

South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council
www.swancc.org.uk

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on
Monday 11th April 2022

Minutes

63/22 Record attendance and list apologies for absence

Present: Andy Rogers (AR) Andy Hodges (AH) Nirosha Thilagarajan, Steve Campkin (SC) Peter Porter (PP) Eric Parkinson (EP) Jacky Godden (JG) Paul Bohill (PB)

Also, in attendance - Sarah Evans (SE) Rob Woods (RW) Peter New (PN Neighbourhood Watch), David Smith, (DS) Ward Cllr SWAN, Bradley Lomas (BL - Boys Hall) and 7 members of the Public Sue Mullan (SM) David Mullan (DM) - apologies received and approved.

Johnny Hunt's unexplained absence was not approved.

AR Chaired the meeting in the absence of SM

64/22 Declarations of pecuniary, other significant or voluntary interest

PP declared an interest in item 72/22 (Boys Hall redevelopment)

AR declared an interest in item 73/22 (Memorial Wheels improvements)

65/22 Agree Minutes of the Additional Council meeting of 7th March 2022 and sign

The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed.

Proposed PP Seconded NT and agreed unanimously

66/22 Meeting adjourned for members of the public to raise questions on items on the agenda

Adjourned 7.03pm and reconvened immediately at 7.04pm. No questions were asked.

67/22 To receive reports from PCSO Jones and Peter New (Neighbourhood Watch)

PCSO Luke Jones was unavailable. PN reported on the perceived need for, and extension of Neighbourhood Watch to Mallards, making it the 34th scheme in the SWAN area. He commented on the numbers of crimes affecting vehicles/garages, fuel tanks and sheds/outbuildings. He also warned of the need to be aware of continuing scams and bogus callers and to report fly tipping.

He alerted residents to his petition against the unlawful use of catapults and urged people to sign it – <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/611526>

He also emphasized that the proactive relationship with SWAN would not change as a result of the decision by the Community Safety Unit to “aim” to send a PCSO to SWAN meetings every three months and thanked AR for his Ward member contribution to a Neighbourhood Watch project.

68/22 To receive a verbal presentation from Mark Goodman, Environmental Contracts & Enforcement Manager, Ashford Borough Council

Mr Goodman tested positive for Covid19 and could not attend the meeting

69/22 To receive reports from County and Borough Ward Councillors on the G-Line bus service and other issues and KALC representatives

AR –Advised he had approved use his Ward Grant to support NHW as mentioned by PN, SWAN Litter Pickers and SWANCC Jubilee event. AR had little to report as both KALC and Ashford Council meetings were out of line with SWAN's meeting programme but warned of predictions of further disruptions on the M20 and feeder roads over the Easter holidays due to Operation Brock and the ongoing P&O disputes.

DS emphasized that although the G-Line bus service had had a temporary reprieve, there was a need to use it if residents truly valued the service. He also advised that ABC had invested in a Highways Officer and that he/she, when finally in post, should be SWAN's first contact for transport and parking issues.

SC reserved his commentary on the Brompton Bikes development for Item 72/22 but reported on recent meetings with KCC Highways staff and the procedures required by them for the successful "20's Plenty" scheme in Kennington, including speed assessments, Community Council and resident involvement. Noted that the scheme could be adopted on the SWAN road network as part of a wider revision of the traffic management system.

70/22 To receive a verbal report from the Community Council Manager regarding actions taken by SWANCC to lobby for the extension of the G line and to agree a response to the KCC consultation on further bus cuts in the area particularly the Kent Karrier.

SE gave a verbal report which was read from a prewritten script and is in the appendix. Members discussed the report, were pleased with the actions and the outcome and noted the need to continue to use the G line but that this must be weighed against confidence in using Public Transport post Covid19.

Members discussed the previously circulated KCC consultation report and added that emphasis must be given on the safety of Women and girl and this must be in line with Gov and Kent Police priorities, that equality must reflect the needs of school children who have suffered so much disruption through Covid19 and need a consistent route to school, to reflect the cost to KCC of taxis for children must surely be prohibitive and that it would not be to the same school but the nearest school which would again cause angst and issues for children and families. That this must be considered that budgets should strain towards consideration of children's needs and equality for all. That the station car park is a good indicator of the return to normal use of Public Transport and is only starting to be used again and certainly is not yet at Pre Covid19 levels that confidence to use Public Transport must be built up and allowed for in making and decisions.

Resolved:-Agreed

To continue with the opportunity to meet with Stagecoach and KCC to discuss long term solutions for the G line and the importance of providing new timetables at Bus stops and copies for Community locations such as SWAN centre.

To complete the KCC Bus Consultation as per the circulated report but to add the points recorded above

Action Clerks to amend and submit the Consultation response. Clerks to follow up meeting with KCC and Stagecoach over Quarter 3.

71/22 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee of 16th March 2022 and consider the following recommendations

The draft minutes were circulated in advance. **It was resolved unanimously to note the draft minutes and endorse the recommendations below subject to the following**

a) Responses to Land Mapping exercise

Proposed EP : Seconded PB and agreed unanimously to change the emphasis in the section on public transport infrastructure from zero bus service to threatened reductions in bus services. All other recommendations to remain unchanged

Action Clerks to re-write item on bus service as above.

b) Newtown Works

PP commented on the opportunity to resurrect the idea of new offices and a community hub for SWAN including community café

Proposed AH: Seconded PB and agreed unanimously that this should be added to the following points

- i. Lobby ABC at the highest levels that SWANCC should have a voice in the deployment of the levelling up fund and to consider the residents of the area.
- ii. To again consider the need for a Community Hub with the possibility of a not for profit café
- iii. To note SWANCC is a progressive Council with an active community.
- iv. To again respond that a retail park would not be a sustainable alternative to the media and studios.
- v. The value for education employments and commerce for the area is essential
- vi. That considering ABC is putting in such a large sum of money and has been reaching out to Parish Councils' and asking to work together it is surely important to discuss such a development with its parish council and consult.
- vii. That there is still no movement on the Parking and the issues have been raised multiple times and will significantly impacted by this development

c) Pavement Access in SWAN

Proposed NT Seconded SC and agreed unanimously

- i) To agree an analysis and time to be given to the project and report back to Council.
- ii) To agree to an ongoing review of the project and comment and support.
- iii) To request Communications Working Committee to request volunteers to assist with viewing pavements from disabled and pushchair points of view

72/22 To consider the planning issues on developments abutting the SWAN area and agree

a) Application for the redevelopment of Boys Hall

AR welcomed BL to the meeting. BL offered to answer questions about the proposals
PP confirmed that he would attend a Planning and Highways Committee as a near neighbour to share his detailed views

BL confirmed that the development would not be mass-market, would not involve weddings or other late-night entertainment and despite an increase in car parking provision would strive to be environmentally friendly. The re-development would respect the historic value of the place. Three electric charging points were planned and work was continuing to encourage biodiversity in the gardens and orchard. One key issue still to address was the difficult access. Plans were in progress to create an entrance at the rear of the property to reduce traffic on Boys Hall Road. JG asked about litter bin provision for use by the Willesborough Litter pickers. BL agreed to make bins available and work with AR to add to the Bins serviced in the areas.

Members concluded that the Council should look favourably on the development, subject to the mitigation of access problems and thanked BL for his explanations and his community engagement.

b) Brompton Bikes proposals

AR referred to the public consultation, the opportunity to create 3000 new jobs, the environmentally ethos of the company and potentially and improved connectivity with the SWAN area, although initial plans showed no change to the way SWAN residents could access the site. By contrast, the potential threats to SWAN from further flooding, traffic and parking problems.

Noted that no potential Section 106 commitments were made

Members were informed that currently underused car parks at the Outlet and International Station could be used for excess parking although it was generally agreed that these could fill up with shoppers post Covid and passengers if more international trains stop at Ashford.

SC reported on his attendance at several briefings and design panel meetings – see Appendix 1 for his comments which were agreed to be circulated to all members.

DS could see the value of job creation and Ashford Borough Council's will to accommodate the proposal but warned against knock on flooding issues in Earlswoth Road, Mallards and Cudworth Road.

It was agreed unanimously that

- a) A special meeting of the Planning and Highways Committee should be convened when the plans are submitted
- b) Representatives of Brompton Bikes and Quinn Estates are invited to the meeting
- c) The opportunity arises to work with ABC Planners and Members, adjoining parishes and developers to develop community projects and an improved transport infrastructure for the SWAN area (Cross ref link to SC's comments in item 69/22)

Action: SC to email his report on the Deign Panel meeting to the clerks for circulation, to all members to review and feedback to clerks.

73/22 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 21st March 2022

The draft minutes were circulated in advance. **Proposed SC: Seconded PB and resolved unanimously to note the draft minutes without comment**

74/22 To consider the recommendations of the Year End Financial Position report and agree The report was circulated in advance of the meeting

Recommendation 1 - To endorse the following payments agreed unanimously by the Finance and General Purposes Committee by e-mail

- Dallas Event Services, - £183.20 – Deposit Jubilee event table hire
- Salary award Back pay -ACCM – £175.99
- Salary award Back pay – CCM - £221.75
- Hopkins - Installation of Defib inc training and service costs for one year - £2351.00
- Andrew Sage - Allotments work carried out as previously agreed (FGP) plus emergency work (Storm Eunice damage) - £1218.00

Recommendation 2 - To note bank charges dated 31st March 2022 - £36 and Bank interest received 31st March 2022 - £31.07

Recommendations 1 and 2 were taken together

Proposed AH: Seconded NT and agreed unanimously to endorse the payments and note the bank charges and interest posted to the bank accounts on the last day of the financial year 2021-22

Recommendations 3-6 were discussed en bloc

Recommendation 3 - To note the bank reconciliation at 31st March 2022 and Year-end bank balance – See Appendix 2

Recommendation 4 - To agree the application of the Year end bank balance 60923

Balance as above

Applied to:

Council tax support	8500	As agreed by Council
Emergency Reserve	25000	6- months running cost reserve
Earmarked reserves	19990	All agreed by Council

Noticeboard repairs	400
Election Costs	3500
Legal Fees	4000
Speed Indicator Device	6000
Allotments – Key deposits	650

Allotments- Emergency repair	3000
Jubilee medals	1630
Defib maintenance	810

Unallocated (Contingency) 7434

Recommendation 5 - To note and endorse the reasons for significant differences between outcomes in financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 – See Appendix 2

Recommendation 6 - To agree the updated Fixed Asset Register – See Appendix 2

Proposed SC: Seconded PP and agreed unanimously to note and endorse the year end bank balances and bank reconciliation, the application of the financial reserve, the income and expenditure out-turn, the reasons for significant (+/-15%) changes in expenditure levels and the Council's fixed asset register.

75/22 To consider a verbal report of the Community Council Manager on SWAN Litter Pickers grant and agree

SE reported that SWAN Council had received an initial request from the voluntary South Willesborough litter pickers for assistance with costs of equipment and consumables amounting to £353. Subsequently, more items were added to the list of equipment requirements. The group is unincorporated and does not have a bank account. SE/AR saw an opportunity to apply for a Borough Council grant which raised £333 toward the costs.

To demonstrate commitment to the community, BL agreed to sponsor the difference.

Resolved: Agreed unanimously that the litter picking group should be supported and SWAN Council should hold the income and ring fence it to support the work of the volunteer litter pickers.

Action: Clerks to make purchases as detailed by the application from SWAN Litter Pickers and distribute to the group. Clerks to invoice BL for the wheels for the litter picking trolley.

76/22 To agree a date for the SWAN Ward Walk and debrief as Sunday 17th April 2022

Resolved: Agreed unanimously to change the date to Sunday 24th April 2020 2pm start at the Alfred Arms, Newtown Green

77/22 To agree to Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers supporting the Council in its events and projects for their community volunteering requirement and agree for the Chair, Vice Chair and CCM to sign training logs and agree priorities and objectives for Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers.

SE verbally reported on the opportunity to support a young person in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Resolved: Agreed unanimously that this should be supported in principle. but in the light of recent information from the Council's Insurers, to clarify the employment status before proceeding.

(Action Clerks)

78/22 To receive urgent correspondence/e-mails

- a) Kent Police – PCSO presence at meetings – Action Clerks in consultation with the Chair to send response to express frustration about discontinuity and related matters and request a monthly report at minimum
- b) NALC – Small Councils Issues Questionnaire – Agreed send to all Cllrs for comments and delegated to Clerks to send response
- c) Jubilee Event 1st Draft Management Plan and Layout – send to Cllrs for comments
- d) Insurer – Notice of rule changes & questionnaire – delegate to FGP Committee
- e) Microshade – Planned work on their servers from 10pm Tuesday 11th to 7am Wednesday 12th April 2022 – (for info)

- f) ABC –Local Council Forum virtual meeting – Discussing ASB - Agreed PB to attend
- g) KALC – Requesting KALC reps to feed comments to Ashford Area Chair on KCC Strategic Plan by 18th April 2020 - agreed distribution to all members with request for comments by Monday 18th 9am

**79/22 To agree the dates of the Annual Council meeting as Tuesday 3rd May 2022, the Annual Meeting of Electors as 24th May 2022 (6.30pm) and items for each agenda
Both dates agreed. PN would like Crime and Safety on Meeting of Electors agenda**

80/22 Forum for exchange of information between Council members

SE alerted members to the fact that the Community Plan was not on the Agenda this month as the items up to the last meeting would be up to date by the end of the Month and there was nothing further to report for this month. However, the bench installation was delayed by snow but would be installed by the end of April and the memorial wheel paint colour was initially incorrect but would be corrected by the end of the week.

PB commented on parking issues and also litter issues needing further action and the lack of response from ABC.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8:49pm

Signed _____
(Chair)

Dated ____/____/____

Steve Campkin County Councillor Report

Obviously, we've been talking about the fallout from the bus cuts. We believe that this attempt to save money will lead to parents appealing, winning their case and then KCC having to pay out for taxis for children which will cost more, add to congestion and of course pollution. Two cases are parents who are both police officers and work shift and another couple whose children go to different schools in opposite directions, so that's two taxis for that household at, we estimate, £10,000 PA each.

Again, we must reiterate that this has all come about as a result of Government imposed austerity: government makes the cuts, councils are forced to decide which services get cut and then have to take the blame. Councils have two sets of expenditure: statutory and discretionary. Statutory means we are legally required to fund it, like healthcare, education, adult social care, etc... so that money is allocated first. What's leftover is then discretionary, we can choose to fund it or not. KCC is one of the few councils still funding buses that are not making a profit for the bus companies as we obviously see the value in what are called "socially necessary" services. But if there's no money after statutory obligations are met then we are faced with the choice to cut the discretionary funding or put council tax up. In this case KCC has had to do both: council tax has gone up 2.99%, which is the most it can be raised without a county wide referendum which would cost millions and inevitably result in everyone voting "no".

However, which services get cut is a political decision, and that's where we step in as opposition parties: there is million-pound restructuring of KCC proposed at the moment to move officers into a better work environment, that is easier, cheaper and less carbon intensive to heat. This will save money in the long run but the Labour group proposed scrapping this to fund a budget with less cuts.

The Greens and Independents focussed on taking money from strategic reserves. Strategic reserves are money we have saved for one off projects, "rainy day" money effectively. We argued that the government is currently introducing "Bus Back Better" money and we should use strategic reserves to keep services running until that comes through, as it would be easier and cheaper than cutting services and then reinstating than but, more importantly, less disruption for people. I pointed out that for one generation of children this is the year they are studying for their GCSEs and this is the year that a small disruption could ruin their entire future. This was met, despite my earlier defence of the Conservative authority earlier who are, in my opinion being gaslit by their own government, with the phrase that "discretionary funding is a luxury we can no longer afford". A Labour Councillor (Barry Lewis) pointed out that Strategic Reserves are moneys put aside for a rainy day and that the Tories need to take a good look out of the window!

So, we are currently across Kent starting petitions, supporting campaigns and reporting back to forums such as this to try and get these decisions reversed. Mark Hood, Green Councillor for Tonbridge and Malling is bringing this up in the Growth, Environment Transport committee and Rich Lehman, Green Councillor for Swale East, is bringing it up in the Children and Young Persons Committee.

We are also constantly calling for services to be brought back in house. Remember when the council used to collect your bins? Well it cost what it cost. Now it's privatised it costs the same plus Biffa makes a profit. There's a healthcare firm currently subcontracted to KCC, and while we are cutting essential services they are making £16 million per year profit.

KCC homelessness support has also been cut. Again, this is discretionary, it's not up to KCC to do anything about homelessness, it's up to district councils like Ashford Borough Council, but the increase in costs to local councils and organisations like Porchlight far outweighs the savings made by KCC, so in the grand scheme of things it's a false economy, it means local councils spending more money on homelessness support and less money on preventing homelessness in the first place