

**VIGO PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE 18th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON 30th APRIL 2018 at 7.30pm IN VIGO VILLAGE HALL**

Present:	Cllr Jim Haslem (in the Chair); Cllr Sue Connor; Cllr John Goodban; Cllr Alan White.
In Attendance:	Joanne Glass (Clerk); Cllr Rosemary Dymond (Gravesham KALC); Cllr Sheila Buchannan (Meopham Parish Council); PCSO Frankie Stack; Mandy Cason (KCC Community Warden); Mr Paul Agle (Highview Services); Ms Carol Cox (Vigo Journal Editor); Tony Smith, Carol Baylis, Paul Baylis, John Perry (Parishioners).

1] Apologies for Absence

AP01 Cllr Pat Banks (Vigo Parish Council); Cllr Colin Talboys (Vigo Parish Council); Cllr Mike Germain (Vigo Parish Council); Cllr Roland Graves (Vigo Parish Council); Cllr Andy Woolway (Vigo Parish Council); Mr Adam Holloway (MP); Cllr Bryan Sweetland (KCC); Cllr Lesley Boycott (Gravesham Borough Council); Cllr Derek Shelbrooke (Gravesham Borough Council); Inspector Alan Searle (Kent Police, Gravesham CSU); Ken Hill (Vigo Village Hall); Ms Diana Knox (Local Journalist); Mrs Janet Jones (local resident);

2] Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (AGM) held on 24th April 2017

AP02 The minutes were signed by the Chair, having been accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3] Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th April 2017.

AP03 Any issues arising were noted and dealt with at the Full Parish Council meeting held in May 2017.

4] The Annual Report of the Parish Council

AP04 Cllr Haslem read out the following report on behalf of Cllr Banks.

“Good evening everyone and welcome to another Annual Parish Meeting for Vigo. I am very sorry that I am unable to be with you this evening. It is a legal requirement that Parish Councils in England hold an Annual Meeting with members of the Parish.

This meeting gives the Parish Council the opportunity to tell parishioners about projects that have been carried out in the past year and to explain where your money has been spent. As well as informing you about Parish Council activities, we hope to have reports from other people and organisations that have links to Vigo. This will give a broader picture of what is happening in and around Vigo. Parishioners are, of course, always invited to attend our normal Parish Meetings, which are much more formal affairs than this meeting. Residents are able to ask questions at these meeting but the time for these is limited. During this evening’s meeting however, parishioners are welcome to ask questions and raise issues, without time restrictions. We would just ask that questions are saved until the end of any report.

As usual, when the formal business of this meeting is complete, there will be an opportunity for parishioners to discuss individual concerns with councillors in a more relaxed atmosphere. You are all invited to join us for a glass of wine and hope that you will take this opportunity to chat with your councillors.

So, what has happened in Vigo in the last year: Quite a lot! There have been 2 major projects.

The first of these is the installation of a new CCTV system. This is much more extensive that our old system and now gives good coverage of the Bay, the children’s play park and the main car park (by the school). Although the expenditure for a new CCTV system had not been specified in our budget talks, it became very clear early last year, that an updated system was urgently required. There were sufficient funds in the Parish Council reserves to allow us to go ahead with purchasing the new system. There have already been several examples of the usefulness of the new system – including a major reduction in litter in the car park immediately following the installation.

The second project is just coming to an end. This began with the need to repair the children’s play park fence, yet again! A discussion followed as to the benefit of replacing the wooden fence with a metal one and went on from there to ‘why don’t we enlarge the play park while we are replacing the fence’?! We had been

Vigo Parish Council ~ Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th April 2018

aware for some time that the playground equipment was not inclusive and so this would also be an opportunity to include some equipment that would also be accessible to children with disabilities. A consultation with playground users identified a number of new pieces of playground equipment they would like to see in the playground.

The Parish Council then applied for grants and were successful in obtaining grants from Kent County Council and Awards for All. Money was given by the Vigo Youth and Community group. The Parish Council added more, including monies raised at various fetes that had been designated for 'The Youth of Vigo'. Playground equipment isn't cheap and there was still a shortfall; so, in order to cover this the Parish Council consulted all villagers about taking out a loan. The positive response to this allowed us to go ahead and apply for the loan and, more importantly to go ahead with the enlargement of the playground.

We are pleased to announce that most of the equipment is now installed although there are a few tweaks that still need to be made before we can open the Park. We are also waiting for the Village Green to become drier and harder before the zip wire is installed.

You may have seen some new benches appearing in Vigo – mainly along the spine path. Our clerk organised for us to take part in a Tesco's token event. We were awarded enough money to fund 6 new benches. Paul, our maintenance contractor has been installing them.

Alongside these major projects, the regular business of the Council has continued. As always, we strive to keep the Village looking its best overseeing the grass mowing, the tree care and the general maintenance of the village verges, paths and woodland.

Another aspect to keeping the Village looking good is by monitoring changes that people want to make to their houses. We ask residents to keep to the covenants that are enshrined in everyone's' deeds and some time is spent at each meeting discussion applications from residents asking for Covenant approval for changes they want to make.

For several years the Council has given financial support to the Vigo Youth Club. This has been operated by the Gr@nd , based at Gravesend. Unfortunately for some time now, the numbers attending have been very low. The Parish Council has decided that it will not support this project for the coming year. It is hoped that KCC will fund the Gr@nd to run some sessions during the summer months.

Each year the Council puts aside some money that can be used to support local groups and organisations. Grants of up to £250 are available. Unfortunately, again this year, the Grant in Aid budget has been underspent. Please remember, if you are involved with a local organisation, you can apply to us for a grant.

Unfortunately, as usual this year there have been some incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. We have been in contact with the police on several occasions. It is important that we all report incidents as they happen, so that the authorities are aware of problems. You can now report incidents on line, as well as by phoning 101.

Ruts on the roadside verges has been a problem again. This has been a particular problem on the bend opposite the entrance to the Country Park. Ruts were caused by people parking dangerously on the bend in order to avoid paying to park in the car park. The Parish Council has now put cones on the bend. This has dissuaded people from parking on the bend but has not encouraged them to go in to the car park. They just park further down the road!

So, as always some not so good things have happened, but I am sure you will agree that the positive events far outweigh the negative!

Finally, as usual I would like to mention some of the many people who are very important to our Village life, obviously with apologies if I miss anyone out.

Jo Glass, our Clerk, who is always very cheerful and helpful. This year, she has been involved in a lot of extra work with the play park project, as well as all the day to day running of the Council. Writing the letters, making the phone calls, finding answers to queries, keeping up with legal changes and keeping us all on the straight and narrow! Without her knowledge and very able assistance, this council would definitely not

function.

Paul Agle, our services contractor, without whom the Village would not look nearly so good. We must also thank him this year for his invaluable help with the play park project.

Community Wardens, Many Casson and Jacqui Fuller. Who are always proactive in the Village and give help and support in so very many ways.

Carol Cox who continues to produce our excellent Vigo Journal. Lesley Boycott and Derek Shelbrooke - our Borough Councillors who are always ready with help and support, and Bryan Sweetland, our KCC member. Many, many thanks to you all.

And last but not least, I must, of course mention the other members of our Parish Council. Thank you to you all for the very valuable work you do and for the help and support you have given me. I look forward to working with you all again in the coming year.

5] Tree Wardens Report

AP05 Colin Talboys, Vigo Tree Warden had provided the following report in his absence:

Much of this annual tree report appears in previous reports mirroring the continual management process for trees. One of the catalysis for setting up Vigo Parish Council was to secure funding via the precept for the management and maintenance of the grass and trees that cover the majority of the 137 hectares of Vigo.

On specific issues VPC always seeks formal arboreal advice and VPC will always listen and act on sound advice. Safety is paramount in our approach regarding trees. Through the tree management process, trees are constantly monitored. Those requiring works are prioritised for attention with safety again being the main criteria.

Nearly everyone has an opinion on trees, love or loath them, we have plenty in Vigo to comment amount.

There are plenty of factors that have an effect on our trees. The strong winds of recent years being the most obvious. Although by constant monitoring and subsequent action the number of VPC trees damaged by wind has reduced, we should never be complacent. Strong winds can help clear out twigs and branches, this is a natural process helped along by the wind. Wet winters and dry summers can also affect the growth of trees and other plants. Soil conditions are also a key factor in the health of any plant, especially trees. The soil conditions in Vigo are variable but generally poor with plenty of Second World War debris compacted in to make it difficult for trees to successfully establish sound root systems.

As previously mentioned, plant and tree pathogens are always present to attack our woods and gardens. I have mentioned many times Phythorhthora attacking the Sweet Chestnuts, although still present the disease appears to have slowed down. We have been told to expect big problems with Chalara (Ash Die Back). It is estimated that 1 in 2 trees in lowland Britain are Ash with a forecast of up to 60% succumbing to Chalara. Unfortunately, Chalara has been confirmed in Trosley Country Park and Vigo. Ash trees represent approximately 12% of our trees. I am ever hopeful that the diversity of our woods will give us some protection. Some genetic Chalara resistance has been found in Holland Norfolk. Let's hope in Vigo as well. We have taken professional advice on how to deal with this problem.

Other issues with trees worthy of mention are squirrels and humans. We are witnessing considerable tree damage from the ever-increasing squirrel population which is difficult to resolve.

Woodlands are living entities. They cannot be preserved as they are. Our woods have been manged for centuries and for them to continue they must be managed as best as resources permit.

The Tree Surgeon who works with us, Cherish Tree Services, has during this winter season been working under the direction of the Parish Council's contractor on tree projects across the whole of Vigo, including felling, crown lifting and reducing verge overhang along the bus route.

Birch Polypore fungus has infected many of our birch trees, particularly near or on the village green. These have been felled along with several adjacent to the playpark. Uprooted trees and justifiable requests from residents have also been attended to.

Profession advice suggested extensive work to the trees at the junction of Ash Keys and Erskine Road, this include dealing with some Chalara infected ash trees.

The woods of Vigo are continually monitored for any tree issues, safety always being the paramount Woodland Management. Most native woodland trees do not cease to exist after being felled. A wood is self-

regenerating and is no more destroyed by being cut down than cutting a crop of hay destroys a meadow. Woodland management encourages flowering plants (including grasses), birds and insects (including butterflies and moths). Practices that remove Rhododendron also help encourage natural regeneration of indigenous species and contribute to habitat creation. Coppicing creates habitats similar to open glades and will encourage a greater diversity of flora and fauna. No major areas have been coppiced in recent years.

Other good woodland management policies that aid diversity include only felling dead trees that are hazardous or removing only the hazardous sections of trees. Leaving a proportion of dead trees still standing in the woodland, where safety permits, creates habitat niches that encourage wildlife. Cut material after felling can be used to make a natural habitat pile that encourages wildlife. These practices are not always suited to the environs of Vigo.

The nations trees are a multi-purpose resource, as a habitat for wildlife, and a pleasant healthy environment for humans to enjoy, and as a sink for the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Around 30% of the global landmass is forest cover. Some 13% of the UK is woodland (approximately 3 million hectares) of which 1 million hectares is native woodland. Some 60% of Vigo is woodland.

AP06 It was noted that 45 new saplings had been planted in Vigo over the last year – unfortunately only around 21 remained, with the others having been vandalised or removed. There had been a general negative reception to these saplings being planted. The Parish Council would continue to move ahead with replanting as and when appropriate.

AP07 Cllr Dymond enquired about coppicing and other general tree work in Vigo. It was noted that the tree budget was around £13,000 per annum and it was always spent in full, with lots of work being carried out. Cllr Haslem noted that the Parish Council had a duty to preserve the Community Land as woodland, but there was no guidance about how this should be managed (for example coppicing etc).

6] Finance Report

AP08 The Audit Certificate for 2016/2017 was made available to all, along with the draft year end spend for 2017/18.

7] Report from County Council Representative

AP09 Cllr Bryan Sweetland provided the following report which was read out in his absence:

Much of what has been happening at KCC centres around next year's budget, which has been reduced again for the seventh consecutive year.

However, although the last few months have been pretty hectic, they have also been highly productive. KCC been very fortuitous on a number of fronts to help and support the delivery of our complex array of front-line services as well as helping support the continued delivery of a balanced budget in the coming financial year and for our Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Indeed, it was good to hear KCC's Financial Director give assurances that we will deliver a very modest underspend in the current year, accepting that we need to accelerate our pressure on the Home Office to get full cost recovery on Asylum costs (£4m). Kent being the main point of entry to the UK for unaccompanied young asylum seekers.

In addition to being chosen by government as one of the few counties as a 100% Business Rate Pilot (worth £10m to Kent) and the additional Social Care Grant of £3.65m, we heard last week that the Department for Transport have allocated an additional £3.1m for pothole repairs across Kent. This now gives us a war chest for pothole and drainage repairs in excess of £11m. The recent snow and cold weather have caused a lot of damage, as I'm sure you have noticed. The Highway's crews will be out and about in earnest in the coming days, weeks and months ahead to repair the damage. Any Highways faults (as you know) can be reported online.

8] Report from Borough Council Representative

AP10 Cllr Derek Shelbrooke had provided the following report in his absence:

Finances: GBC struggles to bridge a £3m funding gap over the next few years but prudent management and commercial property acquisitions have brought in extra monies. Our neighbouring Districts and Boroughs are building more houses and benefitting from the New House Bonus Scheme whereas in Gravesham, Brown Field start-ups have been particularly slow.

Housing: Building on the land adjacent to Coldharbour Road will begin later this year which will provide approx. 400 homes. Under the new housing review, GBC will have to find sites for approximately 1200 houses in the rural area. Every resident will be encouraged to respond to a new survey of possible sites (not everyone will be used) in the very near future. There will be drop-in displays around the Borough showing

possible sites; GBC officers will be available to give explanations.

Roads: The severity of the late winter has caused many pot-holes. KCC is surveying them but if residents are aware of deep holes that have not been ringed in white, we encourage them to report them to KCC via their website, it is easy to use.

Culverstone Valley: Clearance of land continues to give concerns especially the site on Heron Hill Lane. GBC's Planning Department has investigated. There are no TPOs on the said site and so tree clearance is legitimate. The owners have been told that the damage to the Chalk bank near to the Lane must be reinstated. Recently, a planning application to create placements for five Traveller's Vans had been received by GBC and will be processed in the normal way.

Gravesend Town Centre: Heritage Quarter: There is no date when work will begin but the market has been refurbished and re-opened, but footfall is still weak.

Transport Quarter: The new road scheme around the station has now been completed.

Paramount: This has been renamed The London Resort. Not sure when work will begin.

Lower Thames Crossing: The Government chose the route East of Gravesend. The date for completion is 2027. This will create more pressure on the A227 and we use every opportunity to express our fears to Highways England and the Minister for Roads.

Clipper Service: The trial last summer was a complete success and it is hoped that fast river transport to London will become a reality.

9] Report from Local Police, PCSO's and Community Wardens

AP11 PCSO Frankie Stack reported that Halloween had been an issue, with nuisance youths and antisocial behaviour. One police van in the Bay had been attacked with eggs. A two hour "run-around" had taken place. However, overall, antisocial behaviour had improved in Vigo, with The Bay especially being less affected (perhaps due to the installation of the new CCTV system). A total of seven calls to report anti-social behaviour had been received since New Year until now – mainly due to off road bikes. PCSO Stack encouraged residents to ring issues through to 101 – if the issues were not reported he could not help. PCSO Stack covered four beats – Higham, Meopham South & Vigo, Kings Farm and Riverview. He tries to balance his time evenly but does have to attend where the reports of issues are made. PCSO Stack and his colleague, PCSO Kirsty Lowe are always happy to help and one of them is always on duty.

AP12 Community Warden Mandy Cason provided the following report:

Within my role I have: acted as "eyes and ears" for other agencies; collated and reported to Trading Standards and Kent Police; provided support and reassurance along with security advice to victims of crime.

Other issues dealt with include: Neighbour disputes; reporting of road obstruction i.e. fly tipping and abandoned/untaxed vehicles.

As a community warden I regularly visit scam victims within the area, when required I have provided support and reassurance and assisted with incident reports to aid with investigations.

I have made many reassurance visits to individuals by request or self –generated resulting in giving advice and making referrals to agencies that can provide support and information covering benefit advice, adaptations, telecare systems and hospital transport.

I also attend the Dementia Forum meetings quarterly and support the Memory Café which is held every Tuesday of the month at St Johns Centre. I attend as and when duties allow providing support and advice on welfare / community issues.

What's gone on 2017-2018? I had arranged a Neighbourhood Watch Recruitment Event at Vigo Village Hall 7th September 7:00pm - 9:30pm which was well attended, and I will be arranging another one for the summer 2018.

13th February was the Official opening of the new Meopham Library that was opened by KCC Cabinet Member Michael Hill, over 300 residents attended.

Trosley Country Park Open day 4th April I attended and had taken part in the activities, also provided advice on local issues/concerns and provided the outdoor games equipment to support this event.

I am also actively seeking local residents to volunteer to make the environmentally friendly morsbags.

Community Awareness: We have received reports of scam phone calls from people claiming to work for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). The caller attempts to trick residents by claiming they owe large amounts of money to HMRC. They insist if the money is not paid, the resident will face court action and the police will be involved. Please contact Police 101

What's on? Conference for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators in Gravesham and Dartford. Wednesday 23rd May 2018 at Gravesend Civic Centre, courtesy of Gravesham Borough Council. I will be attending and will be happy to provide feedback.

NEW: The Rural Kent Coffee and Information Project - Making a difference to rural communities throughout Kent and Medway. The Rural Kent Coffee and Information Project is a Rural Kent project funded initially by KCC through Stronger Kent Communities, Engaging Kent CIC, and the National Lottery through The Big Lottery Fund. Dates for Vigo: 25th April located in the Bay this was very well supported by local residents. Next visit to Vigo 23rd May. Harvel -10th May location Harvel Village hall, then 7th June.

Community surgery/talk time held at Vigo Library every Tuesday 1400-1600hrs. Lego Club, 1500-1700hrs Tuesday at Vigo Library. 16th June 1100-1400hrs Vigo School Family Fun day, I will be attending providing the outdoor games.

10] Report from Village Bodies and Voluntary Organisations

AP13 Vigo Village Hall: Mr Ken Hill (Treasurer of the Village Hall Committee) had provided the latest Village Hall accounts for information (year ended 30.09.17)

Cllr White reported that the wiring circuit had been tested and approved, and the circuit board replaced. Four large radiators in the main hall had been replaced (the previous ones were 30 – 40 years old and were noisy and inefficient). Two New Years Eve parties and a recent quiz night had boosted funds and assisted with the costs of the new radiators.

There was ongoing discussion regarding disabled access to the hall – a problem not easily solved due to the design of the building.

AP14 2nd Vigo Brownies: Summary of Activities Sept 2017 - March 2018

We have had a busy time since September. Our focus this year is to travel the world! We have made our own passports and so far, have been to China (where we tried noodles and made hats), Australia (where we learnt how to do aboriginal painting) and Italy (or course when we made pizzas!). At the end of last year, we made Christmas cake (now it's a tradition!) and more recently had an Easter egg hunt. We supported the village at the Remembrance Sunday parade and Christingle. We regularly venture out into Trosley Country Park and recently had a bonfire and toasted marshmallows there. Numbers are reducing; however, we continue to ensure that our girls have a fun filled time with crafts, games, outdoor activities and crafts each term.

Brown Owl. April 2018

AP15 Mrs Baylis reported that the scout groups were thriving with over 70 young people attending across Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. There are now two Beaver colonies due to the high numbers attending. The Vigo group was very well supported with leaders. The Scout Group thanked Vigo Parish Council for recent financial support via a Grant in Aid.

AP16 Vigo School:

Cllr White reported that the school was not yet up to the maximum intake of 30 for the September 2018 intake.

11] Parishioners Matters

AP17 Mrs Carole Baylis noted that the installation of the CCTV in The Bay and in the car park outside the school had made life easier, with less litter and less noise. She thanked the Parish Council for having this installed.

Mr Perry asked if there was CCTV covering the playpark adjacent to the Villager Public House – it was confirmed that there were two cameras in this location.

AP18 Mr Perry raised the issue of parking on Waterlow Road, mainly by people visiting the Country Park and avoiding the car park fees. This is something that was an ongoing issue, Vigo Parish Council continued to liaise with KCC regarding this, but it appeared there was no immediate solution to the problem.

12] Any Other Business

- AP19** Cllr Buchanan asked if there was an issue with Quad Bikes damaging grass in Vigo. It was noted that where there had been issues (land at the junction of Erskine and Harvel Road) rustic fencing had been installed, which has resolved the issue, as Quad Bikes could no longer access the land.

The Meeting Closed at 8.45 pm