

# Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect  
Pledge Council

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7:00pm at Judsons Pavilion

### Members Present:

Cllr D Bramer  
Cllr S Buchanan – Vice-Chairman  
Cllr P Crow  
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. 251** Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Adam (prior commitment) and Cllr Evans (prior commitment). KCC Community Warden; M Cason also sent her apologies.

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

**F.C. 252** There were no declarations of interest.

### Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16.01.24

**F.C. 253** The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16.01.24 were approved.

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

### Item 4: Public Session & External Reports

#### 4.1 Public Session

**F.C. 254** The member of the public thanked the Council for the assistance with the matter of the zebra crossings at Culverstone Green Primary School and the new crossing at Neville Parade. The Clerk and Chairman of Council would continue to keep the resident updates as a site visit with KCC Highways is arranged.

#### 4.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

**F.C. 255** There were no Borough Councillors or County Councillor present.

#### **4.3 Police and Community Warden**

**F.C. 256** There was no Police or Community Warden present.

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

**F.C. 257** The Deputy Clerk presented the report verbally, a copy of the report will be 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 13.01.24**

**F.C. 258** The payments as listed in the schedule, totalling £30,071.78 (inc. VAT) were approved.

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

##### **6.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 13.01.24**

**F.C. 259** The receipts and payments report up to 13.01.24 was noted.

##### **6.3 Bank Statements: To note the bank statements as of 13.01.24**

**F.C. 260** The bank statement as of 13.01.24 was noted.

##### **6.4 Council Reserves: To note the reserves balance as of 13.01.24**

**F.C. 261** The Council Reserves as of 13.01.24 was noted.

#### **Item 7: Strategic Plan 2024-2027**

##### **7.1 Visioning Day: To receive the report from Council HR & Governance Support regarding the visioning day held on 1 February 2024**

**F.C. 262** The Visioning Day report received from Council HR & Governance Support was received and noted.

##### **7.2 Progression to Draft Plan: To agree arrangements for formulating a draft strategic plan**

**F.C. 263** It was agreed that the Council would take the following steps:

1. The Council would hold an informal meeting to review the list of projects previously agreed in principle, against the aims and projects set out in the visioning day report
2. The Council HR & Governance Support recommendations would be approved, subject to the amendments discussed and marked in red.
3. The Council HR & Governance Support consultant would be asked to begin writing the draft strategic plan
4. The next Full Council meeting would have an agenda item to give consideration to commissioning the consultant to return for a second all-councillor day to discuss the draft strategic plan

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

**Item 8: Council Administration**

**8.1 VOIP Phone System: To agree to switch our VOIP phone system from Zen Internet to Teams, at a cost of £49.20 per month for four staff. Current cost is £32.80 for two phone licences.**

**F.C. 264** It was agreed to migrate the VOIP phone system from Zen to Teams, at a monthly cost of £49.20 for four licences.

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

**8.2 HR Support: To consider the recommendations of the report from the Clerk to appoint a HR support provider for the 2024-25 financial year**

**F.C. 265** It was agreed to accept the recommendation; to appoint Council HR & Governance Support for a five-year contract to provide human resources support and advice to the Council, at a cost of £1400 per annum.

This was subject to a break clause being inserted at the three-year point.

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

**8.3 Declaration of Other Roles: To note the correspondence received from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk Designate on external roles and directorships held**

**F.C. 266** The Declaration of Other Roles letter received from the Clerk and Deputy Clerk was noted. A copy of the letter will be held in the Personnel file for future reference.

**Item 9: Council Services**

**9.1 Community Toilet Scheme – Service Level Agreement: To consider approving the draft service level agreement for venues participating in the Community Toilet Scheme**

**F.C. 267** It was agreed to adopt the service level agreement, subject to the following amendments:

- Inserting a definition of 'exceptional circumstances'
- Amending payment terms so it's paid in two halves at six-month intervals
- To insert a notification clause if the toilet is unavailable for temporary circumstances
- Amendment of the notice period term from one month to three months
- To insert a clause that in the event of change of ownership, there is a right to renegotiate

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

**9.2 Harvel Green – Replacement Bench: To consider quotes received for a replacement bench on Harvel Green**

**F.C. 268** It was agreed to approve the installation of a bench, accepting the quote from Plaswood at £445.45 (inc. VAT). It was also agreed to delegate to

officers, in consultation with the Liaison Cllrs for Environment and Amenities, to arrange for a plaque to be installed in recognition of the Coronation.

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

**9.3 Community Grants Scheme 2024/25 – Participatory Budgeting: To consider the recommendations of the report**

**F.C. 269**

It was agreed to adopt the recommendations:

- To adopt a participatory budgeting process for the Community Grants Scheme for the 2024/25 financial year, to be piloted for one-year before a review by Full Council to determine its permanency.
- To delegate to the Deputy Clerk Designate, in consultation with the Liaison Cllrs for Youth & Community to finalise the arrangements for operating such a process including co-ordinating a participatory voting system.

PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Smith. Cllr Buchanan requested a recorded vote. The votes were as follows.

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Cllr D Bramer   | FOR     |
| Cllr S Buchanan | AGAINST |
| Cllr P Crow     | FOR     |
| Cllr D Fisher   | FOR     |
| Cllr P Haslam   | AGAINST |
| Cllr C Price    | FOR     |
| Cllr D Sims     | FOR     |
| Cllr G Smith    | FOR     |
| Cllr B Wade     | AGAINST |
| Cllr P Watson   | FOR     |

The motion therefore received seven votes in favour and three against. The motion was carried.

**9.4 Southdown Shaw Allotments - Security of Site: To consider authorising the Clerk, and Finance & Grants Officer to conduct research into costings and grant funding available for securing the allotment site**

**F.C. 270**

It was agreed to pause this, pending a response from Meopham and District Allotment Association regarding the site visit to assess tree works.

**Item 10:**

**Annual Parish Meeting 2024: To note the arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**F.C. 271**

It was noted that the Annual Parish Meeting was being held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024 in Meopham School hall. The following would be speakers:

- Clerk and Deputy Clerk – Presentation on Meopham Parish Council
- PC Joanne Hammond – Presentation on Policing and Community Safety in Meopham
- A presentation from Gravesham Borough Council, hopefully Jamie Izzard or Tom Reynolds from the Communities & Inclusive Growth directorate.

**Item 11:**

**Council Projects & Events**

**11.1 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. 272** It was agreed to defer this item pending a further meeting being held with the school to discuss the event.

**11.2 'Meopham Matters' Podcast: To consider creating a resident-led podcast to increase community engagement with the Council**

**F.C. 273** It was agreed to create a trial episode of a Meopham Matters podcast. The subject matter of the episode being Meopham Windmill.

The Deputy Clerk will produce the podcast, and it will be circulated to Full Council for approval before release. The Deputy Clerk will gather data on podcast views for presentation to Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Fisher. There were eight votes in favour and two against. The motion was carried.

**Item 12: Council Confidentiality: To discuss concerns regarding confidentiality of council information and agree any actions to maintain the council's duty of care towards its employees**

**F.C. 274** Cllr Smith highlighted his concerns regarding breaches of confidentiality to council information. Discussion amongst councillors ensued and several action points arose:

- To circulate to all councillors the Nolan Principles, and adopted Code of Conduct
- To circulate the audio recording of the vote held to close Pitfield Green toilets
- A reminder to all councillors to ensure confidential information is not shared

The Clerk requested an apology on the Deputy Clerk's behalf from Cllr Bramer for sharing the personal data of the Deputy Clerk. Cllr Bramer denied doing so.

Cllr Smith will request this item continues to appear on the meeting agendas on a regular basis until the matter is resolved. There would be a separate item on the next meeting agenda to consider the recommendations from the Personnel Committee regarding confidentiality.

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

**F.C. 275** Liaison Councillor reports were received from the following:

- Cllr Wade reported that the play area at Judsons need the leaf debris clearing. There were also trees at Southdown Shaw that need inspecting to ensure their safety as they adjoin the highway. There are two posts at
- Cllr Watson reported on the successful Police drop-in surgeries held by PC Jo Hammond had been attended by Cllr Watson and Cllr Crow

- Cllr Haslam reported that he had conducted research for a new website, by contacting other parishes about their website providers. He will meet with the Deputy Clerk and Cllr Adam in due course to discuss findings
- Cllr Bramer had attended as a private individual the Making Space for Nature in Kent session.

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

**F.C. 276** The Clerk would re-issue the progress tracker, to ensure all councillors had received it.

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**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**

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**Item 15: WorkNest: To receive an update from the Personnel Committee on the WorkNest review**

**F.C. 277** Cllr Haslam provided a summary of the recommendations received from WorkNest. The following recommendations were then agreed:

- Develop a return-to-work process/policy to support employees when they return from a period of long-term absence.
- Ensure if roles and responsibilities are changing this is done with informal or formal consultation.
- Review of all policies across MPC to identify gaps and update as required. Particular focus on; Grievance and disciplinary policy, to update the process, and ensure that all employees are aware of the policies and what action needs to be taken. Also, confidentiality process and policy
- Establish clear and set out guidelines of communication for Councillors and employees to minimise the risk of communication breakdowns.
- Review process/policy for sharing information across the council
- MPC to review and update all current contracts, this should be done in consultation with the employees if there is a key change to the T&C.
- Define the recruitment process to have steps in place for council approval of recruitment.
- Look at conflicts of interest and declarations that need to be made to ensure things like directorships are captured.

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

***The meeting closed at 9:30pm***