Meopham Parish Council

St Johns Centre, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent, DA13 0AA - **Tel:** 01474 813779
Email: enquiries@meopham-pc.gov.uk **Website:** www.meopham-pc.gov.uk

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME FOUNDATION

A Civility & Respect Pledge Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Tuesday 17th September 2024 at 7:00pm
at Harvel Village Hall, Harvel, DA13 0DS

Members Present:
Cllr M Adam
Cllr S Buchanan
Cllr P Crow - Vice-Chairman
Cllr A Evans
Cllr D Fisher
Cllr P Haslam
Cllr D Sims
Cllr G Smith
Cllr B Wade
Cllr P Watson

In Attendance:
L Winter – Clerk
Seven members of the public

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

F.C. 74 Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Bramer (holiday) and Cllr Cheryl Price (personal family reasons).

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

F.C. 75 The Clerk advised that failure to declare an interest would be reported to the monitoring officer. Cllr Crow and Cllr Wade declared a conflict of interest in agenda items 17 and 18. The Clerk also declared the same interest. Cllr Buchanan failed to declare and the Clerk reiterated that it would be reported to the monitoring officer.

Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meetings: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 29.07.2024

F.C. 76 The minutes of the meeting held on 29.07.2024 were approved.

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

Item 4: Officer's Report: To receive a report of items for information from the Locum Proper Officer and RFO

F.C. 77 The officer's report was noted. A copy will be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Item 5: Pitfield Green Toilets:

5.1 Parish Poll

F.C. 78 Members received the invoice and agreed the payment from reserves.

PROPOSED: Cllr Wade. SECONDED: Cllr Adam. Agreed.

5.2 Refurbishment

F.C. 79 Members received the invoice and agreed the payment from reserves.

PROPOSED: Cllr Haslam. SECONDED: Cllr Adam. Agreed

5.3 Refurbishment

F.C. 80 Members agreed to progress with the surveyor to the next stage of specifying the detailed works and obtaining tenders, with the costs from reserves.

PROPOSED: Cllr Haslam. SECONDED: Cllr Adam.
There were 8 votes in favour and two abstentions. The motion was carried.

Item 6: Public Session & External Reports

6.1 Public Session

F.C. 81 Ian Cleary reported on a number of matters:

He thanked MPC for the fete and for all the effort that went into this event by Councillors and staff.

He advised that the improvements at both zebra crossings had been carried out or was imminent and that all outstanding queries had been answered and again thanked MPC with their assistance with these issues.

He asked the question that if the toilets were brought back into use, it wasn't just a matter of reopening them, but would mean them needing to be brought up to modern standards and could cost MPC more money? He felt that the surveyor was almost holding MPC to ransom? In addition, Costa Coffee were not allowing public use of the toilet even though named as part of the Community Toilet Scheme.

Councillors advised that they hadn't agreed to reopening the toilets, but were progressing in line with what was agreed following the Parish Poll, which included quotes for the building to meet requirements for today. The cost of the surveyor was something that MPC would have to accept to progress the matter. Councillor Buchanan and Cllr Wade to progress with Pitfield Toilets.

An officer stated that Costa Coffee was currently listed as party to the Community Toilet Scheme, but were aware that the Head Office and the individual franchise were not on the 'same page'. If they did wish to leave the scheme, they had to give MPC three months' notice.

He also asked if there had been any feedback on the drainage survey at Judsons' Recreational Grounds. An officer advised that the survey had been carried out, at a very reasonable cost negotiated by Mr Cleary with a local firm, and that MPC were awaiting this. Initial feedback was that there was nothing of major concern other than fat being put down the drains causing a 'fatberg'. We understand there is a solution for this, but we do not know what that entails until the survey is received.

David from the Meopham Community Initiative was in attendance to advise on what they had been doing behind the scenes and to urge Councillors to put this on the next agenda. The Chair stated that they would consider this.

6.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

F.C. 82 There were no Borough Councillors or County Councillor present.

6.3 Police and Community Warden

F.C. 83 There were no Police and Community Warden present.

Item 7: Council Administration – Schedule of Meetings: To agree the schedule of meetings up to and including the next Annual Meeting of Council

F.C. 84 It was agreed to adopt the schedule. A date for the formal budget meeting was still to be agreed. All in favour.

Item 8: Council Services – Extension of Service Contract: To agree for the current service contract with Highview Tress to be extended to 31 March 2025

F.C. 85 It was agreed to extend the current service contract.

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

Item 9: Remembrance Event: To agree arrangements for before, during and after the event

F.C. 86 It was agreed that Cllr Buchanan and Cllr Evans would arrange the speaker for this event. Cllr Buchanan advised that she had had informal discussions with Adam Holloway, as a former military person, who had shown interest.

Concern was raised by a number of Councillors around the event taking place at the War Memorial due to its location to the A227 and that other options needed to be considered to mitigate the risks. Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Evans and Cllr Sims agreed to meet and progress this event. All in favour.

Item 10: Family Fun Days: To receive an update from the liaison councillor on the family fun days run by Swale Community Leisure

F.C. 87 Cllr Evans gave a brief update on how the August events had gone. Swale Community Leisure had worked exceptionally hard to deliver these events and they had been very well attended and appreciated. Further dates were scheduled for the October Half Term and possible Christmas or February Half Term.

Item 11: Meopham Village Fete: To receive an update from the liaison councillor

F.C. 88 Cllr Evans gave a brief update on the income and expenditure for the fete.

Item 12: Community Grants Scheme 2024/2025: To revoke the arrangements agreed on 5th March 2024 for a Participatory Budgeting Community

Grant Scheme and revert to the agreed community grants policy and agree a deadline date for applications

F.C. 89 It was agreed to revoke the Participatory Budgeting Community Grant Scheme due to officer time constraints involved with this process and revert to the agreed community grants policy. Deadline for applications Tuesday 8th October 2024. Applications to be considered at the October Full Council meeting.

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

Item 13: Liaison Councillor Reports: To receive liaison councillor reports for information only

F.C. 90 The following liaison councillor reports were noted:

Cllr Wade:

- Advised that a number of reports had been received regarding e-scooters and off road bikes being ridden on pavements and through the alleyways. Having inspected the alleyway, it was noted that a post was located in the middle at one end, but clearly this did little to prevent these vehicles going through. The same was also happening at Judson's Recreational Grounds. Unfortunately there wasn't a solution as access has to be maintained for mobility scooters, wheelchairs and pushchairs.
- The contractor had been asked to cut the basal at Hook Green and Meopham Green and for a number of issues to be addressed at the Harvel Village Pond, but as yet, the contractor hadn't carried out the work.

Cllr Adam and Cllr Haslam:

- New website – Cllr Haslam clarified the need for 3 quotes and our requirement to comply with this if a quote was under £1000. Members wanted to receive 3 quotes and Cllr Smith stated that he was happy to be involved with this.
- Cllr Adam stated that they both needed to clarify what they had been asked to do as part of their liaison councillor role as they could not recall what it was.
- Cllr Adam advised that she had shown an expression of interest to the Meopham Medical Centre to be involved with health and well-being and had been invited to attend a meeting on 1st October 2024.

Cllr Watson:

- Advised that he had joined the speed watch group and that Cllr Bramer was also a member.
- He and Cllr Crow had attended a 'secure the landscape meeting'. The lack of enforcement against e-scooter users was very apparent.
- Southdown Shaw Allotments had held an event which he had attended on behalf of MPC to present the prizes.

Item 14: Financial Matters

14.1 Approval of Payments: To approve the payments made since the last meeting up to 11.09.24

F.C. 91 Members approved the payments up to 16.09.24 as per the report.

14.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 11.09.24

F.C. 92 The receipts and payments report up 16.09.24 was noted.

14.3 Bank Statements: To note the bank statements as of 11.09.24

F.C. 93 The bank statements from Unit from 25.04.24 up to 16.09.24 were noted.

14.4 Council Reserves: To note the reserves balance as of 11.09.24

F.C. 94 Members were advised that it had not been possible to produce this report in time for this meeting.

14.5 Expenses Claim Forms: To authorise the expenses claimed by Cllr Price and Cllr Evans

F.C. 95 Members were advised that these expense claim forms were for some considerable figures due to the office needing to pay for numerous things, mainly for the fete and not having a multi-pay card to be used by staff members.

Members approved the payment of £784.31 to Cllr Price and £151.26 to Cllr Evans.

Item 15: Harvel Village Pond Warden: To agree a vote of thanks for their years of service and to approve the purchase of a David Austin gift card.

F.C. 96 Councillors approved the purchase of a £100 David Austin gift card and for the payment to be taken from reserves.

Item 16: Judson's Recreational Grounds: To agree budgetary arrangements for repairs to the fence around the car park

F.C. 97 Councillors were advise that only one quote had been received. However, since the quotes had been requested, repairs were now needed to the gate accessing the car park and to the gate and fencing at the far boundary where the public footpath exits into .

Councillor Evans proposed that the quote of £1074.00 be accepted for the original proposed fence work and that up to £2000 be agreed from the reserves to cover both exit areas, as access to the football pitches needs to be prevent before they are ruined by unauthorised vehicles.

Councillors asked to see the specifications for the type of gates proposed by any contractor.

All councillors agreed to this proposal and approved £1074.00 for the fencing and up to £2000 for the gates, subject to agreeing the specification, and for these to be taken from reserves.

Councillors Buchanan, Crow, and Wade along with the Clerk left the meeting.

F.C. 98 In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Council, Cllr Smith, as the Acting Chair of the Personnel Committee, was chosen by the remaining councillors at the meeting to preside as Chair for the remaining items

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

Item 17: **Personnel Committee – Grievance**

17.1 **To agree that any current Grievance or Disciplinary investigation be dealt with by an independent external party.**

F.C. 99 Members agreed that any current Grievance or Disciplinary investigation be dealt with by an independent external party.

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

17.2 **To agree that the Personnel Committee be given delegated authority to oversee the investigation and implement any recommendations ultimately made, as appropriate**

F.C. 100 Members agreed that the Personnel Committee be given temporary delegated authority to oversee the investigation and implement any recommendations ultimately made, as appropriate.

PROPOSED: Cllr Watson. SECONDED: Cllr Sims.
There were 5 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. The motion was carried.

17.3 **To agree a budget for this process**

F.C. 101 Members agreed that the costs for this process would come from the reserves.

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

Item 18: **Personnel Committee – Clerk Appointment**

18.1 **To approve the recommendation that the NALC LC2 (29-32) Pay Scales be paid to the Locum Proper Officer and RFO**

F.C. 102 Members *approved the recommendation that the NALC LC2 (29-32) Pay Scales be paid to the Locum Proper Officer and RFO.*

PROPOSED: Cllr Fisher. SECONDED: Cllr Watson.

18.2 **To approve the recommendation that the current Locum Proper Officer and RFO be appointed to the position of Clerk for 30 hours per week on the NALC LC2 (29-32) Pay Scales as previously approved for this position by Full Council on 23rd December 2023**

F.C. 103 Members approved the recommendation that the current Locum Proper Officer and RFO be appointed to the position of Clerk for 30 hours per week on the NALC LC2 (29-32) Pay Scales as previously approved for this position by Full Council on 23rd December 2023.

PROPOSED: Cllr Watson. SECONDED: Cllr Evans.
There were 6 votes in favour and 1 against. The motion was carried.

The meeting closed at 9:06pm