

KINGSNORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the annual parish meeting held on Thursday, 11th May, 2006,
at Kingsnorth School Hall

PRESENT: Mrs. A. Hicks (Chairman); Dr. H. Moorby; Mr. G. Parr; Mrs. C. Vavasour; Mr. T. Horsman; Mrs. L. Ross; Mr. M. Ciccone; Cllr. J. Wedgbury (part of meeting); Cllr. M. Angell. Approximately 45 parishioners attended.

1. **Welcome and Apologies** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from: Mr. J. Debonnaire; Rev. S. McLachlan; Cllr. J. Davidson; Cllr. G. Weller; Cllr. R. Harrington; Cllr. P. Bartlett; Cllr. J. Holland. Cllr. Wedgbury apologised for arriving late.

2. **Guest Speakers**

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Sean Furey of the Environment Agency and Mr. Paul Kent of Southern Water to the meeting.

Mr. Furey spoke first. He has worked on the Ashford Integrated Water Management Study which was commissioned to assess and find solutions to the constraints to growth that will arise from the increased need for drinking water, provision of wastewater services, impact of treated effluent on rivers and management of flood risk. He also acts as liaison between the Environment Agency and the Ashford's Future organisation.

There are competing demands when considering the water cycle – ecological, industrial, agricultural, public use of water, flood prevention. There are 5 main watercourses flowing through Ashford: Great Stour; East Stour; Aylesford Stream; White Water Dyke, Ruckinge Dyke. Mr. Furey gave a brief outline of the hydrological cycle.

Preferred options to increase the supply of potable water include the building of a pipeline from Bewl Reservoir to Ashford and a possible new reservoir at Broad Oak, near Canterbury, although this is controversial and may not happen. Other, more expensive options include transfer of water from other areas and desalination. The Study also looked at water demand management, i.e. making new houses more water efficient and educating people about more sensible use of water.

Flood risk management was also considered during the Study as this is a big concern in the Ashford area. New developments could be built with much better drainage including sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), green roofs, swales, ponds, permeable paving, which would absorb water more like natural systems. There are already two flood storage reservoirs to hold water back in times of heavy rainfall. Flood risk and pollution need to be reduced.

The discharge of waste water was studied. The quality of water in the Stour has implications for wildlife. To protect it, the flow and water quality has to be right. River banks will need improvement, especially in town where concrete channels need to be replaced with more natural conditions. If more waste water is generated it will need to be treated to a higher standard before entering the Stour.

The strategy for the next 25 years to cope with the growth of Ashford without damage to the environment or increasing the flood risk will include trying to ensure that SUDS strategies are included in planning policy; encouraging developers to build more water-

efficient systems in new houses, including use of grey water; stricter drainage standards and regulations on people who discharge water or take it from the rivers; water meters and possible dual charging, i.e. making water more expensive to use in the summer. A willow coppice pilot study is already taking place which uses treated sewage. There are things that people can do personally to help, for instance storing water for garden use in water butts and putting a 'hippo' in toilet cisterns to reduce water used for flushing. There will be a Water Festival in Ashford on 27th May which is being organised by ABC, KCC, the Environment Agency and others to inform the public about water-related matters.

Mr. Paul Kent is Capital Maintenance Manager & Sludge Strategy Manager for Southern Water. Southern Water is studying what investment will be needed in the future to keep wastewater services in step with development. The proposed increase in housing and employment over the next 30 years will mean a 92% increase in the size of the Ashford urban area by 2031. Southern Water has to consider what facilities are really needed and whether they are the right size to cope with the increases in wastewater. SW is responsible for providing an adequate sewage system, sewage treatment and disposal of by-products, e.g. sludge to farmland.

Potential solutions include pumping all the sewage from Ashford to the existing Bybrook sewage treatment works. Alternatives to this would be to treat it locally using natural technology or new conventional treatment works. Discharges would be into the River Stour at Bybrook, wetland storage or to the sea.

Bybrook can be extended for use up to 2030. There will need to be more discharge to the River Stour but there is a limit to the improvements in water quality that can be made with current techniques. There are significant concerns about natural technology techniques; a system that works properly has yet to be found. Smaller systems work well but no larger ones have yet been tested in Europe. Willow/reed bed systems need a very large land area and may cause problems with odour and insects. A lot of research is needed before this is likely to become a practical solution. The sea is too far from Ashford for pumping via a pipeline to be economical and sustainable; it would be very costly in money and energy. Discharging more treated water into the Stour will exacerbate the existing problems at Bybrook.

In the immediate future to 2010 there are plans to upgrade the existing system to allow growth to happen. Additional processing capacity will be built at Bybrook. Plans for the extension of the sludge-producing processes have been with KCC Planning since Christmas. If these are approved soon, construction could start in 2007 and would be completed in 2008. The existing facilities for odour control will need to be improved.

From 2010 onwards there is room to add more treatment capacity to the system beside the existing one at Bybrook until 2015. The costs will be high: £35m for the 5 years to 2010 and many millions more after this.

There will be a lot more sewage to be pumped from the new developments in the south of Ashford to Bybrook. SW wants to avoid having to create an additional crossing of the CTRL because this is risky and very expensive. Instead they are proposing to put a new pumping station at Alsops Road. This will free up part of the existing system to take sewage from south to north and there will be no need for a new pipe under the CTRL. There will be a new pumping station and rising main at Cheeseman's Green. SW wants

to keep sewage from the new developments away from the existing Ashford urban area and will develop a trunk system around the edge of the catchment area.

A query was raised about possible natural technology treatment works behind Tally Ho Rd. Mr. Kent said that Southern Water wants to carry on doing what it has always done and continue to use conventional sewage treatment processes. Post-2031, Ashford is likely to keep on growing. Bybrook could continue to expand but the Stour may not be able to accept any more treated water or the water would have to be cleaner. The natural technology treatment had been suggested as a very long-term possibility. Alternatively, there could be a small, possibly conventional, sewage treatment works south of Ashford which would discharge into the River Beult. He gave a guarantee that any natural technology treatment would not in any case be introduced before 2031.

The problem of contamination due to the very low water flow in the Stour during the summer was raised. Mr. Furey said that the EA monitor the discharge consents to SW and can take legal action if these are breached. Mr. Kent said that discussions will take place to ensure that future investment in new systems will meet the criteria, but value for money for the customer will also be considered and controlled by the Economic Regulator. The existing system will have to meet tighter consents. If more water is entering the Stour from the treatment plant, then its quality will have to improve to prevent contamination. However, there is an economic break-point which will prevent effluent being improved to tapwater quality. Another process, a polishing plant, can be included between Bybrook and the river and cooling may also have to take place to lower the temperature of the water entering the river. They will also look at using water more than once. Southern Water will carry on working with other bodies on these matters to try and get the balance right.

Concerning a query on the amount of land Southern Water might need to acquire for future developments, Mr. Kent said that SW had no intention of acquiring any more land than they need to for the pumping station at Cheesemans Green. They want any treatment works to be in the 'middle of nowhere', but they don't control the development which may happen around it.

The effect of the new EU regulations was queried and what would be done to comply with these; they will include larger river flows and reduced pumping from ground water. With global warming bringing more rain in winter and less in summer, how would these regulations be complied with? Mr. Kent said there was not enough information on global warming to say that it was definitely happening. There had always been fluctuations in weather conditions. Industrial research is going on and SW will keep an eye on this. Concerning the EU Water Framework Directive, SW are not yet in a position to quantify all the issues as they relate to the local area but full-time research is going on about this which will lead to further investment.

Mr. Furey said that the EA was assuming that climate change is real and taking a precautionary approach, factoring in climate factors, e.g. adding 20% to peak flood flows, and advising planners and developers to be as careful as possible. Eco-friendly alternatives to act as 'polishing' treatments to improve already treated sewage were being researched, e.g. using reed and willow beds. Two pilot schemes are already in progress to see if this type of treatment is effective and how acceptable as a neighbour.

In the light of the current drought conditions, the future source of water was queried. It had been the lowest rainfall period for 60 or 70 years. More water had been transferred

from the Medway to Bewl Water during the winter and it was now almost 86% full. Over the next 25 years all sorts of ideas will be looked at, including towing icebergs! The most cost-effective ones have to be worked up into a priority list of options. The pipeline from Bewl Water to Ashford is the next move. Re-use of water is a possibility; a new reservoir at Canterbury may be built; desalination is also possible but uses lots of energy. Grey water re-use has been built into some new developments, e.g. Thames Gateway, but has not been entirely successful as residents tend to switch the system off.

The comment was made that the houses should be built in other areas where the water is. This was a matter for the Government. All the future investment in the water industry will come from customers. Mr. Kent said that Southern Water bills will go up 5% plus inflation each year for the next 5 years. There was a query whether boreholes could be replenished. This would not be possible as treated wastewater may contaminate the aquifer. Another question concerned whether Bewl Water would be overcommitted by building a pipeline to Ashford. Analysis has demonstrated that it would not be overstretched. The current conditions are exceptional. In an average year Bewl will fill up in the winter, discharge in summer and then refill again the following winter. Two consecutive, dry winters have resulted in the need for a top-up from the Medway. If it continues like this in the future, a re-think will be necessary.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Furey and Mr. Kent for coming to the meeting.

3. **Approve minutes of the last meeting**

It was proposed by GP, seconded by HM and agreed that the minutes of the last annual parish meeting held on 4th April 2005 should be approved as a true record.

4. **Matters arising from the last minutes** There were none.

5. **Chairman's annual report**

Copies of the Chairman's annual report were given to those present and a copy would be attached to the minutes.

6. **County Councillor's report**

Cllr. Mike Angell introduced himself to the meeting as the County Council member for Ashford Rural South, which covered 8 district wards and contained 4 schools and 7 parish councils. He had previously been County Councillor for Kennington. Since May last year he has been Chairman of KCC's Policy Overview Committee for Social Care. He has already been on the Special Education Committee for 7 years. Cllr. Angell is also the lead member for Adult Care Services, which was in the process of being completely modernised to give those in need of care more control over their own care packages and better access to KCC. Information on this was now available from the KCC website and included a self-assessment form and details of care providers in an on-line care directory. A direct payments card scheme had been developed. A certain amount of money would be allocated to the card as a result of assessment and this could be spent with any care provider.

In April, Cllr. Angell became a non-executive director on the Mental Health Board for the next 3 years. His local duties included being Chairman of the Youth Advisory Group, which was trying to find things for young people to do. Top of their shopping list is an ice rink but this would be very expensive. Cllr. Angell is Chairman of the Ashford Local Board, soon to be re-named the Local Joint Board as ABC is joining. Each County Cllr for the area currently has £10,000 a year to distribute to deserving causes. Among other

things, this fund has paid for 3 new picnic benches at Kingsnorth playing field. The Board can also distribute money from the Second Homes Fund and this will amount to £40,000 next year in Ashford.

The Highways situation is extremely difficult as not enough funding is being allocated to this from central Government. The Highway Authority have had to cancel the quiet surfacing for the M20. Cllr. Angell is campaigning for traffic lights for the Queen's Head crossroads and for interactive speed signs along Magpie Hall Rd.

There has been a lot of publicity recently about possible Primary School amalgamations and closures. There is a serious surplus of places as the birth rate had dropped so much. A lot of schools are now in the wrong place. The new Methodist/Anglican School in Cuckoo Lane will fill the gap and may impact on Kingsnorth School. Two schools on the same site in Stanhope may amalgamate. Hothfield may have to close. Mr. Neil Shorter, a Kingsnorth School governor, had been to a recent meeting about this. He said that there was a 9.3% surplus in places at the moment and this would rise to 11.5% with the opening of the new school. With the suggested amalgamations and closures, this would go back to 3.5%, but he was concerned that a reduction in the number of schools would result in not enough parental choice and people should make their views known on this. Cllr. Angell mentioned that another public concern was the traffic congestion outside schools. The practicality of operating a Speedwatch scheme in Magpie Hall Rd was queried. There were problems with this as not only did the equipment cost about £3,000 but volunteers were needed to run the scheme and people will not come forward because of the risk of confrontation with drivers.

The Chairman thanked Cllr. Angell for his contribution.

7. **Borough Councillors' reports**

The Chairman said that unfortunately, the date of the Kingsnorth APM had clashed with the Annual Borough Council meeting which meant that Kingsnorth's Borough Cllrs. could not attend. Cllr. Bartlett had written a report, copies of which were given to those present. Cllr. Davison had asked the Chairman to say on his behalf that he had been active in supporting the Parish Council on Highways and Planning matters. He had also been active in trying to protect the area from over-development by first having the original area reduced and secondly and currently having the remaining development put into phase 3 of the GADF plan, i.e. post 2021. This had been done in endless meetings and correspondence, often working with the Parish Council, adjoining parishes and other Borough Councillors. He had enjoyed the inclusive atmosphere of Kingsnorth Parish Council where working for the common good is obviously paramount.

Cllr. Wedgbury arrived for the final part of the meeting and drew everyone's attention to the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan. He urged people to read this and submit their comments as the outcome will affect all our lives.

8. **Parish business**

The Chairman asked if anyone had any other parish business to raise or wanted to suggest subjects that the Parish Council should consider in the forthcoming year. As no items were raised, she thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 9.05 pm.

Chairman

Report by Aline Hicks, Chairman, Kingsnorth Parish Council

At this time last year we were awaiting the option most favoured by the Borough Council for the development of Ashford. When the Core Strategy of Preferred Options was published we found that most of the intense development for Kingsnorth was planned for after 2031. Although in the period 2001-2011 there would be some development at the northern edge of the Discovery Park and northwards from the previous area to join up with Brisley Farm. The Parish Council responded that it was concerned with the flooding to the north of Magpie Hall Road and it was not suitable for housing.

Following the Preferred Options the Parish Council was approached by Mr. Jarvis, a builder, who did not agree with the Borough's proposals as he would like to develop his land much sooner. A public meeting was held at which Mr. Jarvis outlined his plans for the 600 acres controlled by his group. The Parish Council decided to seek the opinion of the residents most likely to be affected by the new proposal. A survey was organised on our behalf by the Borough Council's Electoral Office which showed overwhelmingly that the residents wanted to abide by the Core Strategy recommendations, i.e. not to permit development around Mill and Hill and the village until after 2021.

As many of you will have noticed the new roundabout being built on the A2070 will give access to the new development Park Farm South, which is based on the principles of the Poundbury experiment, and later to Park Farm East. Your Parish Council has continued to push for traffic calming measures along Bluebell Road and Church Hill and firmly believes there should be traffic lights at the bottom of Church Hill.

Due to very heavy wear last summer it was necessary to extensively repair the football pitch by laying new turf. Three new picnic tables were installed on the playing field with a grant from our County Councillor.

The application by Tesco's to enlarge their store was opposed by the Parish Council but so far no date has been given at which we can voice our objections to the Planning Committee.

Last summer there were reports of youths hanging around the car park at Tesco's and the Parish Council paid for the Outreach Youth Van to visit the youngsters. The van was manned by two youth workers and equipped with games and relevant information was given out.

A request from the children of Kingsnorth School Council resulted in two outdoor games tables being given to the School. I understand these are very well used at playtimes.

A piece of land at the bottom of Church Hill will shortly be made over to the Parish Council for the improvement of the village. This is likely to be a grassed area with a path joining the pavement on Mill Hill to the pavement on Church Hill. We are very grateful to Jarvis Homes for this generous gift. Your Parish Council proposes to erect a village sign at this site. (*Plans were displayed at the meeting.*)

During the year the Local Education Authority proposed that a chalet bungalow on Mill Hill should be turned into an educational establishment for an alternative curriculum for excluded pupils. I arranged for an informal meeting between the LEA and residents to discuss the proposal. The planning application was refused.

The next major project for your Parish Council is to install a second football pitch to the west of the pavilion. We are currently in discussions with ABC to lease the land.

As always the Parish Council would like to hear from residents of the parish, which includes Brisley Farm, Washford Farm, Westhawk, all of Park Farm, Stubbs Cross and the old village, about proposals they think we should pursue. We also now have a short period at the beginning of all monthly meetings at which you are invited to bring matters of concern to our attention.