

**VIGO PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE 22nd ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 9TH MAY 2022 at 7.30pm
In Vigo Village Hall.**

Present:	Cllr Pat Banks (Chair); Cllr Simon Chaplin; Cllr Jim Haslem; Cllr Mandie Jones; Cllr Andy Woolway. Mrs Joanne Glass (Clerk).
In Attendance:	Mr Adam Holloway (Local MP); Mandy Cason (KCC Community Warden); Ms Freya Prince & Mr Richard Lees (KCC Rangers, Trosley Country Park); Cllr Sheila Buchannan (Meopham Parish Council Chairman); Six Vigo Residents (Mr Colin Wells, Mr Alan Smith, Mr Robin Banks, Mr Roland Graves, Mrs Janice Tomlin, Mrs Julie Marsh).

1] Apologies for Absence

- AP01** Cllr Mike Germain (VPC); Cllr Dave Hawkins (VPC); Cllr Alan White (VPC);
Cllr Bryan Sweetland (Kent County Council);
Cllr Ejaz Aslam & Cllr Denise Tiran (Gravesham Borough Council Members)
Cllr Rosemary Dymond (Cobham PC & KALC Local Gravesham Group).

Chairman's welcome to Guests, Electors, Members of the Public and Press

- AP02** Cllr Banks welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

3] To confirm the minutes of the 21st Annual Parish Meeting (held by zoom on 27th April 2021)

- AP03** It was noted that the 21st Annual Parish Meeting had been held online (by zoom) due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

The minutes of the 21st Annual Parish Meeting (27.04.2021) were signed by the Chair, having been accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

4] Chairman's Annual Report

- AP04** Cllr Mrs Pat Banks, Chairman of Vigo Parish Council, gave the following report:

This is the first face to face Annual Parish meeting for 3 years!

We are required by law to hold this meeting, but it is a good opportunity to meet residents and to share what has happened during the past year. The trouble this year is that there are 3 years of events to talk about.

Travellers - Almost immediately after our last meeting we discovered that Travellers had removed the gate to the Village Green and set up camp there. Fortunately, with the help of our CCTV cameras that had recorded their actions, the police who visited them and the careful intervention of Paul Agle, our services manager, they didn't stay too long, and they didn't leave too much mess when they went.

Flooding - Following quickly on this event, Vigo was flooded! Who would have believed that a village, at a height of around 660 feet could possibly have been flooded? Sadly, the torrential and prolonged rainfall was enough to result in this unimaginable event. As we know, many residents suffered flood damage and many were forced had to move out of their homes, some for a long period of time.

VPC were in regular contact with the Kent Flood Team. The questionnaire that we organised, and was sent to every household, enabled the Flood Team to identify who had been flooded, where the flooding had occurred and how serious it was. The Flood Team found this information very useful and proposed to use a similar questionnaire for all flooding investigations in the future.

As a result of the investigation, a number of recommendations were proposed – not least of which was to clean and survey the existing drainage system. Although KCC didn't always appear to be working as quickly as we would have liked, they did survey, clean, repair and replace the drains and soak ways. Additionally, some major drainage works are being carried out in Timberbank.

Local History - In November 2019, in conjunction with the Stansted and Fairseat history society Vigo Parish Council arranged for a WW1/WW2 exhibition to be put on in the Village Hall. This was a great success, with lots of people visiting it, including some who had lived in Vigo after the war, when the army camp became a home for displaced people.

Social Media - Moving into 2020, Vigo Parish Council moved into the 21st century and started a Facebook page and uploaded a new website.

And then, as we know, Covid-19 became a pandemic, and everyone went into lockdown. Jo Glass, our Clerk worked from home, where I think she worked many more hours that she is contracted for! A rapid, temporary, change in the law, allowed Parish Council meetings to be held remotely.

Jo set up and coordinated people who were able to help other people link with those who needed help. Many residents of Vigo came forward and offered to help those in need, delivering prescriptions, doing shopping, checking on elderly neighbours etc etc

Food Bank - Residents also donated to the Community Food cupboard, which Sheila Oag organised and she, along with our Community Wardens collected and took to the Community cupboard in West Kingsdown. Our Wardens then distributed food parcels to many needy families.

Defibrillators - In spite of being in lock down, we managed, with major input from Cllr Dave Hawkins to acquire and install 2 defibrillators. VPC produced a post card with a map identifying the positions of the defibrillators in our vicinity, 5 in Vigo and 1 at the Rugby Club and giving some instructions on recognising and treating cardiac arrest. Every house in Vigo received a copy of this post card and the information is also available on our website – it is always the first item on the News page.

Covenant Consultation - During 2020 we carried out a consultation on the Covenants that apply to all houses in Vigo. There was a good response to this, with many aspects of the Covenants being well supported by residents. As a result of the consultation, VPC has made some amendments to the way in which some covenants are enforced.

A leaflet giving information on the way in which Covenants are now be interpreted was delivered to every house. I hope residents have found this useful.

Pop-Up Cafe - When Covid 19 permitted lulls in the various lockdowns, a Pop-up café, run by Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) met in The Bay. ACRK brought all the seating, teas and coffees and cakes etc in their van. It was well supported by residents.

Unfortunately, ACRK are no longer able to run this in Vigo and it would have stopped. However, it was felt that it would be good for it to continue and with the encouragement of Jo, our Clerk; it has been taken over by your Parish Council, with Jo organising and running it. Volunteers to help would be very welcome

Fowlers Stone Wood - We are all aware that in early 2020 Fowler's Stone Wood stopped being a piece of ancient woodland. This issue has caused a lot of upset to a great many people. It has used up a lot of Parish Council time, especially that of our clerk and sadly it is still on-going.

As I am sure you know, Mr Sullivan has served a prison term for not complying with a High Court Injunction to clear the site and return it to its original state – not that that is actually possible! Gravesham have served an enforcement notice. At the time of writing, we are waiting to hear when the appeal Mr Sullivan made against the refusal of his retrospective planning application will be heard.

Anti-Social Behaviour - At the end of October 2020 there were major incidents of anti-social behaviour, particularly at the time of Halloween. This caused a lot of stress to a great many people. Vigo Parish Council made strong representations about the problems to the police and Jo liaised with them to ensure that actions would be taken to try to prevent this happening again. As a result, last year, there was a heavy police presence in Vigo. The police based themselves in the Village Hall and happily there were very few problems at Halloween 2021

Trosley C.P. Parking - In spring 2020, when people were very restricted as to where they could go to take exercise, the issue with parking for Trosley Country Park became a really serious problem. Waterlow road was a car park, with people parking on the verges and sometimes on both sides of Waterlow Road.

After a lot of discussions with Highways, people from Trosley Country Park and Bryan Sweetland, our KCC member, it was agreed that we would install posts and No Parking signs. Bryan gave us a grant for the purchase and installation of the posts. VPC paid for the no parking signs. The presence of the posts seems to be quite effective and the situation has now also been helped by resurfacing the overflow car park in Trosley CP, so that it can always be used.

Storm Eunice - Then just when we thought life was getting back to a bit of normality, Storm Eunice arrived! Jo manned the phone over the weekend so that any problems could be reported. She was in regular contact with Paul and Steph, who worked on trees day and night. We really do appreciate all the hard work that they put in to make sure trees were safe and roads and footpaths were clear.

10 trees were dealt with, as emergencies, over that weekend; some were trees from the Country Park. And there were many more trees that were affected and have been, or are being dealt with.

The Bay - The next issue I want to mention is the Bay. It has been in need of some care and attention for some time. VPC do, to some extent have their hands tied, as the shops are under the control of landlords and there are no Covenants on them or the flats above. The previous landlord was always very hard to get hold of, and I'm not sure things will be much easier now.

However, we do own the seating area in the middle of the Bay and some weeks ago, a group of residents got together to weed out round the seats and plant some flowers. Thanks to Brian Denis, who got the ball rolling and provided the compost and plants.

Street Lights - The last serious issue I really must mention is Streetlights. These are the reason for the Vigo part of your Council tax increasing by 8.8% on 1st April, Gravesham Borough Council, who had looked after our Streetlights for the last 50 years or so, transferred the ownership to Vigo Parish Council. So, the increase in our Precept is to cover the cost of maintenance and electricity. The percentage increase amounts to £1.17 per month (for people in a Band D property). You could say that this is the price we have to pay to keep the street lights on!

Other Work - Throughout all of this, Parish business has continued as usual. For example, responding to residents' requests and working to ensure that the Village is a safe and pleasant environment to live in.

We have organised for paving outside the school gates to be repaired and for muddy parts of the Play park to be resurfaced, the grass to be mowed, trees to be monitored, litter to be picked ... the list goes on.

Other important activities are reviewing Planning and Covenant applications and dealing with Covenant breaches.

Our Council has been short of a member for a while now, as Julie Marsh was no longer able to continue as a Councillor. She was with us for 2 years and was a lively and positive member of our team. We are pleased to be able to report that will be co-opting a new Councillor, at our Full Council meeting on 16th May.

Colin Talboys was with the Parish Council from its beginning in 2000 until he retired at the end of 2020. Prior to being on the Parish Council, Colin was, for many years, a member of the Vigo Residents association. Vigo is indebted to Colin, for all the time and effort he gave to the Village. As Colin's departure from the Council came during lockdown, a certificate and gift to say thank you, was delivered to him at home.

Community Awards - For the last few years Vigo Parish Council has said a special thanks to a resident who has made a significant contribution to the Village, by giving them a Community Award. This award is produced by the Kent Association of Local Councils and signed by the High Sheriff of Kent, the Chairman of Kent County Council and the KALC Chairman.

This year, as we haven't met face to face for 3 years, we have 3 Community Awards to make. They are to Carol Cox, for all the years that she edited the Vigo Journal, Sheila Oag, for her time as a school Governor and for organising the Community Cupboard and to Janice Tomlin, for taking time from your day to voluntarily litter pick throughout the village, which contributes to maintaining Vigo as a beautiful place to live.

Thank You's - Almost finally, I must say a few thank you's. Firstly to Jo Glass – our Parish Clerk, who I have mention quite a few times in this report. As Clerk, Financial Officer, Organiser, Font of information, adviser on legal issues, and so much more, she is indispensable! Thank you for everything you do.

The next thank-you's are to some other people I have already mentioned, Paul Agle, our Services contractor, and his assistant Stephanie Calvert. They work tirelessly to keep the Village looking good and seem to do more and more each year.

Others we must mention are our indefatigable Community Wardens, Mandie Casson

and Jackie Fuller, who have been very busy lately organising collections of materials for Ukraine and taking them to distribution points in London.

Also, Bryan Sweetland, our Kent County Councillor, Denise Tiran and Ejaz Aslam, our Borough councillors. We are grateful to you all for the help and support that you give us.

And finally, to all Vigo Parish Council Councillors, I must say thank you to you, for being Councillors and taking an active part in maintaining Vigo as a super place to live!

Jubilee - This really is finally - Before we adjourn for a drink and nibbles, please remember that Vigo Parish Council have organised several events to help celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

5] Presentation of KALC Community Awards for 2020, 2021 & 2022

AP05 The following people had been nominated, and won KALC Community Awards:

AP06 2020: To Carol Cox, with grateful thanks from Vigo Parish Council for many years of voluntary service in editing the Vigo Journal, which had been an invaluable source of information for all residents in Vigo.

Unfortunately, Ms Cox had been unable to attend the meeting to receive her award.

AP07 2021: To Sheila Oag, for many years' service to Vigo, including as a school governor, but more recently for tirelessly co-ordinating food donations from local residents for the Community Cupboard during the Covid Pandemic.

Unfortunately, Mrs Oag had been unable to attend the meeting to receive her award.

AP08 2022: To Janice Tomlin, for taking time from her day to voluntarily litter pick throughout the village, which contributes to maintaining Vigo as a beautiful place to live.

Cllr Banks thanked Ms Tomlin and presented her with the KALC Community Award (signed by the High Sheriff of Kent, the Chairman of Kent County Council, and the KALC Chairman), along with some flowers.

6] To receive reports from County and Borough Councillors

AP09 None received.

7] To receive reports from the Police and the Community Wardens

AP10 None received.

8] To receive any reports from Local Village Bodies and Organisations

AP11 TROSLEY COUNTRY PARK:

Freya Prince & Richard Lees were both Park Rangers at Trosley Country Park. A very informative presentation was given to all those present, giving details of how the park was managed and information on projects that had been undertaken and some which were due to start in the future.

Discussion about the biodiversity crossover between the Country Park and Parish land was discussed in some detail. The Park Rangers were pleased to see that the Parish Council had adopted No Mow May on the grass verge on Waterlow Road, which was on the border of the Country Park.

It was noted that the "MAIDSTONE SOLITARY MINING BEE" had recently been found in the Country Park – this was exciting news as it was a rare species, presumed extinct in Britain for almost a century. A small population of the bee had been discovered in Trosley Country Park by an amateur entomologist in the summer of 2001.

AP12 MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Buchanan gave an update on the Meopham Windmill. The Windmill was owned by Kent Country Council, who leased the building / land to the Windmill Trust. There was also a licence issued to Meopham Parish Council to use the engine shed as an office. KCC had renovated the outside of the windmill, with more renovations to come. Cllr Buchanan informed that volunteers were needed to help run the site.

9] Finance Report

To receive the Financial Statement of the Parish Council's Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.

AP13 The Financial Statement of the Parish Council's audited accounts for the year ended 31.03.2021 was noted by all present. These had been available on the Parish Council website for some time.

To receive the DRAFT actual vs budget spend for the year ended 31 March 2022.

AP14 The draft spend for the year ended 31.03.22 was noted by all present. This would be available on the Parish Council website. The Clerk took the meeting through the spreadsheet to explain any over or under spends, and invited questions (to which there were none).

10] Questions from the Press & Public.

AP15 None.

11] Any Other Business (at the Chairman's Discretion)

AP16 None.

The Meeting Closed at 8.50 pm