

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

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on
Monday 7th March 2022
Minutes

The Chair opened the meeting at 7pm

The Chair thanked all members of the Public for coming

The Chair led 1-minute silence for the people of Ukraine.

Members and Residents able to stand and observed a silence for 1 minute.

46/22 Record attendance and list apologies for absence

Present Sue Mullan (SM) Andy Rogers (AR) David Mullan (DM) Andy Hodges (AH) Nirosha Thilagarajan (from 7:35pm) Andy Hodges (AH) Steve Campkin (SC) Peter Porter (PP) Eric Parkinson (EP) Jacky Godden (JG)

Also, in attendance Sarah Evans (SE) Rob Woods (RW) Peter New (PN Neighbourhood Watch) Luke Jones PCSO, David Smith, (DS) Ward Cllr SWAN, 61 Members of the Public

Paul Bohill (PB) apologies received and approved.

Johnny Hunt's unexplained absence was not approved.

47/22 Declarations of pecuniary, other significant or voluntary interest

AH declared an interest in item 53/22

48/22 Agree Minutes of the Additional Council meeting of 24th February 2022 and sign (attached)

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

Proposed AR Seconded EP and Agreed by a unanimous agreement

49/22 Meeting adjourned for members of the public to raise questions on items on the agenda (This item will last no more than 15 minutes in total)

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:10 and advised those present that item 52/22 was special item and the Council would be willing to open the item for members of the public to speak.

No items were raised relating to the Agenda apart from the Bus, one member raised they had questions on Finance but was not related to the Agenda and would contact the Clerks directly.

The Meeting reopened at 7:11pm

50/22 To receive reports from PCSO Jones and Peter New (Neighbourhood Watch)

PN read a previously circulated report to members of the Public and was well received. Report in appendix

PCSO Luke Jones introduced himself to the Members and those in attendance and pressed the message that it is extremely important to report all crime. Highlighted that the fires at Bullied Place Playpark and The Mallards were part of ongoing investigations which cannot be disclosed but being taken very seriously and appealed for information to be reported. That ABC were refusing to site CCTV on the Underpass at Newtown Road and that mirrored surfaces would be helpful for users' safety.

51/22 To receive reports from County and Borough Ward Councillors and KALC representatives

SC read his report verbatim report in appendix: -

SC report covered, bus cuts and the financial implications of KCC having to provide taxis for children unable to use a bus in the area, that councils have 2 sets of expenditure statutory and discretionary, Statutory means KCC 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".

Cuts are a political decision, and the restricting of KCC is costly and different parties are varying views on this.

That the Green Party and Independent Cllrs are stating that Bus back better money should be used with rainy day funds to keep services running. Cheaper than reinstating new services. The impact on GCSE students was significant with school services being cut.

A Green Cllrs are stating that services which have been privatised should be brought back in house to make a service rather than a profit.

That KCC homeless support has also been cut and the impact is more costs in the future to replace services and support charities.

AR highlighted his specific roles across ABC KALC and SWANCC and the JTB.

With regard to the G line cuts for Bus services in SWAN, AR explained his own family rely on this bus, that the petition on line has under 400 signatures and many more are needed to make a significant impact.

That he would wholeheartedly support residents wanting to lobby to protect the service.

AR advised last ABC meeting purchasing Newtown Works was approved and the purchase was being made by the Commercial Arm of Ashford Borough Council to prevent it stalling due to issues including Covid19.

CCTV lighting from No intention from either ABC or KCC to extend the network however any street lights that are currently damaged will now be replaced.

Ukraine Update ABC to fund £5000 to Gov Scheme to donate to Ukraine for support.

JTB Petition in place to provide parking for Tannery Lane Sorting Office.

Eurostar suspended services as lost 95% of business decision to reinstall it delayed until 2023 however still issues of signaling at Newtown which prevent the reinstalling of the service, as well as the fact it is not possible to provide staff for a weekly reduced service despite the addition of Brompton Bikes to the area.

HGV Orbital Park Truckstop is not enough capacity Lorries have to stop due to limits but the services are not enough there are long term plan to review but this does impact onto Orbital Park for drivers seeking parking and this was highlighted.

Bus Shelters are being improved across the area and green or living roofed bus stops are being created.

The planning application for Brompton Bikes just outside the SWAN ward would be a flagship factory however it would bring a weighty impact to the area, traffic, parking, HGVs

Cars using the pavement for parking is being consulted on and to make it fineable.

DS

Mirrored surfaces at Newtown Underpass would be beneficial, Underpass maintained by KCC and ABC with Networks Line.

Advised to contact ABC to insist on help from KCC to achieve the required outcome.

Advised the many parking situations are high on his agenda and liaising with Parking Managers at ABC has been difficult due to various changes in posts and lack of staff.

Bus issues would report under that specific item.

52/22 To discuss the implications of the recent announcement to terminate the G Line Stagecoach bus service and agree actions.

The Chair opened the item to members of the public, who gave grave examples of the impact the withdrawal of the bus service would give to them and the area. See Appendix.

A weighty and lengthy discussion was had with Councillors, Residents and Ward and County Council Councillors.

Resolved: - Proposed AH Seconded DM and agreed unanimously

1. Seeking clarity and understanding from KCC as to why the cutting of the G line has not been part of the consultation on reduced bus services.
2. Lobby Stagecoach, KCC and Damian Green MP to maintain the G-Line and Kent Karrier services and, given the short notice, to circulate details of a petition initiated by Ashford Green Party for members of the public to consider. Note that SWAN Council is apolitical.
3. Ask KCC to come to an Ordinary Meeting of the SWANCC to negotiate a future service
4. To gather evidence for a thorough feedback of all the issues affecting so many residents.
5. For AR and RW to leave the room and use the adjacent meeting room to take residents details and feedback and requests for email links to the petition

7:55pm Meeting adjourned

The Chair adjourned the meeting to allow residents who needed to leave to depart after this key item. AR & RW Left the meeting to take written notes from the public in attendance.

The Chair reopened the meeting at 8:10pm

53/22 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 27th January 2022 and consider the following recommendations

PP gave an overview of the minutes and no specific recommendations were made.

The draft minutes were agreed.

Resolved: - Proposed PP Seconded NT and agreed unanimously

54/22 To receive an update from the Communications Working Group with recommendations (Cllr Porter)

PP gave an overview of the minutes from CWG, congratulated the Group, Editors and SE for the successful newsletter this month.

The following recommendations made

To do a flyer for the Spring edition and larger edition for the Summer after the Jubilee.

To create a welcome leaflet for the Klondyke Residents moving end of April early May 2022.

A draft Terms of Reference for the working group to become a Committee subject to the addition of the option to get in outside help as per working group and to add to each Agenda an opportunity to discuss upcoming issues for the Council.

Inscription for benches to read Happy to Chat provided by SWANCC

Resolved: - Proposed DM Seconded JG and Agreed by a unanimous agreement

55/22 To receive an update from the Events Working Group with recommendations (Cllr Sue Mullan)

SM gave an overview of the EWG minutes and made the following recommendations: -

- 1. Beacon up to date excluding Choir. To recommend EWG Budget is used for purchase of cups and refreshments.**
- 2. Litter pick agreed at Council with item on Great British Spring Clean to organise Jubilee Spring Clean (JG)**
- 3. Jubilee Council investigate Portaloo's.**
- 4. Commemorative Items 200 bookmarks personalised to SWANCC to be purchased and design agreed with CWG.**
- 5. Assembly to present Commemorative Coins May 2022 to be actioned by SM, PP, DM, EP and SE interview style with any other Council Members Welcome. Coins to be put into gift bags for each Class.**
- 6. Allotments Tenants Day to start at 11am to invite the Mayor and others involved and open the Community Plot with ribbon on the shed and planting of wild flower seeds.**
- 7. Operation London Bridge – EWG Commented on the logistics for a draft report and now recommend the adoption of the agreed and updated report of the CCM and to make relevant purchases and bookings noted within that report.**
- 8. To cancel the Easter Craft Fair and support the SWAN Farm Community and Craft Day**
- 9. To investigate the permanent siting of a Flagpole**

Proposed NT Seconded AH and Agreed by a unanimous agreement

56/22 To receive a report of the Community Council Manager regarding the Great British Spring Clean 2022 with recommendations and discuss (Cllr Godden)

JG gave an update on the litter picking group, the change in organization of who is running it and that the current leader had been running the group for 15 years before handing over. That more members were needed and further equipment. That the group were keen to work with other litter picking groups and were also very social and supportive of each other. AR agreed to an application to his ward grant for funding.

Members discussed a previously circulated report and agreed the following recommendations:

Resolved: - Proposed DM Seconded JG Unanimous

- 1. To continue to support the Keep KENT Clean Group during these dates**
- 2. To continue to support the Willesborough Wombles Event**
- 3. To note the extensive coverage in the Newsletter for Litter management in the area being distributed to SWAN in March 2022 by Council Support of this.**
- 4. To log on with The AGBSC any litter picking by Members and Officers during the period Annual Great British Spring Clean is being run.**
- 5. To ask Keep Kent Clean and any other interested groups or residents to support a litter pick on Newtown Green Newtown Green Road and down to the steps leading to the SWAN Centre, in addition to the agreed litter pick of SWAN Farm to support the Jubilee Event on Friday 3rd June 2022 – to call it Clean for the Queen.**
- 6. To advertise this with the Event advertising.**
- 7. To see if a community award nomination could be made by residents for those who have organised so diligently and served the litter picking group in SWAN for 15 years.**

57/22 To monitor and note the Council's performance (Report on SWAN Community Plan commitments attached)

Noted and well received.

Resolved: - Proposed DM Seconded JG and Agreed by a unanimous agreement

58/22 To review and agree draft letters to Network Rail and Ashford Borough Council Civil Enforcement.

**Resolved: Agreed unanimously to amend signature to Chair of Community Council and send.
Action SE/RW to amend and send.**

59/22 To review a Nominations Communication from Neighbourhood Watch and agree

Resolved Agreed unanimously to propose PN

Action SE/RW to draft and submit response.

60/22 To receive urgent correspondence/e-mails

- 1) NALC – National Salary award backdated to April 21 – Send to FGP in first instance
- 2) KALC – Advising of the deadline for bus consultation
- 3) ABC - Notice of guidance on supporting people in Ukraine. Details on ABC website
- 4) Insurers – Guidance on event planning/insurance – Action by Clerks in first instance

61/22 To agree the date of the next meeting as 4th April 2022 and items for the agenda 4th April 2022

Resolved: Agreed unanimously

PP confirmed G Line Buses would be on the Agenda

62/22 Forum for exchange of information between Council members

SE asked Members to consider a Ward Walk and Workshop for the Community Plan in planned for April. That email booking form would be sent out requesting Members availability.

EP advised that 4 fence panels were down on The Spinney and needed to be repaired

DM advised that Klondyke was behind due to supply delays and covid19 reducing staff. That traffic lights would be again on Newtown Road to allow for deliveries.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8:45pm

Signed _____
(Chair)

Dated ____/____/____

Appendix

- Draft Minutes Addition February Meeting
- Peter New Neighbourhood Watch
- Steve Campkin Kent County Councillor
- Draft Minutes Finance and General Purposes Committee
- CWG notes and recommendations
- EWG notes and recommendations
- Report Great British Spring Clean
- Report Council Performance on Community Plan
- Draft Letters to Network Rail and Ashford Borough Council Civil Enforcement

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