

**Minutes of the Kennington Community Forum Extraordinary General Meeting
held on Tuesday, 28 November 2017 at 7.30pm at
St. Mary's Community Centre, Rylands Road, Kennington, TN24 9LL**

Present: Core Group members: Tony Bartlett (Chair), Sandra Dunn (Secretary),
Derek Standing.

Members of the community: John Baker, DJ Bellwood, Bill Clark, Carole Cole, Jenny Flaherty,
Michael Foister, Paul Graham, Cliff Grieve, Cyril Marsh, Chris Morley, Ian Milbery,
Mike Paddy, Mr & Mrs Setek, Graham Skinner, Geoff Stanborough.

Councillors Andrew Buchanan (ABC: Bybrook), Simon Howard-Smith (ABC: Bockhanger) and
Clair Bell (KCC: Ashford Rural East), Michelle Byrne (ABC Funding and Partnerships Officer),

1. **Tony Bartlett welcomed everyone to the meeting.**
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Paul Bartlett, Charlie Simkins, Graham Galpin and Phil Sims, Chris Woolgar,
Chris Jackson, Helen Brown, Lee Robinson.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 26 September 2017.** Graham Skinner proposed that they were a
true record of events. This was seconded by Derek Standing and carried. Matters arising: None
4. **Proposal to dissolve Kennington Community Forum on 31 March 2018 as recommended by the
Core Group at a meeting held on 21 November 2017, and dispersal of funds.**

4.1. Tony Bartlett explained the situation:

“On 20 March 2002 Ashford Borough Council’s Executive Committee agreed to establish
community forums in the urban areas of Ashford. The aim being to give town centre
residents a similar structure to that enjoyed by their rural neighbours. One in which they
could formally express their views and ideas on important issues, and take forward
community projects benefiting their area.

There are five urban community forums and KCF is one. Each of the five set themselves up
with similar but in some respects different governance organisations to reflect their
particular community needs. They have over the 15 years of their existence both thrived,
declined and sometimes re-invented themselves.

In 2014, in response to public pressure ABC agreed to undertake a governance review to
look at the future of these forums and the appetite to take them to the next stage and
become community or parish councils.

Following referendums in each of the five forum areas, two, Kennington and South
Willesborough and New Town (SWAN), voted by small majorities to become councils. A
decision adopted by ABC in its Governance Review report.

This decision inevitably, and necessarily, leads to the meeting we are having tonight as the
outcome is that at the elections in May 2019 Kennington will elect 16 councillors to provide

the community with a new statutory level of local government to give them a stronger, more powerful voice than that previously provided by this Forum.

Whilst May 2019 may seem a long way distant it is a short timescale in the evolution of new governance structures and processes.

The first step will be the formation of a so-called shadow council in early 2018 and the expectation is that the Forum will play a part in that.

But before we talk of the future let's reflect on the very considerable success this Forum has presided over during the last fifteen years or so.

But first a health warning – although I have been involved with the growth of Ashford since it was established as a Sustainable Community in 2005 and the advent of Ashford's Future, I have only been a member of this forum for about four years and your Chair for four months, so I am relying on the memories of others in this look back over the years. So apologies if we miss something you were engaged with in the Community.

Ashford development

We have engaged with and formally responded to, Ashford Borough Council's consultations on the Core Strategy 2008, the Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan in 2012, and of course the new emerging Local Plan to 2030, including providing two community consultation events.

More recently we campaigned against the latest threat of 650 new houses OUTSIDE the draft Local Plan.

Bockhanger Community Centre

We helped stop ABC from disposing of Bockhanger Community Centre
Facilitated the stakeholder group to identify other options and gain community engagement to give the Centre a second chance.

Spearpoint Sports & Recreation Ground

Replace pavilion: participated in the ABC stakeholder group on design of a replacement Spearpoint Pavilion, raising initial funds (from community and from member grants) to enable ABC to start design and secure other grants

Trim Trail: funding and organising the design provision and delivery of Spearpoint Trim Trail

Environment

The Forum obtained funding through members' grants for some raised allotment beds for the Flats in Bybrook Road as well as helping fund some of the Little Burton Environmental Projects. We also helped with the establishment of a village green on the corner of Beecholme Drive and Grasmere Road.

We proudly led the Restoration of the Kennington Garden of Remembrance and Memorial Shelter

We assisted in forming and starting the Friends of Bybrook Nature Reserve and participated in the stakeholder group for the design of the Conningbrook Lakes Country Park

Health

We represented our community on the NHS Health Network for Ashford (North)

Events

We supported and latterly managing the Kennington Summer Fair

Communication

Originally publishing a Community newsletter we more ambitiously undertook to produce the Kennington News which was delivered free to nearly all 4000 households

Our Open meetings were regular shop windows for local charities to come and present on their activities and invite help with their fund raising.

Parishing

Finally we successfully campaigned (from 2006) to achieve a Community Council for Kennington, the Parish Council which will be in place from May 2019

An enviable record and a hard act for our new parish council to follow. But I am sure the residents of the wider Kennington area will come forward to make the new era of governance a similar success.

So what happens with the KCF next?

As many of you know the last two years have been difficult particularly with the number of Core Group members we have lost through members moving away, job pressures, personal pressures and family ill health.

As a result our Core Group has now fallen to four in number. Despite our efforts to recruit both at and after the AGM, our net gain since then has been ZERO.

As the number we MUST have to make any meeting Quorate, or legal, is four it means NONE of us can EVER be away for any reason when we need to hold a meeting. No way to run a sustainable organisation.

Knowing the Forum will, by necessity, end sometime before May 2019 the Core Group has decided to face the inevitable. So in accordance with the Forum Constitution they have set a date for the end of the Forum that will enable them to work towards it in a controlled, professional and cost effective manner. **That date is 31st March 2018**

This will give us time to work out how to support the Summer Fair, how best to distribute the MAXIMUM amount of our funds to local charities without wasting money on

unnecessary administration and enable those who wish to work with ABC to help form and participate in the shadow parish council to do so.

To facilitate this I hereby give my notice to resign from the KCF Core Group effective 31st March 2018. Tony then explained that although he would continue as Chair until that date his resignation was necessary under the KCF constitution to end the Core Group and then make the winding up of the Forum possible.

5. Ashford Borough Councillors' plans for a shadow parish council

- 5.1. Although it is not her department but as its new head has only been in post for one week Michelle Byrne gave a brief, but understandably limited, overview of what will happen next.
- 5.2. The new Head of Legal and Democracy, Vivien Williams, is looking at how to facilitate the shadow council. In January 2018 she will start to identify people who would like to be on the shadow council.
- 5.3. It will then be put in place but will have no statutory powers and have no legal entities. It will look into issues such as finding premises from which to operate, and the costs involved, including premises costs, insurance, clerk's salary, etc. It would also consider policies and procedures, set a code of conduct and look into issues such as a website and logo and consider which community assets the parish council would like to take over. Residents may be consulted over which issues they would like to see pursued. The shadow parish council would also consider the budget that would be required and the precept that would be needed to finance it.
- 5.4. If you would like to be a member of the shadow council please contact the Chair, Tony Bartlett or the Secretary, Sandra Dunn. Tony Bartlett said that he would be willing to meet up with anyone who would like to be involved.

6. Any other business:

- 6.1. John Baker proposed a vote of thanks to the Core Group for their efforts and achievements over the years.
- 6.2. There was a discussion about means of publicising the shadow parish council and its need for members. Also no-one outside the meeting will know about the closure of the forum. It is no longer possible to produce the Kennington News as the current editor is not in a position to produce it, and the last edition made a loss of £300 because of difficulties in obtaining advertising. Cllr Bell suggested that it might be possible for Ashford Borough Council to produce a leaflet that could be distributed with the council tax bill. She asked Michelle to look into the possibility.

Post meeting note: as a result of the discussion under Item 6.2 at the meeting, the Core Group issued the following Press Release publicising the Dissolution of the Forum from 31st March 2018.

Dissolution of Kennington Community Forum

At a well-attended Extraordinary General Meeting of the Kennington Community Forum held on 28th November its Chair, Tony Bartlett announced his resignation with effect from 31st March 2018.

He stressed the end of the Forum was a direct result of the majority vote in the 2015 local referendum to seek to replace the Forum with a Parish Council. He clarified that, whilst he would continue as Chair of the Forum until March 2018, under the KCF Constitution his action was necessary for its formal dissolution on the date agreed by the Core Group. This is in readiness for the creation of the new “shadow” parish council on 31st May 2018.

He said the four months to dissolution would enable the Core group to effect an orderly wind-down of the Forum’s affairs and responsibly distribute its remaining funds to local charities.

In making his announcement he reflected on the successful contributions the Forum had made to the community in its fifteen year history and expressed his confidence that the new Parish Council would continue this good work.

He concluded by thanking the previous Forum Chairs and Core Group members for their dedication and efforts and the wider community for their support and encouragement.

The evening ended with a brief presentation from Ashford Borough Council on the next steps in the parishing process due to end with the election of the new Parish Council in May 2019.

END