

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 19th March 2024 at 7:00pm at Judsons Pavilion

Members Present:

Cllr M Adam
Cllr D Bramer
Cllr S Buchanan – Vice-Chairman
Cllr P Crow
Cllr A Evans
Cllr D Fisher
Cllr P Haslam
Cllr C Price – Chairman
Cllr D Sims
Cllr G Smith
Cllr B Wade
Cllr P Watson

In Attendance:

S Fishenden – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
G Duffort – Deputy Clerk
L Winter – Assistant Clerk
T Hanlon – Finance & Grants Officer
One member of the public

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

F.C. 278 There were no apologies for absence.

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

F.C. 279 Cllr Wade declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application **20240140** as she knew the applicant.

Cllr Buchanan declared an interest in Item 11.1 as she was the sponsor of the memorial tree under discussion.

Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 05.03.24 (*)

F.C. 280 The minutes of the meeting held on 05.03.24 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments:

- To amend F.C. 167 so that the second bullet point reads “*Amending payment terms so the sum of £500 is paid in two halves at six-month intervals during the year*”.
- To amend F.C. 274 so that the following sentence is added “*Cllr Bramer was of the opinion that all information provided to WorkNest about the Deputy Clerk was at the time, in the public domain however, the Deputy Clerk disputed this statement*”.
- To amend F.C. 275 so that the sentence ends with “*two posts at Priestwood Green which require replacing to prevent vehicle entry*”.

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

Item 4: Public Session & External Reports

4.1 Public Session

- F.C. 281** The member of public present raised a query surrounding development sites within the parish, and whether the parish council was being placed under pressure to support development.

The Parish Council confirmed it was currently unaware of development sites within the Local Plan but was aware of various site surveys that had been carried out in Meopham. As soon as the Parish Council receives any information, it will publish this to residents.

4.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

- F.C. 282** There was no Borough Councillors or County Councillor present.

4.3 Police and Community Warden

- F.C. 283** There was no Police Officer or Community Warden present.

Item 5: Officer's Report: To receive a report of items for information from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk

- F.C. 284** The Deputy Clerk presented the officer's report. A copy of the report given is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

Item 6: Financial Matters

6.1 Approval of Payments: To approve the payments made since the last meeting up to 12.03.24

- F.C. 285** There were no payments awaiting authorisation this month.

6.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 12.03.24

- F.C. 286** The receipts and payment report up to 12.03.24 was noted.

6.3 Bank Statements: To note the bank statements as of 12.03.24

- F.C. 287** The bank statement as of 12.03.24 was noted.

6.3 Council Reserves: To note the reserves balance as of 12.03.24

- F.C. 288** The council reserves as of 12.03.24 was noted.

6.4 Pitfield Green Toilets - Earmarked Reserve: To agree to closing the earmarked reserve of £9,000 following the toilets closure, and transferring this into the council's general reserves

- F.C. 289** It was agreed to close the Pitfield Green Toilets earmarked reserve and transfer the sum of £9000 into general reserves.

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

Item 7: Council Administration

7.1 Declaration of Other Role: To note the correspondence received from the Assistant Clerk on secondary employment held

F.C. 290 The declaration of secondary employment by the Assistant Clerk was noted. A copy of the declaration will be retained in the Personnel file.

7.2 Strategic Plan 2024-27: To consider agreeing expenditure to hold a further all-council day facilitated by Council HR & Governance Support to discuss the draft strategic plan

F.C. 291 It was agreed to authorise expenditure of £683.70 for Council HR & Governance Support to facilitate a further all-council day to discuss the draft plan before it is adopted (*)

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

Item 8: Village Fete and Festival 2024: To consider and agree arrangements for the Village Fete and Festival, both event ideas have been agreed in principle under resolutions F.C. 71 (20.06.23) and F.C. 151 (17.10.23)

F.C. 292 Cllr Price provided an update on arrangements so far, the event would be held on Saturday 20th July 2024. It will be held at Meopham School.

Cllr Price, Cllr Evans and Cllr Fisher would commence holding weekly meetings with the Assistant Clerk in order to monitor progress of event planning.

Item 10: Highways Improvement Plan: To consider adopting the revised Highways Improvement Plan following KCC's responses as part of the annual review process

F.C. 293 It was agreed to defer this item to enable the Parish Council to hold an informal discussion surrounding highways priorities before it is formally considered by Full Council in due course.

Item 11: Motions from Councillors

11.1 Diamond Jubilee Trees – Replacement Tree (Motion from Cllr Wade): To consider replacing the dead tree sponsored by Cllr Buchanan, using unspent funds in the Judson's Play Area maintenance budget of which there is £1024.83 remaining

F.C. 294 It was agreed the Council would authorise a replacement tree to replace the deceased Whitebeam tree, this would be purchased from Woodland Trust under delegated authority upon receiving advice from GBC. This would be vired from the Judson's Play Area maintenance budget.

It would be of the same species but would be planted in the corner near Judsons Play Area.

PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Evans. There were eleven votes in favour, and one abstention due to a declared interest.

11.2 Meopham Village Sign – Cleaning (Motion from Cllr Wade): To consider authorising a one-off clean to the village sign to remove pollution debris, to be funded from the Village Sign & Flagpole budget of which there is £500.00 remaining

- F.C. 295** This item was deferred to enable quotes to be received from contractors for cleaning the sign.
- 11.3 Meopham Green – Post Replacements (Motion from Cllr Wade): To consider authorising a budget to fund the replacement of village green posts around Meopham Green, using unspent funds in the Village Greens & Recreation Ground budget of which there is £1116.04 remaining**
- F.C. 296** It was agreed to authorise the use of the remaining £1116.04 in the Village Green's budget to carry out post replacements. The posts to be replaced will be determined in consultation with the Liaison Cllrs for Environment and Amenities.
- Three contractor quotes will be sought before proceeding with the work.
- PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Wade. All in favour.
- 11.4 Council Culture (Motion from Cllr Smith): To receive and discuss any updates on improvements to council culture, handling of confidential information and duty of care towards employees**
- F.C. 297** Cllr Smith requested that a quote be sought from Council HR & Governance Support to perform an efficiency review of the Parish Council office to determine time pressures on the office and alignment with council priorities.
- It was confirmed the NALC Peer Challenge would cover governance and culture.
- Item 12: Planning Applications: To agree the proposed responses to planning applications received en bloc**
- F.C. 298** It was agreed to adopt the proposed responses to planning applications as per the comments sheet. It was noted Cllr Wade had abstained on the application concerning Tudor House.
- PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Evans. All in favour.
- Item 13: Liaison Councillor Reports: To receive liaison councillor reports for information only**
- F.C. 299** The following liaison councillor reports were noted:
- Cllr Wade suggested the photos of Meopham Mill published by the Friends of Meopham Windmill could be shared onto the Parish Council website. This will be actioned by officers.
 - Cllr Watson reported on the livestock signage that had been provided by Kent Police, at the recent KALC meeting it was well-received and neighbouring parishes had requested copies of the signage.
 - Cllr Evans confirmed the Rotary Club music event had been amalgamated into the proposed Village Fete, which would be expanded in future years.
 - Cllr Bramer reported that five councillors had attended the Leisure Centre open day and were pleased to see the wellbeing focus provided by Swale Leisure.

Item 14: Decisions Tracker: To note the progress tracker of council decisions

F.C. 230 This was noted.

CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that due to the confidential nature of the next item, the public and press will be asked to leave the meeting

Item 15: Personnel Committee

15.1 Minutes of Previous Meetings: To note the minutes of the meetings held on 14.02.24 and 28.02.24

F.C. 231 The minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 14.02.24 and 28.02.24 were noted.

15.2 Recommendations: To consider adopting recommendations from the Personnel Committee

F.C. 232 There were no recommendations from the Committee. Cllr Buchanan reported the Committee was due to meet again soon.

Item 16: Outstanding Invoices: To agree how the Council wishes to resolve two outstanding invoices owed to the council

F.C. 233 It was agreed that the invoice of £397.93 owed to the Council by a former employee would be written off as a bad debt.

It was agreed that the invoice of £390.00 (Invoice No.5) owed to the Council would continue to be chased for payment and would be reported back to Council at the next meeting if payment has still not been received to determine further action.

The meeting closed at 8:38pm