

Kingston Village Action Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2 March 2021

- 1 Present, virtually:** Vicki Scott, Tim Ambrose, John Bewick, Steve Berry, Barrie Lambert, Rob Watson. **Apologies:** Dinah Morgan, Tony Wheeler.

Note – Chris Moulder from the KPC had been expected to attend but did not, possibly because computer problems meant that she had not received the invitation.

- 2 Minutes of the meeting** held on 19 January were agreed.

- 3 Matters arising**

3.1 Community Infrastructure Levy

Barrie had asked former KPC John Crabbe whether he still had any of the old papers relating to the second phase of traffic calming but had received no reply. John had written to Will Dorman about the more recent examination of the problem but he had not replied either. **Vicki would check Will's email address and confirm that to John.**

3.2 Energy and OVESCO

The specific suggestions for renewable energy projects submitted to the KPC following the OVESCO presentation to the Action Group and before the KPC's meeting on 11 November had not yet been discussed by the KPC. **John would raise this at the next KPC meeting.**

3.3 Ashcombe Lane Footway

As far as was known, there had been no reply from ESCC Highways on the question of who within ESH specifically was responsible for the upkeep of this Footway.

3.4 Saxondown Windfall

Villagers had been asked for suggestions about how to spend the £170,000 available but there was as yet no certainty about how the decision was to be made, nor when. Could villagers be asked to vote on a short list of projects selected by the KPC from those put forward by the community? Ideally, the matter might have been settled at a village meeting but this was not possible under the current circumstances. It was expected that the KPC would clarify its position at its next meeting. The Action Group also needed to be clearer about which of the many projects it had already put forward it favoured most highly. **This could be discussed at the next meeting.**

4 Finance

- 4.3 The balance in the Group's account according to the last bank statement dated 9 February was £622.95. Of this, a total of £178.21 was owed to Steve. This was made up of sums for the purchase last year of a grass rake (£28.99); and for recent purchases of snowdrop bulbs (£50, of the total of £116.51 spent); £25.91 (Jacksons Nurseries – hedgerow trees) and £73.31 (British Hardwood Tree Nursery – more trees). The available balance was therefore £444.74.
- 4.4 Monthly donations and income from the Lewes Lottery had increased slightly and were now running at an annual rate of £416, although there could be no guarantee that this would continue. Anticipated annual expenditure on fixed costs – rent for the former allotment site and insurance – would be around £170, suggesting a regular surplus of more than £200, with the caveat above. The first payment for the rent was due in April.

5 Community Garden

- 5.3 Some 40 hedgerow trees had been planted adjoining the new post and rail fence erected by LDC contractors last year.
- 5.4 Details were now available for the new South Downs National Park Authority grant schemes and Steve had had preliminary discussions about these with Mark Rose of the South Downs Trust who would be administering the schemes. Following up his suggestion, Steve had also met – on the former allotment site – Jan Knowlson, the SDNP Ranger for our area. Both Jan and Mark had made very positive comments about the Community Garden project and it appeared that the prospects of the Group receiving some help from the Sustainable Communities Fund were more than reasonable, although no formal application could be made yet. However, the Action Group would need to supply 25% of the total project costs itself in cash and the outcome of any application would therefore have to rely heavily on fund raising or getting support from the KPC.
- 5.5 In the meantime, Steve had applied to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for a grant of approximately £1000. The outcome of this application would be known at the beginning of April. If we were successful, the money would be spent on greenhouse staging, garden tools, seeds and plants. Even with the full amount sought from this source, however, other money to advance the project would have to be found, particularly for capital elements including the planned shelter.
- 5.6 Steve was also looking at the possibility of an application to the Chalk Cliff Trust.
- 5.7 We had still been unable to erect either the greenhouse or the shed because of Covid-related restrictions but it was hoped that some progress would be possible in April.

John had offered to oversee the construction of a firm base for the greenhouse and would let Steve know the quantities of the materials needed.

- 5.8 Just hours before this meeting had begun, there had been an e-mail from Lewes District Council, though from Paul Boyce rather than Andy Frost. The gate which was originally to have been installed in January would be fitted “within the next few weeks”. This e-mail also reported that fencing had been left on the site for us to erect ourselves. There was still, however, no news about the definition of the remaining boundaries and it was agreed that Tim should ask our District Councillor to see if he could assist with this long-running issue.
- 5.9 Steve had not yet ordered fruit trees and it was thought wisest now to delay the purchase until the autumn to minimise any risk of them suffering through drought. Trees might also impede the construction of the shelter. It was, however, still safe to plant whips for another month or so and it was agreed that he should order more to the value of around £100.
- 5.10 It was agreed that we should try for a bespoke shelter rather than buy one off the shelf. Vicki would ask Dinah whether she had contacted the builder whom she knew in Kingstonridge. Tom Fry could also be asked as could other local builders but we would need at least a sketch for them to work on. Dinah might be able to provide this.
- 5.11 It was agreed that in the next bulletin that Steve would write to all those who had expressed an interest, there would be a summary of the development in thinking that had taken place since the autumn. At that time, the Group had considered the best use of the site would be as a community allotment. Now, the clear goal was a community garden.

6 KPC Update

6.1 Environmental Policy

The Action Plan associated with the Environment Policy had been sent to the Action Group for comment. The overall view of Group members was that there needed to be clear targets and some form of annual accounting to the village on what progress had been made and what was planned for the future.

The KPC had identified two issues of particular interest to the AG and suggested that Group members might like to be involved in:

- exploring the development of green corridors through the village; and
- developing an action plan for footpaths and cycle ways.

The Group welcomed this invitation. Tim would lead on the first issue and Barrie on the second. In each instance it was agreed that the work should begin with an audit of existing assets followed by a consideration of how to enhance them.

6.2 Planning

There had been a complaint that aspects of the construction of the new house being built on Farthings at the junction of “Bumpy Lane” and Ashcombe Lane were in contravention of clauses in the planning consent.

6.3 Saxondown Development

Despite the best efforts of the KPC and the developers to ensure that clear signs directed construction traffic away from The Avenue and Church Lane, one or more irresponsible individuals continued to frustrate these by removing signs.

6.4 Speed sensors

These had still not been received. Parts of the fixing posts had been sent but missing items had been re-ordered.

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Bulb Planting

7.1 Around 500 snowdrop bulbs had been planted in verges in The Avenue. One resident had been so pleased that she donated £20 for more bulbs.

7.2 After protracted correspondence with ESCC it had been established that planting bulbs on verges on the estate was permissible provided that “cultivation licences” were first obtained in respect of each street to be planted. This meant that just five licences would be needed rather than the 34 suggested at one point. The agreement of each householder affected was also necessary.

7.3 At least 20 villagers had expressed their appreciation of the snowdrops and crocuses planted in the village this year and earlier on. Several had suggested to the KPC that it consider funding further bulb planting as one of the capital projects to be financed from the Saxondown Farm development money. However, they had each been told that the planting of bulbs did not constitute a capital project. The Clerk had since been asked where the restriction on funding capital projects originated, what the guidance actually said and whether there was any flexibility in interpreting this. It was noted that the definition of a capital project was complex and varied from one local authority to another but it was clear that there was no common understanding among villagers about what was meant in this case.

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Next Meeting

This would be at 5-00 pm on Tuesday 13 April.