Business Grant Scheme offers grants of up to £10,000 to businesses in Dover, Deal and Sandwich town centres. The grants can be used to bring commercial properties back into use or upgrade or improve the appearance commercial premises. In addition the St James development is now open and bringing footfall into other parts of the town. Deal pier refurbishment continue with works to the main entrance and the introduction of smart bins.

We're tackling homelessness on many fronts, working to keep people in their homes, or providing more cost effective interim accommodation where that's not possible.

Dover District Council is also developing plans for more affordable housing. Projects currently in the pipeline include the potential to build new council houses, modular and sheltered housing, and investing in affordable homes on new private housing developments.

Dover District Council have purchased and brought back into use three empty properties on Folkestone Road in Dover. The properties were extensively refurbished into nine flats providing interim accommodation for people who find themselves homeless whilst a permanent home can be found for them.

Dover continues to offer employment to apprentices and is recruiting two apprentices to join its National Lottery Heritage Fund project at the Kearsney Parks.

A £1m investment in new street lighting, including the extensive replacement of lights with LED lamps has been agreed. DDC is currently responsible for more than 2,500 street lights across the district. The first element of the works will include an extensive replacement programme of more than 100 lighting columns, and the upgrading of all of the district's concrete columns in order for the new LED lamps to be fitted.

The second element to these works will be to replace all of the existing high wattage sodium lamps with LEDs. It is estimated that the £500k cost of the LED conversion will be paid back from energy savings within 5 years. This will provide further sustainability and improved footway lighting across the district.

Finally Cllrs Kenton and Manion announced that due to the boundary changes to District Wards Great Mongeham will not be in there ward area following the elections. They thanked everyone for attending and wished them well for the future.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited them to stay for refreshments.

The meeting closed at 8.24pm