

BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 13th February 2014
In the committee room of Boughton Monchelsea Village Hall pursuant to notice,
commencing at 7.30pm**

Present:

Cllrs S. Munford (Chairman)
 I. Ellis
 J. Gershon
 P. Herrin
 D. Smith
 S. Evans
 B. Brown
 A. Whybrow
 C. Bracking
 L. Date
 M. Bray

Parish Clerk

1. **Apologies:**
 Apologies were received from Cllrs Clarke and Williams.
2. **Notification of late items for inclusion on the agenda**
 No late items
3. **Standing Order 61: To decide whether the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for any item.**
 No excluded items.
4. **Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda / Declaration of Changes to the Register of Interests / Requests for Dispensations :**
 None
5. **Items for Discussion:**
 - 5.1 Parkwood Farm reservoir / flooding :
 Cllr Munford stated that the purpose of the meeting was to update members on the current situation and the events of the last two months. He noted that the Parish Council were being advised that we are the statutory undertaker of Parkwood Farm reservoir, in line with the Reservoirs Act 1975. He clarified that the Parish Council had not constructed the reservoir but had put in a controlled sluice gate on an existing reservoir.

Cllr Munford noted that heavy rain had occurred on 23rd December 2013 and soon after this the swallow hole at the end of The Quarries filled with water and was on the point of overflowing. The Parish Council then operated the sluice gate so that water would enter the flood plain as designed by Black & Veatch. Water was controlled like this for a period of time, thus preventing it from reaching The

Quarries. The rain continued over a significant period and the flood plain became full. Water was then controlled for a further period of time using tankers provided by KCC. This enabled the water level in the flood plain to be reduced to well below the overflow level. At the beginning of January 2014 however, the flood plain filled up completely again over the course of one night. The provision of tankers by KCC was not reliable and the Parish Council were forced to hire tankers to work in conjunction with them. At all times the Parish Council has been operating the sluice in line with the operating instructions advised by the Panel Engineer from Black & Veatch.

In early January the Panel Engineer visited site and observed water seeping from behind the reservoir embankment and wrote a report to the Parish Council saying that he could no longer be sure of the integrity of the dam and that the Parish Council were to reduce the water level by one metre, 'without flooding properties in The Quarries'. A multi-agency response followed, commanded by the Police and involving the Environment Agency and Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS). This response was escalated to 'silver' level and Cllrs Munford and Herrin were invited to attend a conference call and a meeting on 11th February. The silver response took it upon themselves to reduce the water level in the reservoir by one metre. As such, KFRS have been stationed in Brishing Road, pumping water from the reservoir to the storm drains in Parkwood.

Cllrs Munford and Herrin were visiting the reservoir on 12th February and chanced upon a site meeting with the Police and others. They were told that the situation had been escalated to 'gold' level and that the gold commander had decided the KFRS pumping would continue and that reports were required from the Panel Engineer. A further gold level meeting took place on the morning of 13th February at which problems with the River Len were discussed, i.e. that critical footpaths adjacent to the river were being flooded and that further pumping from the reservoir into the storm drains at Parkwood could not continue. The gold commander had therefore decided that controlled flooding of the road in The Quarries should take place and that a breach analysis inundation mapping report should be carried out by the Panel Engineer.

The Panel Engineer had convinced the Environment Agency on 13th February that there was, in fact, no need to endanger property by flooding The Quarries. Cllr Munford advised that the Parish Council, as operator of the reservoir, have to provide a second opinion on this to the Environment Agency. The latest advice from the Parish Council's Panel Engineer, following his consultation with another Panel Engineer, is that he may have been over-cautious in his original requirement and that it may not be necessary after all to reduce the water level by 1m. The Panel Engineer along with the second Panel Engineer will inspect the dam again on 14th February and this will be followed by a gold level meeting later that morning.

Cllr Munford noted that the Police had knocked on every door in The Quarries on 13th February and told residents that there was no intention at present to release any more water and that the situation shouldn't get any worse but to be aware that flooding could occur.

Cllr Munford noted that there had been no flooding at all in The Maltings throughout the last two months.

It was noted that the options were as follows :

- Reduce the water level in the reservoir by pumping into storm drains until such a time as the River Len becomes jeopardised
- Look into pumping water to the south rather than the north
- Release water from the reservoir into Quarry Wood

Cllr Munford requested delegated powers to spend up to £10,000 on pumping. Proposed by Cllr Ellis, seconded by Cllr Smith and agreed by all members.

Cllr Munford noted that the gold commander has emergency powers to request reports and that the Parish Council, as operator of the reservoir, has to provide these. He added that the 1975 Reservoir Act allows the reservoir to 'mature' and that one report would have had to be provided anyway. A second report would be required however and Cllr Munford requested delegated powers to instruct Black & Veatch to produce a Flood Impact Assessment and obtain a second opinion from another Panel Engineer at a cost of up to £3500. Proposed by Cllr Ellis, seconded by Cllr Smith and agreed by all members.

Cllr Munford advised that at no point have the Parish Council been asked for authority for the work carried out by the Police, KCC and KFRS.

Cllr Munford requested assistance from Councillors in the event that The Quarries does become flooded. Cllr Whybrow agreed to assist with catering if necessary and Cllr Bray and the clerk would be available to open the village hall if required. A telephone message tree would also be put in place with Cllr Munford at the top, followed by Cllrs Gershon and Date and cascading down to other Councillors from there.

It was agreed that Cllrs Munford and Herrin would continue liaising with the authorities.

6. Any Other Business

None

Meeting closed at 8.20pm