

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF LEEDS PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Held in Leeds Village Hall on Tuesday 14th January 2014 at 7.30pm.**

Present: Mrs Fort  
Mr China  
Mr Gallihawk  
Mr Govett  
Mr Springford  
Mrs Young

In attendance: Mrs Sherrie Babington – Clerk, KCC Councillor Gary Cooke, MBC Councillor Parvin, Police Sergeant Beven, KCC Officer Katie Lewis and members of the public.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Fort.

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting, she stated that the agenda would be shortened in light of the recent highways problems in the parish to allow Kent County Council Officers to report on the current situation.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Wallace.

**2. Declaration of Interest.**

No interests were declared.

**3. Kent Police (Volunteer Special Constable for Leeds Village)**

CLlr Govett spoke regarding Kent Police and the needs to have enforcement as a long term solution to the problems of HGVs in the village and that enforcement was key to every solution.

He introduced Police Sgt Neil Bevan to the meeting and stated that he had attended the meeting to speak regarding the role of a volunteer Special Constable and the process by which the appointment is made.

CLlr Govett stated that a Special Constable had the same powers as a full-time Police Constable, and with a reduced weight limit in the parish; enforcement was needed in order for this to be a success. Given that even now HGVs over 17T were coming through the village and little or no enforcement was being done by the Police.

He reported that the Parish Council does have powers to finance the appointment and the training of a volunteer Special Constable, this could cost in the region of up to £10,000 and he informed all present that the finance of this would be an item for discussion later in the meeting.

CLlr Govett welcomed Sgt Beven to the meeting and invited him to speak.

Sgt Beven passed on the apologies of Inspector Thompson who was originally going to attend the meeting. (Inspector Guy Thompson had been taken ill and Sgt Beven had stood in).

He spoke regarding the role of a Volunteer Special Constable within the local community, he confirmed that the office of Special Constable had the same full powers as a Police Constable with powers to prosecute and issue fixed penalty notices or impound foreign lorries who broke the law.

He stated that they had different powers to that of a PCSO (these have very limited powers).

Sgt Beven explained that a Special Constable was a volunteer within the local community who was able to work a minimum of four hours a week (16 hours a month); however this could vary according to the personal commitments of the appointment and was seen as a minimum.

He spoke regarding the Lorry Watch Scheme that was undertaken within the parish and the attendance of the PCSO at Parish meetings. He stated that the Parish Council concerns regarding these would be fed back to Police Head Office.

A resident questioned whether a Special Constable would be called away from the parish to other priorities within the area and he asked if the police were bringing back the role of the old Parish Constable.

Sgt Bevan stated that there was a small danger that a Special Constable would be called away to other priorities; however they would try to limit this from happening.

A resident spoke regarding recent press reports concerning the loss of 100 police officers within the police force. He raised concerns that the cost of funding a Special Constable from the Parish precept could result in the parish funding the police force.

A general discussion took place concerning this matter and residents stated that they wished to see measures being taken to reduce the number of vehicles and HGV lorries within the parish.

Cllr Govett stated that the Parish Council was proposing to do something which was within its own control. He stated that this was an opportunity for the Parish Council to take action regarding the enforcement against HGVs travelling through the village that broke the law. He reiterated that the Parish Council was looking for a long-term solution and that every option available was open for debate.

A resident asked about the risk of the Parish Council investing up to £10,000 on the training for a volunteer Special Constable(s) and them resigning from the role within a month.

Cllr Govett stated that this was a risk that the Parish Council would take; he clarified that the funding for the training would be financed from the Parish Councils existing reserves.

A resident spoke regarding the route that HGVs took through the village and questioned why they were not using Willington Street.

Cllr Govett stated that it was KCC policy to have HGVs routed via Willington Street and not Leeds village as Willington Street was the KCC designated HGV route. (Cllr Cooke from KCC confirmed this.)

A discussion took place regarding the criteria for having a camera in the village. Councillor Govett stated that this was a matter for discussion later in the meeting.

He thanked Sgt Beven for attending the meeting.

**4. Update of appointment of Peter Brett Associates for Leeds PC Highways Review: John Govett.**

Cllr Govett spoke regarding the appointment of Peter Brett Associates. He stated that the Parish Council had approved the finance for this appointment at its previous meeting in December and the aim was to seek independent advice on highway matters and seek a scoping exercise to see what options the Parish has going forward.

He confirmed a clear brief would be given to them following this evening's meeting.

**5. Report on B2163 Meeting held with KCC on 10th of January: John Govett.**

Cllr Govett reported on a letter sent by the Parish Council to John Burr, Director of Kent County Council Highways and the response received to this by him and the meeting that he, Cllr Fort and Gary Heard (Peter Brett Associates) attended the previous Friday at KCC offices with John Burr, Cllr Cooke, Tim Read (Head of Highways) and other KCC officers.

Copies of both items of correspondence were circulated to all in attendance at the meeting.

*NOTE: Jon Burr's letter in response was shared at the start of the meeting and therefore did not reflect fully the positive discussions that then took place at that meeting.*

Cllr Govett explained the key reason for the meeting with KCC and the aim to establish a long term solution to the problems, he stated that the Parish Council had asked KCC to consider investigating whether there were further voids along the B2163 throughout Leeds village and confirmed that he & Cllr Fort had received reassurances from John Burr at the meeting that the road would not be reopened until it was completely safe.

He stated that the Parish Council had asked for the weight limit to be reduced from 17.5 tonnes to 7.5 tonnes before it was reopened, however John Burr had stated that this was unlikely to happen as a Traffic Regulation Order was needed.

Cllr Govett confirmed that Peter Brett Associates had been asked to liaise with KCC to establish what data was available to support the 7.5 tonne weight limit. He stated that the data collected from the Lorry Watch would also be used to support this. He informed the meeting that there would also be a consultation period for both the public and other neighbouring parish councils.

Cllr Govett stated that advice was also being sought from Peter Brett Associates regarding other options for the enforcement of the weight limit, such as fixed cameras with weight triggers etc.

He stated that the declassification of the B2163 was a longer term scenario and the Parish Council needed to explore the benefits and disadvantages of this.

He stated that Peter Brett Associates would be asked to advise on the possibilities of declassification.

Cllr Govett explained the need for the Parish Council to liaise with Kent Highways regarding the progress of the works; he stated that he felt the view of Kent County Councillor Gary Cooke to be balanced when dealing with both the Parish Council and Kent County Council and thanked Cllr Cooke.

**6. Report from KCC on B2163 (short-term and long-term solutions): Gary Cooke and KCC Officers.**

KCC Cllr Gary Cooke spoke to the public and gave an update on matters.

He stated the role of KCC was not to enforce signage on the B2163 but to maintain the public highway.

He stated that following the meeting with Cllr Govett and Cllr Fort, the KCC had now agreed to undertake a ground radar survey to ensure that further voids were not present along the B2163 road throughout Leeds village.

Cllr Cooke stated that he was in support of the Bypass but not on its current route.

He stated that the two issues being looked at present were:

1. The hole in the road and getting this fixed.

2. The longer term issues of HGVs and the weight limits.

Cllr Cook stated that he had submitted an application from his Highways Fund to commence the work on the weight restriction to 7.5T. He stated that they were going to use Lorry Watch data to support this.

He confirmed that a consultation process would take place for the weight restriction; however this would take place when the road had reopened.

He stated that it was anticipated that the weight limit would be in place by the summer and this would be a 7.5 tonne restriction with exemptions i.e. access and public transport.

Residents asked about the speeding through the village and stated that the current 20 mph speed limit in the village was not enforced either. Cllr Cooke stated that this, again came back to police enforcement issues which were not the responsibility of KCC.

A general discussion took place regarding the need for enforcement and the problems with speeding cars and over-weight HGVs in the parish.

Councillor Cook and KCC Officer Katie Lewis gave a slideshow presentation and a progress report on the repairs being undertaken to the B2163.

Cllr Cooke reported that the timeframes for the reopening of the B2163 was by the end of March at the earliest, possibly May or longer. He confirmed that when opened it would be one lane traffic only, with lights in operation. He reiterated that the road would not be reopened until it was safe to do so. He stated that the footpath would remain closed for the next 8 weeks and the reopening of this was being treated as a priority.

A general question and answer session took place with residents.

**8. Report from MBC Councillor Peter Parvin**

Borough Councillor Peter Parvin spoke regarding the problems in the parish  
He spoke regarding the weight limit and the history of this.

A general discussion took place regarding a Bypass and the finance of this.

**9. Financial and Precept Considerations by the Parish Council.**

Cllr Govett stated that the Parish Council was proposing to utilise its reserves up to £10,000 to finance the appointment, uniform, mobility and training of up to Special Police Constable(s) to work for Kent Police and with a focus on the Parish of Leeds.

Cllr Govett asked for a show of hands from the public before the Parish Council itself voted and of the c 100 Leeds residents who attended the meeting to begin with, the vast majority who were still present at the vote, voting firstly for and then those against the spend of up to £10,000 on the appointment of Special Constable(s) for Leeds, from reserves.

The public voted over-whelmingly in favour of this proposal.

This proposal was then put forward by Cllr Govett, seconded by Cllr Young and agreed by all Parish Councillors present at the meeting.

***The Chairman thanked all present for attending the meeting and closed this at 9:48 PM***

***Signed*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Dated*** \_\_\_\_\_