

**Minutes of the Sevington with Finberry Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting
on 3rd April 2023 at the Chamber of Commerce at 7pm**

In attendance: Cllr Paul Bartlett, Ashford Borough Councillor (Sevington Ward)
Cllr Clair Bell, Kent County Councillor
Rick Martin, Chairman of the Sevington with Finberry Parish Council
Cllrs Bartram, Coppins and Lemon plus 3 members of the public
Tracey Block, Clerk to the Parish Council

1.	Welcome
	The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2.	Report from Roland Mills
	<p>Quick Finberry update</p> <p>Outline planning permission granted for a local centre containing homes and commercial facilities on the area south of the Avocet Way entrance roundabout – nutrient neutrality secured by s.106 agreement obligations involving land ceasing to be used for agriculture on the eastern side of Cheeseman’s Green Lane. There appears to be market interest in taking the approved scheme forward through making applications for approval of reserved matters, possibly later on this year.</p> <p>Road/foot/cycle bridge over the East Stour connecting Finberry with Waterbrook – application from Crest understood to be imminent and this should help create certainty in terms of delivery arrangements. Crest identify that raised bed allotments originally planned for the space between Bilham Lawn & Bilham Farm are to be moved to this area of the site – this area will contain a district play facility. Some consequential minor adjustments will be needed to the 2016 application approvals for the layout in this part of the Finberry site.</p> <p>Bilham Farm area houses - these are progressing and completion of this parcel should enable the adjacent ‘Southern Link Road’ connection between Swift Avenue to Bridgefield Rutledge Avenue to open benefitting neighbourhood connectivity.</p> <p>‘Northern Link Road’ – this is for buses (and probably taxis tbc) only – foot & cycle connections have been open here since the road was 1st constructed. ANPR enforcement scheme likely by KCC. Co-ordination is needed between the developers at each end with KCC (including highways) and discussions with Stagecoach in terms of how it might see services for Bridgefield and Finberry operating.</p> <p>Sports & Community land – this is now moving forward into discussions as to what should be provided at this site: ABC Commercial Projects & Recreation are involved.</p> <p>Quick Sevington update;-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The IBF – this operates under a Special Development Order that creates a time-limited permission for use of the site. It is currently unknown whether the government propose to make a further Order or make alternative planning arrangements if the need for a facility beyond the temporary period is considered necessary. Hopefully, the position will become clearer as we move through 2024. S.106 obligations - When the IBF site went live, the government identified a willingness to ‘honour’ certain s.106 obligations in the original agreement attached to the grant of the outline

	<p>permission for various business and logistic uses. ABC continues to work with the Dept. for Transport to achieve this outcome.</p>
3.	<p>Report from Clair Bell</p> <p>Once again, the past year has been dominated by efforts to balance the books, as KCC, in common with many councils across the country, has seen rising costs and huge increases in demand. We needed to find over £100m of savings and have achieved this only by making some very difficult and unpopular decisions. Despite that, our budget for 24/25 provides record levels of investment in adults' and children's social care, and in school transport, all of which we have a legal duty to deliver.</p> <p>If the council had failed to reach a balanced budget, the consequence of going "bankrupt" would likely have led to the government sending in commissioners to run the council. Where that has happened elsewhere, many discretionary services, such as arts and culture, support for voluntary groups, libraries and community services, have been severely reduced and council tax raised significantly. We believe it is preferable to manage our own finances, and retain as many services as possible, even if that means scaling back, rather than losing them altogether and at the same time residents facing an even larger council tax bill.</p> <p>This has been a year of change for me personally as I moved from 4years as cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to take over the portfolio for Community and Regulatory Services. The portfolio is wide -ranging and covers libraries, registration and archives, community wardens, trading standards, public rights of way, the coroners service, arts and creative economy, voluntary sector support, community safety, Kent Police, PREVENT anti-terrorism duty and emergency planning.</p> <p>Emergency planning has a particular focus at the moment as later this year sees the introduction of a new European Union Entry Exit System which brings in new electronic border controls for tourists and freight. Checks will be carried out on all passengers crossing the channel at Dover and Eurotunnel giving rise to significant risk of queues and delays which could severely impact the local road network and local communities. A huge amount of work is going on with our partners and with district councils, as well as the Department for Transport and the Home Office, to plan for the new system, to support the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel, to understand the potential impact, to keep traffic flowing, ensure everyone is safe, and informed, and mitigate the disruption for communities and businesses.</p> <p>My inbox is overflowing with emails from residents concerned about the state of our roads - and understandably so. We would love to have more money to spend on the road network and bring it up to a higher standard. While the council has received some extra government funding, which is helpful, we continue to press government for additional resources, so we can get on top of the potholes, carriageway repairs and drainage issues which plague our roads and cause frustration for residents.</p>
4.	<p>Report from Steve Campkin</p> <p>No report received.</p>
5.	<p>Report from Paul Bartlett</p> <p>LORRY DAMAGE</p> <p>I reported the "No HGV" sign that has been knocked down (presumably by a HGV! It's in Church Road, Sevington (ref 797090). It was quickly put back up by KCC Highways.</p>



Before



After

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The group meet on 4th April. The key issues were as follows.

- The biggest issue is wellbeing of homeless with dogs. The RSPA is the lead on the animal welfare.
- PCC funding for 2024/25 has been confirmed and opportunities to access will be made available when priorities are assessed.
- Additional personal alarms and other safety equipment have been purchased.
- Two new PCSO have joined the police out of training school and a new town beat officer (22 years of experience) has also started.
- VAWG event at the Outlet was well received and much better attended than those held in village halls. A similar event is planned for the town centre (pencilled in for 2 August) and one in June at Tesco's.
- The "Women Together" on 26th April at 11am-2pm at Singleton Village Hall was designed to promote women's safety and will be assessed to see if they should be repeated. It included self-defence classes.
- The safer business day on 14th March is expected to be repeated either monthly or bi-monthly; it demonstrates to business what the police and council are doing to promote safety in the town.
- The Town Centre Business Forum was scheduled for 23rd April at County Square.
- The Indian Spring event was scheduled for 20th April at 5pm to 10pm in Civic Park.

OVERFLOWING BINS

There were a number reported as Suez took over from Biffa



Bin at Mill Court



Bins near Newtown underpass



Suez acted quickly to empty them once reported.



As far as bin collection is concerned:

Suez area aware of the troubles, specific roads and lanes were mentioned.

- The ABC portal can't report missed areas.
- Suez own mapping system has been dropping roads or saying they have been completed when they haven't. The crews have reported this to Suez, who are making adjustments.
- New crews were put on in areas they have never worked before, so lack of local knowledge was a problem, missing side roads or not recognising that they needed to be done.
- A 26-ton lorry will not be able to get down some of our lanes and streets.
- Suez underestimated the amount of recycling.

With this knowledge, Suez will be making changes by:

- Putting on more trucks going forward, so they have plenty of capacity.
- Liaise with the Crews on the roads that they will need to watch out for, to not rely on technology, but learn the rounds.
- Rectify the glitches on the technology, so the crews will be able to identify exactly which roads they are meant to be working.
- From the 13th of May, smaller trucks will be deployed to the area to reach the narrower lanes.
- Communication with ABC will continue to be daily.

	<p>I had an update meeting with planning officers on 8th April. The Church Commissioners (CCE) and Aldi have been looking at ways at progressing with a new developer experienced with mixed development with retail and residential mixed development on the land on the corner with Bullfinch and Avocet. Separately Taylor Wimpey is expected to upgrade the footpath from Bridgefield on the Finberry side of the railway to south Willesborough.</p> <p>THE HIGHFIELD</p> <p>I met with ABC officers on 18th April regarding their long-standing desire to acquire management the 44ha site next to the IBF. It is hoped that this strategy would reduce the risk of the IBF ever being extended. The point of the meeting was to point out the failings of the DfT in carrying out their obligations on planting, allowing excessive thistle growth and failure to replace dead trees. If ABC takes ownership (or management), ABC needs to ensure DfT carries out this remedial work or provides funds to ABC (or KCC, the former contractor to carry out this work) to do this. The thistle growth can only be prevented with blanket use of glyphosate weed killer and this is not without controversy, but I will promote that this is the optimal solution with my colleague councillors.</p>
6.	Report from Dawnie Nilsson
	No report received
7.	Financial report
	<p>The Parish Council raised a Precept of £13,560.54. Other income came from a VAT reclaim of £266.89.</p> <p>Salaries totalled £7848.00, Room Hire cost £682.80, the Audit cost £312, Other payments were for insurance, KALC membership and expenses.</p> <p>Separately, Finberry had a questionnaire costing: £198.00 and a coronation tree plaque at £149.99. Sevington North had a tree plaque for £149.99 and defib. signs for the kiosk a £104.70.</p> <p>The year opened with £19,399 in the bank and closed with £22,043.93. The Parish Council has assets that valued £3244, the majority of these assets are in Sevington North: a notice board, 2 x dog waste bins, a kiosk with defib. A plaque for a tree and a beacon. Finberry has a plaque for tree.</p>
8.	Parish Council Chairman's Report
	<p>2023-24 was our fourth year in operation as a parish council, after dividing from Mersham to form Sevington with Finberry Parish Council in 2020.</p> <p>I had the privilege of being chair again over the past year and, as ever, I'll start this report with some thanks, starting with each of our parish councillors for their hard work and support over the past year.</p> <p>I'll particularly highlight Cllr Whybrow, who took the difficult decision to stand down on medical grounds this year, but has served the residents of Highfield ward with distinction for a number of years. He will be a difficult act to follow!</p> <p>Thanks also to our ward Councillors Dawnie Nilsson and Paul Bartlett – Paul of course has a dual role of also serving as a parish councillor with us.</p> <p>I also wanted to give huge thanks to our clerk Tracey Block, whose unerring patience, diligence and knowledge are a huge asset not only to our Parish Council but also the numerous other local parish councils she serves with equal dedication and skill.</p>

Many key issues, both within the Parish and further afield, have received attention during the course of the past year. These are fully documented in the Parish Council's meeting Minutes, which can be found on the Sevington with Finberry Parish Council website.

I'll now run through a few key highlights.

We were pleased to finally plant Finberry's Jubilee Tree, as part of the Queen's Green Canopy scheme, created to mark Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

After being carefully tended to in Cllr Bartlett's garden, and following consultation with Crest Nicholson and HML, the tree has now been planted in its permanent home, in the far corner of the field in front of Song Thrush Drive.

Staying with Finberry, concerns from residents around the upkeep of the estate by Crest and HML – particularly during a period where maintenance services halted whilst the contract was put out to tender - have dominated many of the public sessions in our meetings.

Although the parish council has no power other than to bring forward planning enforcement issues, we have continued to represent resident concerns in regular communications with Crest and HML, and will do so as long as they are raised with us.

Of course, there are other more practical things we can do to help in such situations and we were pleased to arrange a litter pick day in Finberry last September, where many residents turned out to do their bit to keep the estate tidy.

Unfortunately litter is a perpetual menace, so councillors have also undertaken ad hoc litter picks since, with plans afoot for further community picks as the weather now warms up.

In order to better understand which issues matter most to residents, the parish council also ran a formal survey over summer 2023.

We had 127 responses, which highlighted a number of concerns from residents, ranging from traffic management and the delivery of a convenience store to the opening of a link road to Bridgefield.

The issue raised which the parish council feels it can have the most impact on as a stakeholder is the delivery of the community centre committed to by Crest in its planning consent, and this is something we will continue to raise regularly with the developer.

Elsewhere in the parish, the Sevington IBF and adjacent Waterbrook IBFs have continued to be a focus for parishioners, particularly for Cllrs Coppins and Bartlett, who both live close to the site.

There are a range of issues still to be resolved around the site – the effectiveness of new signage to stop lorries going where they shouldn't, daytime noise and planting in an adjacent field to name a few.

Perhaps the biggest issue at the moment is how difficult the DfT have been to communicate with over these problems, but the parish council will continue to persevere in pushing for resolutions for residents.

In other planning matters, we have considered a total of 39 planning applications, including amendments, over the past year, both within and adjacent to our parish boundary. Whilst these

	<p>have been wide ranging over the past year, many have related to proposed developments at Waterbrook Park.</p> <p>Whilst generally supportive of initiatives which improve housing options, community facilities and employment opportunities for local people, we have also noted the ecological concerns of stakeholders and residents around a number of these applications and urged developers and the planning authority to ensure that these are taken into serious consideration.</p> <p>On this note, I will close by reminding members of the public that they are, as always, warmly invited to attend Parish Council meetings and offer their opinions.</p> <p>At present our options are limited for a venue which is easily accessible from all corners of the Parish, so we intend to continue holding our monthly meetings here at the Kent Chamber of Commerce, with a view that we could consider Sevington Church as an option during the warmer summer months.</p> <p>Members of the public are also invited to share their views with the Parish Council on any matters of concern, including formal agenda items, through emailing our Clerk, Tracey.</p> <p>All the necessary contact details and relevant information can be found on our website and on noticeboards across the parish. Thank you!</p>
9.	<p>Questions from the audience</p> <p><i>The buses on Finberry were questioned?</i> Cllr ell reported that she had been chatting with Stagecoach and they are keen to get started but are waiting for KCC. Cllr Bell will progress this.</p> <p><i>What are you perceiving to be border control issues?</i> Operation Brock, Dover Tap, lots of issues with accessing the road network for all Kent residents. There is a lot of work behind the scenes being undertaken to and get things moving forward. Kent is a major entry point to the UK and this a Kent problem not caused by the geography. In the future an app is likely to be developed but we are waiting on European partners at the moment.</p> <p><i>Does the Government not give money to KCC because of its location?</i> Some money is given but it is not enough.</p> <p><i>What is the situation with the Police?</i> KCC only liaises with the Police, they set their own priorities. The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner undertakes the priorities for Kent and every neighbourhood has its own police officer. Kent Police are often caught up with dealing with people with Mental Health issues. There is a new plan called "Right Person, Right Place." This will change the time Police spend dealing with issues that are not crime related and will enable people in crisis to be able to receive the correct treatment from the correct agencies.</p> <p><i>It is important for local people to know their own Police Officer because it enables them to feel emboldened to deal with problems.</i></p> <p><i>What is happening with the missed bin collections?</i> Suez are aware of issues within the Ward. ABC portal cannot be used to report missed areas and the Suez mapping system is missing roads and has crews with no local knowledge. The 26T lorry is not able to access some of the areas. More crews are being supplied, learning the rounds and rectifying the technology glitches are all ways this will be resolved.</p> <p><i>What is happening with the local store on Finberry?</i> The Church Commissioners and Aldi are looking</p>

to use the same developer that developed the commercial centre off Trinity Road.

What is happening to the Management of Finberry? ABC are actively engaged and are encouraging Crest to look at areas requiring ecological mitigation. The Community Centre and School parking are being pushed up the agenda.

When will roads on Finberry be adopted? Only Brambling, Robin, Swift and Avocet will be adopted, the others remain unadopted roads by Kent Highways. KCC will only take ownership of these once the building works have been completed. Until then all roads must be maintained by the Management Company.

What is happening about the Management of Captains Wood? This is an ecological site and so needs a management plan. This has been required since 2002.

The grass is not being cut, there are weeds on the pathways and Bilham Lawn floods, the ancient and protected woodlands are not being looked after. The fencing has not been maintained where the Care Home should be and the wasteland opposite the School is not being looked after. These are all matters for Crest Nicholson and we will do our best to engage with them. We understand that a Management Plan is emerging. This is a very difficult situation because HML is not managing the area appropriately, Crest Nicholson has an obligation to nominate the contractor but they have failed to supervise HML activities.

The residents in attendance listed a number of issues:

Maintenance of the areas is not undertaken thoroughly.

The lakes are not maintained.

The drainage from the lakes has not been cleared,

There is a lack of supervision over Crest/HML.

The area where the Care Home was supposed to be is left unmanaged.

There is apathy on Finberry, houses won't sell and people are stuck there.

What maintenance is being undertaken between Captain's Wood and Waterbrook?

What is the basis for the electrical costings that are charged on to the residents?

There is no regulation over Crest/HML, once Crest completes the final building there is an option for the Community to take on the management of the areas. Crest had expected to complete the build within 10 years when they started in 2002, 22 years later they are not complete. Aldi knew about the corner shop requirement when they took on the Waterbrook store so the furore created by them was just that, they knew the expectation from the set out and ABC have a hold on the condition that the shop is delivered first.

The PC hopes that it might have representation on a Management Company in the end but now, the Parish Council's ability to be involved is limited.

Cllr Martin thanked everyone for their attendance.