

Meopham Parish Council

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Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 18th April 2023 at 7:00pm at Meopham Village Hall

Members Present:

Cllr D Bramer
Cllr M Bramer
Cllr S Buchanan – Chairman
Cllr G Green – Vice-Chairman
Cllr J McTavish
Cllr J Ogden DL
Cllr D Sims (**arrived at 7:29pm**)
Cllr C Price
Cllr B Wade

In Attendance:

S Fishenden – Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
C Collings – Assistant Clerk
Cllr F Wardle – Borough Councillor

Item 1: **Apologies for Absence: To receive and accept apologies**

F.C. 434 Apologies were accepted from Cllr S Gofton (prior commitment)

Item 2: **Declarations of Members' Interests: To receive declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests**

F.C. 435 Cllr Green and Cllr M Bramer declared a non-pecuniary interest in any item relating to Meopham Windmill Trust

Item 3: **To approve minutes of the previous meeting: 21.03.23**

F.C. 436 The minutes of the meeting held on 21.03.23 were approved.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Price. All in favour.

F.C. 437 Cllr M Bramer made enquiries about the following matters:

- To clarify whether the services of MI Payroll & Book-keeping had been dispensed with; the Clerk confirmed it had.
- To clarify whether a new payroll company had been instructed; the Clerk confirmed DM Payroll Services had been appointed
- To enquire when the Men's Shed survey would appear on the agenda; the Clerk confirmed he had met with Cllr McTavish to discuss a draft survey and it would appear on the agenda for the next meeting.
- To enquire whether a reply had been received from Meopham Colts; the Clerk and Cllr Ogden CL confirmed they hadn't received anything.

Item 4: **Public Session & External Reports**

4.1 Public Session

F.C. 437 There were no members of the public present.

4.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

F.C. 438 Cllr F Wardle reported that he had been contacted by a resident in Edmund Close, regarding the trees on Edmund Green.

The Parish Council confirmed the tree issues has been a long-standing issue, and that it was awaiting advice from the arboricultural consultant on whether any proposed works would cause damage to the trees.

Cllr Wardle also stated he would be running a further Speedwatch session at Longfield Road.

4.3 PCSO and Community Warden

F.C. 439 There was no PCSO or Community Warden present.

4.4 Co-op Member Pioneer

F.C. 440 The Clerk provided a verbal report on behalf of the Member Pioneer; G Duffort in his absence:

- Mr Duffort would be attending the May Fayre Parade to provide support
- The Co-op Local Community Fund would be open for applications soon; this can be publicised to community groups and MPC would likely apply for funding for a defibrillator at Southfield Shaw.

F.C. 441 The Chairman then PROPOSED that Item 15 be brought forward into open session and considered as Item 5, with all the subsequent agenda items re-numbered. SECONDED: Cllr Price.

Seven votes in favour and two abstentions. The motion was carried.

Item 5: Personnel Committee

5.1 Minutes of Personnel Committee: To note the minutes of the meetings held on 27.03.23 and 11.04.23

F.C. 442 The minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 27.03.23 and 11.04.23 were noted.

5.2 Recommendations – Social Media & Communications Officer: To consider the recommendation from the Committee on the Social Media and Communications role

F.C. 443 It was agreed to accept the recommendation of delegating to the Clerk the power to utilise the services of a freelance social media agency on an ad hoc basis as and when required.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Price. All in favour.

5.3 Recommendations – Assistant Clerk: To consider the recommendation from Personnel to rename the Assistant Clerk role to Deputy Clerk, effective from the Annual Council Meeting in May 2023

F.C. 444 It was agreed to accept the recommendation to rename the post of Assistant Clerk as currently held by Ms C. Collings so that henceforth it is given the title of Deputy Clerk, effective from the Annual Council Meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Price. All in favour.

F.C. 445 The Chairman re-ordered the agenda so Item 5.5 would be considered prior to Item 5.4

5.5 Resignation of the Trustees appointed by this Council to the Windmill Trust:

F.C. 446 The Chairman explained that the motion as worded on the agenda paper could not be considered as the Parish Council could not require either of its nominated Trustees to resign. However, she reminded the Council that on 17th February 2023, the Council had agreed to re-appoint Cllr M Bramer and Cllr Green as MPC-nominated trustees in the expectation that they would only remain Trustees until such time that replacements were found.

She confirmed the Council had found suitable new trustees and therefore invited both councillors to resign from their positions as MPC-nominated trustees.

Cllr Green confirmed he had submitted his resignation as trustee to the Clerk. Cllr M Bramer confirmed he would not be resigning.

It was noted that the refusal of Cllr M Bramer to resign would prevent the appointment of the new trustees by this Council at this meeting.

F.C. 447 After discussion, Cllr Price PROPOSED a motion of no confidence in Cllr Max Bramer as both a Parish Councillor and Trustee of Meopham Windmill Trust on the following grounds:

- Failure to comply with the Parish Council's request for both council-nominated trustees to resign upon the successful recruitment of two new nominated trustees, as per the decision taken at the extra-ordinary Full Council meeting on the 17th March 2023.
- The lack of any reasonable explanation by Cllr M Bramer for his refusal to resign.
- Failing to act in the best interests of the Windmill, the Parish Council and local community.

It was acknowledged that the legislation governing Parish Councils does not allow for a binding motion of no confidence, however in passing this non-binding motion, the Parish Council was expressing its strong dissatisfaction and disappointment with Cllr M Bramer's recent behaviour. Various Councillors strongly urged him to change his position and resign as a Trustee.

SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. There were five votes in favour, two against and two abstentions. The motion was carried.

F.C. 448 After further discussion, Cllr M Bramer eventually provided the Chairman and Clerk with a written letter of resignation from the Windmill Trust effective from 31st August 2023 or such earlier date as he subsequently chose to nominate.

Item 5.4 Recommendations – Meopham Windmill Trust: To consider approving the candidates recommended by the Personnel Committee to be appointed as MPC-nominated trustees for Meopham Windmill Trust for a four-year term

F.C. 449 In the light of Cllr M Bramer's refusal to resign as a Trustee forthwith the Council agreed to ask Cllr Green to continue serving as a temporary trustee until the moment Cllr M Bramer's resignation became effective.

PROPOSED: Cllr Buchanan. SECONDED: Cllr Sims. Eight votes in favour and one against. The motion was carried.

F.C. 450 It was agreed to appoint C McManus and A Parker as MPC-nominated trustees, effective from 1st September 2023. The Clerk was asked to propose to the Trustees to invite them to the next Windmill Trust meeting on the 28th April 2023 as observers.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr McTavish. Eight votes in favour and one abstention. The motion was carried.

Item 6: Clerk's Report: To note the report of items for information from the Clerk

F.C. 451 The Clerk's Report was noted.

Item 7: 2022-23 End-of-Year Financial Matters

7.1 To review the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control: Councillors are asked to consider the attached Statement of Internal Control in support of the Annual Governance Statement. The Chairman of the Council and the Clerk to sign

F.C. 452 Cllr M Bramer PROPOSED that the statement of internal control is not approved, on the basis he believed there to be twenty-six breaches of internal controls where payments had been made in advance of proper authorisation.

SECONDED: Cllr D Bramer.

In the ensuing debate; Cllr Price and the Clerk advised that the payments referred to by Cllr M Bramer were all payments the Council was bound to make under various contracts and that each of the said contracts had been approved in advance by either Members or the Clerk under delegated authority. In those circumstances, members were advised that Cllr M Bramer's concerns were unfounded.

When his motion was put to the vote, Cllr M Bramer requested a recorded vote.

Cllr D Bramer	FOR
Cllr M Bramer	FOR
Cllr S Buchanan	AGAINST
Cllr G Green	AGAINST
Cllr J McTavish	ABSTAIN
Cllr J Ogden DL	AGAINST
Cllr C Price	AGAINST
Cllr D Sims	AGAINST
Cllr B Wade	AGAINST

The motion received two votes in favour, six against and one abstention. The motion fell.

F.C. 453 It was then agreed to approve the Statement of Internal Control and for the Chairman and Clerk to sign it.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Buchanan. There were six votes in favour, two against and one abstention. The motion was carried.

F.C. 454 Cllr Wade asked for a note of thanks to be recorded for the Clerk and Cllr Price for their work in getting the AGAR completed so promptly.

Item 7.2 Annual Governance Statement: To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022-23, Section 1 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023

F.C. 455 It was agreed to approve the Annual Governance Statement.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL.

Raising the same objections as raised under item FC 452, Cllr M Bramer requested a recorded vote.

Cllr D Bramer	AGAINST
Cllr M Bramer	AGAINST
Cllr S Buchanan	FOR
Cllr G Green	FOR
Cllr J McTavish	FOR
Cllr J Ogden DL	FOR
Cllr C Price	FOR
Cllr D Sims	FOR
Cllr B Wade	FOR

There were seven votes in favour and two against. The motion was therefore carried.

Item 7.3 Accounting Statements, Bank Reconciliation and Variances: To approve the Accounting Statements for 2022-23, Section 2 of the AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2023 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2023 and the explanation of the significant variations from last year (2021-22) to this year (2022-23)

F.C. 456 It was agreed to approve the Accounting Statements, bank reconciliation as of 31 March 2023 and variance analysis.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. Seven votes in favour and two abstentions. The motion was carried.

Item 7.4 Exercise of Public Rights: To agree the proposed dates (Monday 5 June 2023 to Friday 14 July 2023) for the Exercise of Public Rights as selected by the Council's Responsible Finance Officer

F.C. 457 It was agreed to adopt the proposed dates for the Exercise of Public Rights.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Price. All in favour.

Item 8: Financial Matters for 2023-24

8.1 Expenses Claims: To consider approving expenses claimed by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk

F.C. 458 It was agreed to retrospectively approve the purchase of the lanyards that had been agreed under delegated authority to the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman without a minute being complied as strictly required by Financial Regulations.

It was noted that it was the Internal Auditors view that the requirement for a minute was unnecessary and that the Financial Regulations could be amended accordingly.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr McTavish. All in favour.

F.C. 459 It was agreed to approve the expenses claim from the Clerk of £39.29.

PROPOSED: Cllr Wade. SECONDED: Cllr McTavish. Eight votes in favour and one abstention. The motion was carried.

8.2 Council Reserves: To note the council reserves as of 11.04.23

F.C. 460 The Council total reserves level of £149,008.00 was noted.

Item 9: Planning Applications: To consider and make comments on the following planning applications

20230297 – Fair Oak, Willow Walk, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0QS

Raising and replacement of the roof with new rear dormer, demolition of rear conservatory and replacement with single-storey rear extension with flat roof, new front entrance door location, extension of external terrace and internal remodelling

F.C. 461 It was agreed the Council would raise no objection to this application.

PROPOSED: Cllr D Bramer. SECONDED: Cllr Wade. All in favour.

20230312 – Nutfield Farm, Priestwood Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0DA

Demolition of the existing detached 4-bedroom dwelling, together with its associated garages and outbuildings and its replacement by a detached 3-bedroom bungalow with associated detached double garage and mower store

F.C. 462 It was agreed the Council would raise no objection to this application.

PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Buchanan. All in favour.

Item 10: Policy Review – Appointments to External Bodies: To consider adopting the draft policy

F.C. 463 It was agreed to defer consideration of this policy for further work to be completed and to ask the Clerk to review which external bodies, the Council could appoint to and to seek copies of governing documents for each organisation that the Council could appoint to so that the role of the appointee(s) was clear to Councillors when making the appointments in time for the Annual Meeting of the Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr D Bramer. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. All in favour.

Item 11: Harvel Noticeboard: To consider replacing the noticeboard located at Harvel Village Hall

F.C. 464 It was agreed to adopt option two; to delegate to the Clerk up to £300 to arrange a contractor to re-use the former Meopham Windmill site noticeboard and install it at Harvel Village Hall.

PROPOSED: Cllr Buchanan. SECONDED: Cllr Price. All in favour.

Item 12: Councillor Vacancies: To authorise the Clerk to advertise the four councillor spaces available for co-option, requesting applicants provide a CV and supporting statement and setting a deadline for applications of Friday 12 May 2023

F.C. 465 It was agreed to authorise the Clerk to advertise all spaces available for co-option. The deadline for applications would be extended until mid-May, that the closing date would be set by the Clerk and that an extra-ordinary Full Council would be held at the end of May or in early June to co-opt candidates.

It was further agreed that any individuals interested in being co-opted would be invited to part of the proposed training/informal strategy day to be held in May so that all Councillors could meet the candidates in an informal situation prior to interviews taking place.

The Clerk was asked to ensure that the advertisement was placed as widely as possible to encourage a wide range of applicants from different backgrounds and age ranges.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Wade. All in favour.

Item 13: Liaison Councillor Reports: To receive reports from Liaison Councillors

F.C. 466 The Chairman invited Councillors to provide verbal reports:

- Cllr Ogden DL confirmed he hadn't received any further communications with Meopham Colts
- Cllr McTavish reported she had met with the Clerk to discuss the Mens Shed survey and grant funding for the Southfield Shaw defibrillator
- Cllr D Bramer reported on the Rights of Way Committee meeting that she attended. The meeting had discussed the 2026 deadline for recording unmarked rights-of-way. Cllr Price had subsequently researched and found the government had scrapped this deadline.
- Cllr Wade reported that she had accompanied the plumber to unblock the men's toilet at Pitfield Green Toilets. It was suggested a key lock be fitted to the outside of the door to allow it to be locked in the event of a blockage so the urinals can be kept open.
- Cllr Price reported the Unity Multi-pay Card had finally been received, although we were just awaiting the receipt of the password to activate the card

Item 14: Parish Representatives on External Bodies: To receive any reports from representatives

F.C. 467 The following verbal reports were received:

- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council would be attending the Hingham Annual Parish Assembly on Thursday 20th April 2023

- Cllr Price, Cllr D Bramer and Cllr M Bramer would be attending the Harvel Village Hall Committee AGM on the 20th April 2023

Item 15: Chairman's Announcements: To receive announcements from the Chairman

F.C. 468 The Chairman wished to thank all members for their contributions over the four-year council term. She explained she had been very honoured to have served as Chairman for the last eight years.

She wished to particularly thank Cllr Ogden DL for his support as Vice-Chairman for the majority of her tenure, and Cllr Green who has served as Vice-Chairman for the last year.

The Chairman also wished to thank Cllr McTavish who would be stepping down at the May 2023 elections.

The meeting closed at 9:20pm