

PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th January 2025 at 7.30 pm in Pluckley Village Hall

Present : Cllrs Washer (in the Chair), Dilley, Robinson & Pearson

In attendance : Mr. G Eaton, Clerk to the Council, ABC Cllr Bell, Dr M Taylor, and three members of the public

Action by:

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Peter New, Neighbourhood Watch

2 Declarations of Cllrs interests in items on the Agenda

There were no declarations of Cllrs interests in items on the Agenda

3 Minutes of the last Meeting & Matters arising

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th December 2024 were approved and signed

4 Public discussion and Parishioners questions

Two members of the public raised their concerns about speeding traffic on Smarden Road and the Thorne Estate and recounted some near misses. Speed ramps were suggested as a possible solution but it was noted that these had been discounted in the public consultation. Cllr Washer reported that he would be meeting with Highways soon to discuss the Highway Improvement Plan and the Transport Plan and would raise their concerns **Cllr Washer**

The other member of the public wished to observe the Meeting and expressed an interest in being co-opted onto the Council

5 ABC Cllr Bell's report & Neighbourhood Watch report

ABC Cllr Bell reported -

The Government published the English Devolution White Paper in December, outlining its strategy to expand devolution across the country. The proposals include replacing the current two-tier structure of local government, such as we have in Kent, with a directly elected Mayor and one or more unitary authorities

Parish and Town councils are likely to be largely unchanged but perhaps have a bit more importance

Kent County Council has until 10th January to submit a request to the government to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme. This would mean being "fast tracked" to a mayoral strategic authority, with elections for a Mayor (covering both Kent and Medway) taking place in 2026. If such a request is made and accepted, the KCC elections planned for May 2025 are likely to be postponed. Elections to shadow unitary authorities would be held in 2026 (or possibly 2027) with the new structure fully in place by 2028. Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council would no longer exist beyond that time. It is likely that the mayor's powers will be strategic (e.g. infrastructure, transport, economic development) and the unitary authority will be a merger of everything else that KCC & ABC do (e.g. planning decisions, highways, adult social care, children's services, housing, refuse collection & disposal etc.)

For Pluckley and the rest of Ashford Borough, the most likely scenario is that we would be part of an East Kent Unitary Authority, alongside Canterbury, Folkestone, Dover and Thanet

Kent County Council will be holding an extraordinary full council meeting on Thursday 9th January to debate this issue, followed by a meeting of the cabinet where the decision on the response to government will be taken

Peter New's latest Neighbourhood Watch report, circulated by email, was noted with thanks

6 Planning & Enforcement

2024/2144 – proposed home office and garden store to the south-east corner of the garden Saracens Cottage, Surrenden Road, TN27 0SA

The Parish Council is very concerned about developments on this site and is struggling to understand why so little consideration is being given to a listed building or its curtilage. As a rule, we do not look to comment on applications that relate to listed buildings as we feel ABC's conservation officer is far better placed to understand the impact that any proposed developments might have on a heritage asset but we can see no evidence that they have been consulted on either this or previous applications relating to the property. As ABC will be aware Saracens Cottage has, since 12/8/24 already benefitted from two development approvals PA/2024/1061 Installation of kitchen removal of partition walls and doors on ground and first floor PA/2024/1281 Demolition of stables and erection of 5 bay garage While we are unable to comment on the way the first of these has impacted on the character of a listed building the second development has had a major impact on the site. The 5 bay garage is clearly visible from footpaths and the surrounding roads, is having a major impact on views into this heritage site and is so large it is in danger of overwhelming the original part of the building. A site visit will confirm this but the "proposed site plan and elevation 04-003" document clearly illustrates how the recent and current application are completely dominating this heritage site. The Parish Council believes the application will have a severe impact on the setting of a listed building and exacerbate the impact that earlier extensions have had on the original building. We also believe that the current application would represent a significant over development of a rural site. As noted previously we don't normally comment on applications that involve listed buildings but we really can't understand why there has been no representation from the conservation officer in this case which we

understand would normally be required. Could you please confirm separately whether they have been consulted and if not, why it was deemed unnecessary. Moving forward it would also be very helpful if ABC could clarify its policy when considering applications on listed buildings and the involvement of the conservation officer. Like many others we struggle to understand the consistency of the decision-making process and our inability to explain the process to residents is frustrating and potentially undermines the planning system. By way of illustration the recent application PA/2024/0141 at Rose Farm for a single-storey rear extension and removal and insertion of internal walls was rejected with the refusal decision stating: "The proposed extension, by virtue of its scale, siting and detailed design, would not appear as a subordinate and sympathetic addition to the listed building but would rather compete with it in terms of scale, size, and bulk." The current application and previous approval of a five-bay garage at Saracens Cottage would have exactly the same impact and it is worth noting that the planning inspector upheld ABC's decision on Rose Farm at appeal

7 Finance Matters

The following accounts were approved for payment:

	£
E J Clough, Christmas tree	360.00
S Allen, Nature Reserve expenses	691.97

The Clerk's salary/expenses of £565.80, paid by monthly Standing Order, was noted and approved

8 Communications and correspondence

Email from a resident regarding the Transport Plan and specifically about the speed calming measures proposed for the Thorne/Fir Toll areas. Cllr Washer to respond **Cllr Washer**

Emails regarding concerns about tree removal at orchards bordering Pluckley and Little Chart. Agreed joint letter be sent to the land owner raising these concerns

9 Traffic & Highways

Dr Taylor updated the Council on the recent meeting held with Katie Lam MP where the Transport Plan was discussed, and the difficulties experienced whilst trying to progress the Plan with the various agencies involved – KCC, Highways, ABC and Southeastern. It was agreed that Mark should also raise these issues with KALC **Dr M Taylor**

Mark also reported that Southeastern was under huge pressure to save money but had denied any plans to close Pluckley Station. After a discussion it was agreed to resurrect the Friends of Pluckley Station. It was further agreed to submit a Fol request focusing on the parking issues to try and establish if there was a plan for the Station. It was agreed Mark would draft the Fol request and circulate to Cllrs for approval **Dr M Taylor**

10 Recreation Sport & Leisure

Cllr Dilley provided a general update on the recreation ground and pavilion and reported that he was awaiting a quote for the fence repairs

Cllr Washer kindly offered to contact the Friends of the Recreation Ground regarding the public consultation on the playpark

Cllr Washer

11 AOB and Diary items

It was agreed that the Village Clean up would take place on 22nd March (date to be confirmed)

12 Date of next Meeting

It was agreed that the next Meeting would be held on Tuesday 4th February 2025 at 7.30 pm at Pluckley Village Hall

There being no other business the Meeting closed at 9.05 pm