

**VIGO PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE 17th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON 24th APRIL 2017 at 7.30pm IN VIGO VILLAGE HALL**

Present:	Cllr Colin Talboys (in the Chair); Cllr Sue Connor; Cllr Mike Germain; Cllr John Goodban; Cllr Jim Haslem; Cllr Alan White.
In Attendance:	Joanne Glass (Clerk); Bryan Sweetland (KCC); Lesley Boycott (GBC); Mandy Cason (KCC Community Warden); Henry Wiggins (The Gr@nd Youth Worker); Tilly Catchpole, Jessica Talboys, Alan Smith, Penny Smith, John Lloyd, Robin Banks (Local Residents).

1] Apologies for Absence

AP01 Cllr Pat Banks (Vigo Parish Council); Cllr Roland Graves (Vigo Parish Council), Cllr Andy Woolway (Vigo Parish Council); Adam Holloway (MP); Cllr Derek Shelbrooke (Gravesham Borough Council); Mr Paul Agley (Highview Services); Ken Hill (Vigo Village Hall); Ms Carol Cox (Journal Editor)

2] Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting (AGM) held on 25th April 2016

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

3] Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th April 2016

AP03 Any issues arising were noted and dealt with at the Full Parish Council meeting held in May 2016.

4] The Annual Report of the Parish Council

AP04 Cllr Pat Banks provided the following report in her absence:

Good evening everyone and welcome to another Annual Parish Meeting for Vigo. I must apologise for not being with you this evening. It is a legal requirement that Parish Councils in England hold an Annual Meeting with members of the Parish.

At this meeting the Parish Council has the opportunity to share information with parishioners. We are able to tell you about things that have gone on in the past year and to explain where your money has been spent. It also gives us the opportunity to tell you about Parish Council ideas for future projects.

As well as this we hope to have reports from other people and organisations that have links to Vigo, to 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, with very limited time for questions from the floor.

During this evening's meeting, parishioners are welcome to ask questions and raise issues but we would ask that a questioner waits until the speaker has finished their report before asking a question.

When the formal business of the 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, to the review of the last year:

I really cannot believe that another year has gone past since our last Annual Parish Meeting. But you will see that it has, as the date of last year's meeting was 23rd April 2016!

Good things:

As always, the main focus of the Parish Council has been to maintain the quality and appearance of the Village and to guard the best interests of all residents, both within Vigo and the wider Gravesham community.

The most obvious way in which the Village appearance is kept to a high standard is by the grass mowing, the tree care and the general maintenance of the village verges, paths and woodland and this is where the largest part of your precept is spent. John will give you more details on the finances in his report.

Another aspect to keeping the Village looking good is by asking residents to keep to the covenants that are enshrined in everyone's' deeds. These refer to such issues as not putting a barrier in front of the building line and not changing the style of windows etc. Some time is spent at each meeting discussion applications

from residents to make changes that require Covenant approval.

In addition to this the Parish Council is continuing with its programme of asking residents to remove 'barriers' that are in front of the building line.

Some changes that we have made during the year are administrative. We have changed our bank account from the Co-op bank to the Unity Trust Bank. This change was made to enable us to move to electronic banking.

Another change we have made is to enrol our clerk in the automatic enrolment pension scheme.

One subject that has occupied a lot of time and energy for the last two or three years, especially for Jim Haslem, has been the Neighbourhood Plan. Unfortunately, at examination, this was not deemed to be suitable by the authorities. This was largely due, to changing goal posts and the fact that it was not possible to identify areas in Vigo where it would be possible to build more houses. Our thanks must go to Jim for all his hard work and perseverance in trying to establish the Neighbourhood Plan.

One other fairly large item of expenditure that the Council makes is to support the Youth Club in Vigo. This is operated by the Gr@nd based at Gravesend. It is generally well attended. This year the facility is open to younger children.

We are grateful to County Councillor Bryan Sweetland for an extra contribution towards the youth club.

Last year I reported the plan for a footpath to be put through from the Paddock to the Harvel Road bus stop. This was completed earlier in the year and a new bus shelter was installed on the Harvel Road at the entrance to Timberbank.

Another way for the Council to support local groups and organisation is by a Grant in Aid. 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.

Not so good things:

As usual this year we have again suffered from incidents of vandalism. The bus shelter is still a common target. Making ruts in muddy ground is also still popular, but this year we have been fortunate in that the ground has not been so wet and so the damage to verges has perhaps been less. The reduction of damage has also been reduced in the areas where Paul Agley, our services contractor, has installed bollards and rustic fences.

As always we would ask residents to be vigilant and to report any incidents of vandalism that they observe to us and to notify the police on 101.

And so to plans for the future:

The Parish Council is planning to obtain more litter bins for the spine path and to install some benches there.

We are investigating purchasing a new CCTV system that will give increased coverage of the Bay and coverage of the Ball Park and possibly the car park.

We are also working on a project to increase the size of the young children's play park and to install some new equipment. This project will need us to obtain a grant as the funds required are much greater than can be managed from our Precept. We will keep you posted.

And finally, as usual I would like to mention some of the many other 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. She does 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 Agley, our services contractor, without whom the Village would not look nearly so good.

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.

Leslie 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 Cllr Colin Talboys reported the following:

Much of this annual tree report appears in previous reports mirroring the continual management process for trees.

One of the catalysts for setting up VPC 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.

I have been a Tree Warden for Vigo even before VPC when Vigo was part of Meopham PC. During the 30 years of my involvement, I have amassed a reasonable knowledge of Vigo's trees and their management. 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 about

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. Although we should never be complacent as storm Doris recently showed us.

Just a reminder it is 30 years since the storm of 87

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 were told to expect big problems with Chalara (Ash Dieback). 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 approx. 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 and 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 managed 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 Vigo Parish Council's Contractor on tree projects across the whole of Vigo including felling, crown lifting and reducing verge overhang along the bus route. Also several Birch trees shifted by storm Doris have been dealt with and a large dead Maiden Chestnut tree on the centre path has been felled to make safe

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 re-generation 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 (where safety permits) still standing in the woodland creates habitat niches that encourage wild life. 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.

Woods are living entities. They cannot be preserved as they are. They must be managed if they are to continue.

The nation's trees are a multiple-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 (CO₂).

Around 30% of the global landmass is forest cover. Some 13% of the UK is woodland (approximately 3 million hectares) of which around 1 million hectares is native woodland. Some 60% of Vigo is woodland.

6] Finance Report

AP06 Cllr John Goodban reported the following:

Our Parish Clerk, Jo Glass is the Responsible Finance Officer and again has managed the accounts very well. I am the Finance Councillor, who basically checks the accounts before they are audited at least every 6 months.

Please note the balance sheet supplied is only a draft copy still as it has not yet been approved by our auditor.

The grounds maintenance and grass accounts for about 50% of our overall expenditure and Paul Agle has again done a superb job..

The Balance Column shows the overspend in red and the underspend in black. Please look at the footnotes for further explanations.

However, some things to highlight:

The money set aside for the solicitor is there in case we need to seek legal advice and at the last resort take somebody to court. We have only had to pay £250 altogether this last year out of £2200 budgeted.

We have also been fortunate not to have to eat into our Emergency Tree Fund, but have been able to do all the routine tree work.

The play park has had money allocated to it as the fence needs repairing and we are looking into having new equipment. We are also pursuing a grant for this.

Other matters:

The Grant in Aid is there to support organisations. It is disappointing that organisations have not in the main come forward to seek financial help. So please spread the word that the council has a little money to donate, usually up to £250.

It must be noted again that we would be spending out considerably less if the mindless vandals stopped ruining our village. For example the ruts in the grass, litter, play equipment and graffiti. Please report any of this to the police on the 101 number.

However, to finish on a positive note, we have increased reserves to just over £35,000 and the council will consider spending some of this on a worthwhile project.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

Cllr White wondered if it would be possible to separately list any expenditure spent on vandalism repair, the Clerk would look into this for the current financial year.

[Action: Clerk]

7] Neighbourhood Plan Report

AP07 See Annual Report of the Parish Council. Cllr Talboys thanked Cllr Haslem for his tireless work on this project over the last three years. This was echoed by all present. Cllr Haslem thanked those that had also been involved, Councillors and local residents alike.

8] Report from County Council Representative

AP08 Cllr Sweetland had been County Councillor for the last four years. Cllr Sweetland noted that the Parish Council have done, and continue to do a great job. Cllr Sweetland hoped to continue as County Councillor after the May 4th Elections.

Cllr Sweetland had 6 Parish Councils in total, plus Istead Rise, in total around 16,500 residents.

Cllr Sweetland was responsible for securing around £100,000 of grant money which had been shared among the Parish Councils and Istead Rise area. Projects in Vigo included the Village Hall Kitchen, and funding for the local scout and youth groups. Money had been put into all Parish Halls over the 4-year period.

The road resurfacing in Vigo (Waterlow Road) was due to be finished this summer, third time lucky. Raised

kerbs had been installed at all bus stops, with a new bus shelter at the Timberbank entrance of Harvel Road. In other Highways news – 24,000 pot hole repairs had been carried out.

A new library was being built in Meopham, Cllr White had been a great help. It was hoped that the library would be open at the end of June / early July. Each year over 7.8 million library books were lent in the County. Kent Libraries were in the process of transferring to a Charitable Trust, meaning that business rates would no longer be payable.

The annual Council Tax budget was just under £1 billion. This year the Council Tax had increased by 2%, with some budget being ring fenced for Adult Social Services.

There had been around £80 million reduction from each annual budget over the last 6 years, giving a total of just under half a billion pounds cut.

Schools in the Borough continued to perform well, with a high percentage of them being rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

School Bus Passes continued to be subsidised – the Young Peoples Travel Pass price had increased, but was still a half price travel card, with 24,300 young people receiving the subsidy.

17 million free bus journeys had been taken by pensioners / the disabled. Money from the Government was not freely available, and these free bus journeys were heavily subsidised by Kent County Council.

Fly tipping was a frequent problem, despite large fines and penalties being issued – it was very difficult to catch the culprits. There were 18 recycling centres like Pepper Hill, with 3.5 million visits to the tip every year – but many were licenced for domestic waste only. Householders were encouraged to check that any contractors employed to remove waste had the correct licences / documentation, as they were equally responsible for ensuring that rubbish was disposed of correctly.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

Cllr White noted that the local Vigo Preschool was losing money every day due to KCC funding cuts. Cllr Sweetland understood the frustration regarding this, but the budgets were being cut at every level.

Mr Banks asked if the rural 306 / 308 bus service was subsidised by KCC. Cllr Sweetland did not think this was the case but would check. Cllr Sweetland thought the service was entirely commercial.

9] Report from Borough Council Representative

AP09 Cllr Boycott thanked the Parish Council for their continued support, stating that she very much enjoyed working with Council Members.

The new waste collection scheme would be rolled out from June this year. There were some complaints and concerns about this, but Cllr Boycott felt that the new bins would be of a help in areas where the bags were being ripped open regularly by wildlife.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

Mr Banks noted it was difficult to catch any trains from local stations as the bus service did not tie in with the train times, often resulting in almost an hour wait at the train station. If the times were more synched, it was thought that more people may use public transport – it was felt there was a need for more “joined up thinking”.

Cllr Goodban had concerns about the closure of a number of public conveniences in Gravesham. Cllr Talboys felt that Council Tax should be spent on front line services, which would include the provision of public toilets. Cllr Boycott noted that this matter was still being debated, but very tight finances meant that the situation was not likely to change. Cllr Talboys felt the provision of public toilets should be a higher priority than (for example) Christmas decorations. Cllr Boycott noted that much of the expense of Christmas was outsourced, but did agree to take Cllr Talboys comments back to GBC.

Cllr Germain was also concerned about this subject, the Clerk agreed to send a list of Public Convenience closures to Cllr Germain so that he could put in a formal complaint if he felt so minded.

[Action: Clerk]

10] Report from Local Community Wardens and PCSOs

AP10 Ms Cason reported the following:

I have tackled anti-social behaviour including speaking to youths and their parents on their behaviour and encouraged residents to report incidents to Kent Police. I also liaise with the Youth Worker about Anti-Social Behaviour to address/speak to the young people about their conduct.

I collate and report to Trading Standards and Kent Police.

I have also dealt with:

- Neighbour disputes
- Abandoned, irresponsible parking of vehicles
- Reporting off road motorbikes to Kent Police
- Nuisance, stray or lost dogs
- Dog fouling (delivering Parish Council leaflets)
- Graffiti and Fly Tipping

As a community warden, I regularly visit scam victims within the area, referred via trading standards and other partnership agencies. I have made many reassurance visits to individuals by request or self – generated resulting in giving advice and making referrals to many agencies to support them with benefit advice, adaptations, telecare systems and hospital transport. I have provided support and reassurance along with security advice to victims of crime.

I have promoted and taken part in the Keep Kent Clean Campaign at Trosley Country Park 4th March many local residents and their children attended which made this a successful litter pick. I am currently working with the Trosley Country Park event coordinator on their open day planned for the 26th July.

I will be arranging a Neighbourhood Watch Event for Vigo in the summer to promote the start-up of new watches.

I also attend the Dementia Forum meetings quarterly.

I would like to promote the following:

Dementia awareness week an event will be held at The Safeharbour Hub in Coldharbour Road, Northfleet on 17th May more information to follow shortly.

I support the memory café which is held every 3rd Tuesday of the month at St Johns Centre, I attend as and when duties allow, providing support and advice on any welfare or community issues.

11] Report from Village Bodies and Voluntary Organisations

AP11 VIGO VILLAGE HALL – a report from Alan White:

This ABRIDGED report relates to the Financial Year 1st October 2015 to 30th September 2016.

Chairman's Report

As urgency to provide additional storage space had been significantly reduced, the possibility of a hall extension has been put on the 'back-burner'.

The Electrical testing was completed and the electrical report had 30 to 40 items listed to look at. C2's needed to be addressed. The possible need for a new circuit board is under review.

Hall Manager's Report

Hallmark needs us to collect a considerable amount of paperwork and formal procedures. We are, though, slowly getting there. A Welcome Pack for committee members and new regular hall users is in preparation and, once this is in place, we can apply for the First Level of Hallmark. Three representatives from Vigo attended a local Hallmark training meeting and found it very interesting. We need to ready ourselves to now apply for the first stage.

Access to the roof. We have looked at a number of options to prevent/discourage youths from climbing onto the roof. We discussed the possibility of installing "triple rollers" on the adjacent wall, belonging to The Villager, but have decided to take no further immediate action, as there have been no problems recently.

Repairs and Maintenance.

New holders for paper-towels are now in place in the ladies and men's toilets, kitchen and that in the Disabled toilet will be fitted once the old paper has run out.

At times the Patio Area is severely flooded. It has been decided to renew/replace the soakaway (outside of the gates on Parish Land). As part of this we have renewed the ramp from the rear gate. Phil Littlely kindly cleaned the drain for us.

The walls and ceiling of the Small Hall have been decorated, by the combined efforts of several Committee members and their relatives.

Risk Assessment

The **Legionella & Water Hygiene** and **Fire Risk** assessments are all up to date and, following the sealing of all the flooring that has broken tiles, so is **General Health & Safety**.

Fundraising & Grant Applications

We have run two Quiz Nights, with John Prance, and there is another one this Saturday. A Music quiz, run by Paul Amura, was held at the Villager with proceeds going to the Hall. We have considered a number of other events, such as disco for Junior-age kids or perhaps a family roller disco and a New Year's Eve Party. The single prize for the **800 Club**, with the possibility of a Rollover, is working well. We have had several single and one double, rollovers.

Users

A number of our regular users have had to discontinue. Guides and Rainbows could not get the adult helpers/volunteers. For the same reason, the Sure Start toddler group was going to close but, with the support of Sue Marrable, from Sticky Fingers, it has managed to continue. The Irish Dance classes have also now finished.

Projects

Lights.

Having replaced the existing lights in all the Toilets (including the entrance lobbies), the three 'offices' and the under-stage area with Bulkhead LEDs we have completed the conversion to energy saving fittings. This appears to have reduced energy usage by 20%.

Kitchen Refurbishment.

We received several thousand pounds of funding from a combination of grants from GBC and KCC and also a donation from Howdens. Most of the work was completed over the holiday period, followed by tiling, painting and fitting a new extractor fan. Finally, we had brand Flooring Tiles from Amtico fitted, free of charge. Unfortunately, the worktop behind the sinks was not sealed properly and so is lifting.

Storage

We converted the Hall Manager's old office into additional storage space for Sticky Fingers and created a new Office in the 'waiting area'. The Stage and other areas previously used by them are looking much better Janet organised and undertook a review of the storage under the stage. This is much better but is still ongoing.

The project to reorganise the **Stage and Chairs** is continuing and we have a dedicated 'reserve fund' for this – the estimated costs is £3,100 plus VAT

For the future, we need to look into updating all the toilets, sorting out the heating, particularly in the Main Hall, and the possibility of a stair lift to the Small Hall.

AP12 VIGO VILLAGE JOURNAL – A report from Carol Cox (Editor):

The Vigo Journal is working smoothly at the moment, even after the printers we were using went into liquidation. I would like to thank all the contributors and advertisers for their continuing support.

AP13 VIGO YOUTH: Mr Henry Wiggins provided the following report:

At the moment the Youth Club in Vigo was in a transitional period, with many of the original members becoming adults and not attending anymore, and younger youths moving into the club.

There had been quite a high level of Anti-Social Behaviour at the end of 2016, beginning of 2017, but this seemed to have reduced.

There was a plan to take the members of the Youth Club on a trip to Thorpe Park at some point in the summer.

The small hall continued to be used for the club in the event of inclement weather.

Mr Wiggins encouraged people to phone or email him if there were any concerns / issues – contact details were available via the Parish Clerk.

Presently there were between 10 and 20 young people attending each week, aged between 12 and 16 years. There were more boys than girls in general. A diverse team of youth workers were available. Mr Wiggins felt the youths that attended were generally good, well behaved young people.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

Cllr White suggested that an advert be put in the Vigo Journal on a regular basis, to let people know where and when the Youth Club ran, encouraging local youths to attend. Mr Wiggins would liaise with the Clerk regarding this.

The Parish Council thanked Mr Wiggins for his continued support which was very much appreciated.

12] Parishioners Matters

AP14 None.

13] Any Other Business

AP15 None.

The Meeting Closed at 8.50 pm