

Meopham Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 7:00pm at Meopham Village Hall

Members Present:

Cllr D Bramer
Cllr S Buchanan
Cllr G Green – Chairman
Cllr J Ogden DL
Cllr D Sims
Cllr C Price – Vice-Chairman
Cllr B Wade

In Attendance:

S Fishenden – Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
C Collings – Deputy Clerk
B Ryder – Swale Community Leisure **(until 7:45pm)**
Ten members of the public **(until 7:30pm)**

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

F.C. 44 Apologies were received from Borough Cllrs. E Aslam, G Bains, G Harding and F Wardle (GBC meeting). In addition, Community Warden; M Cason and Member Pioneer; G Duffort

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

F.C. 45 There were no declarations of interest.

Item 3: **To approve minutes of the previous Full Council meeting: 16.05.23**

F.C. 46 The minutes of the meeting held on 16.05.23 were approved, subject to one amendment of removing 'MPC-nominated trustee' from minute F.C. 05.

PROPOSED: Cllr Ogden DL. SECONDED: Cllr Wade. All in favour.

Item 4: **Councillor Vacancies: To consider applications received and whether to co-opt any candidate deemed suitable. The Council currently has five vacancies**

F.C. 47 It was agreed the Parish Council would consider Item 4 and 12.2 together.

The Council agreed they would accept the quote from Royal Mail at a total cost of £2123.97 to deliver the one-off bulletin to all households within the parish to advertise the councillor vacancies. Applicants would be asked to attend the afternoon part of the training day on 11th July.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Price. There are five votes in favour and two abstentions. The motion was carried.

Item 5: **Public Session & External Reports**

5.1 Public Session

F.C. 48 The ten members of the public present raised their concerns around the trees located on Edmund Green. They raised a number of concerns which are summarised as below:

- The residents feel they are not being heard
- They allege overhanging the roof of adjacent properties
- The sap generated by the trees is affecting parked vehicles
- The bird mess is impacting on residents
- The residents do not want to see the trees removed, but want to see better management of them
- Concern of the impact that high winds would have on the trees
- Levels of natural light have been impacted over a number of years
- Concerns that the trees may be causing damage to the foundations of garages located nearby
- Visibility concerns in relation to the hollybush tree located on the corner of the green

The Chairman advised the residents that the Council was unable to respond immediately to the concerns raised due to the ongoing formal complaints process but would respond as soon as possible.

5.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

F.C. 49 There were no Borough or County Councillors present.

5.3 Swale Community Leisure

F.C. 50 B Ryder provided an update on Meopham Leisure Centre:

- Since SCL took over, the centre membership has increased to 830 members
- SCL and MSLA will be holding discussions with GBC about future capital projects to enhance the leisure centre
- The Leisure Centre is working with a range of community partners including the Parish Council in order to increase its community presence

He then presented a proposal from SCL for them to host a programme of family fun days in the Summer and at Halloween along with a Christmas pantomime. Members made various enquiries before Mr Ryder was thanked for his update and proposal.

5.4 Police and Community Warden

F.C. 51 The Clerk provided a verbal update on behalf of M Cason:

- M Cason had been promoted to Deputy Team Leader
- She was continuing to carry out a number of referrals for residents to a range of agencies

5.5 Co-op Member Pioneer

F.C. 52 The Member Pioneer was not present.

Item 6: Clerk's Report: To note the report from the Clerk

F.C. 53 The Clerk's Report was noted. The Clerk also added three further updates;

- The car park fencing at Judsons had been damaged completely by a vehicle. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk had made temporary repairs to fill

in the holes left by the missing fence posts in order to prevent any trip hazards for users of the recreation ground. The Colts had been notified of the damage as the car park fencing is their responsibility to repair.

- The Clerk reminded members that following the email received by all councillors from the Chairman of Meopham Windmill Trust, that the Council's agreed position is to await advice from the Charity Commission before proceeding further
- The Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman had held a meeting with a representative from Meopham Colts JFC. There is the possibility of further discussions regarding trying to reduce some of the maintenance liabilities they hold as leaseholders.

F.C. 54 The Council endorsed the continuation of exploratory discussions with the Colts, to also include any suitable third-party organisations.

F.C. 55 The Council also confirmed they were content with £100 being drawn from the Chairman's Allowance to be presented to K Everson in the form of a voucher, as a thank you for his sterling work during the course of his university placement with the Council.

Item 7: Financial Matters

7.1 Approval of Payments: To approve the payments made since the last meeting up to 12.06.23

F.C. 56 It was agreed to approve all the payments, as listed in the schedule, totalling £13,941.02.

PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. All in favour.

7.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 12.06.23

F.C. 57 The Receipts and Payments Report up to 12.06.23 was noted.

The Clerk and Cllr Price confirmed they would investigate the query from Cllr Bramer regarding the variance figure produced by Scribe and report back to all members via email once they had received clarification.

7.3 Bank Statements: To receive the bank statements as of 12.06.23

F.C. 58 The bank statements up to 12.06.23 were noted.

7.4 Council Reserves: To receive the reserves balance as of 12.06.23

F.C. 59 The council reserves balance up to 12.06.23 were noted.

Item 8: Environment and Amenities

8.1 Edmund Green: To consider the recommendations of the report regarding the management of the trees on Edmund Green

F.C. 60 The Clerk advised all members that a formal complaint had been received and therefore a process had to be followed.

A complaints committee comprising of Cllr Price, Cllr Ogden DL and Cllr Sims had been established and would report to the Full Council in July 2023 with its findings.

8.2 Coronation Garden: To consider designs received from the Coronation Garden design competition and agree a budget for the garden's creation

F.C. 61 It was agreed that the three design entries received would be provided to Consilio Partnership who had offered to assist with the project.

They would be asked to draw up a viable design based on the three entries and to cost-up the project for us.

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

8.3 School Close Car Park – Streetlight Repairs: To consider the quote received from our streetlights contractor for repairing the lights in School Close car park and the adjoining pathway

F.C. 62 It was agreed to approve the quote received at a cost of £1375 + VAT for replacing the lighting columns in both the School Close car park and footpath with LED.

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

8.4 Fowlers Stone Green – Hedge Quotes: To consider the quotes received for installing a hedge at Fowlers Stone Green

F.C. 63 It was agreed to defer consideration of this item until September 2023 to allow further research to be carried out on alternatives to planting a hedge.

Officers would invite a planning officer to meet with the Parish Council to discuss the lack of planning enforcement.

8.5 Village Green Post Replacements: To agree whether council wishes to continue with ad-hoc replacement or prepare a planned replacement programme for Village Green posts

F.C. 64 It was agreed to draw up a village green post replacement programme, allowing for block replacement of posts on an annual basis and for this to be budgeted for. A contingency will be allowed for immediate ad-hoc repairs where sufficient posts have been damaged and failure to replace would facilitate vehicle incursion onto the village green.

All future post replacements will use the Plaswood posts.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. All in favour.

8.6 Village Green Surveys: To note the allocations to Councillors for completing Village Green surveys and to ask Cllrs to return completed surveys to the office by 11th July 2023

F.C. 65 The allocation of councillors for this year's Village Green surveys were noted.

8.7 Pitfield Toilets – Electricity Quotes: To consider the quotes received for electricity supply

F.C. 66 It was agreed to accept the quote for a one-year electricity supply contract with Octopus Energy, at a total estimated cost of £640.41

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

8.8 Southdown Shaw – Grass Cutting: To consider quotes received for the rough grass cut for Southdown Shaw

F.C. 67 It was agreed to instruct N Sims Landscape Services to complete the rough grass cut at Southdown Shaw at a cost of £150 + VAT. The Council expects the cut to be done within the next two to three weeks.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. All in favour.

Item 9: Camer Parade – Highways Consultant Report: To receive the independent report from the highways consultant commissioned by the Parish Council and consider its recommendations

F.C. 68 The Highways Consultant report commissioned by the Parish Council was noted.

It was agreed the report would be published on the website and social media to demonstrate the efforts the Parish Council had taken to find options for resolving the situation.

Item 10: Lower Thames Crossing: To consider the draft ‘Statement of Common Ground’ produced by National Highways

F.C. 69 The draft ‘Statement of Common Ground’ document was considered by members.

It was agreed the Council would only maintain the objection related to an increase in traffic on the A227. The other three objections would not be pursued.

Item 11: Youth and Community

11.1 Remembrance Event: To authorise the officers arranging a remembrance event on Sunday 12th November at 3pm, with a delegated budget of £350, and for them to convene a meeting of relevant parties to discuss arrangements

F.C. 70 It was agreed to establish a working group consisting of Cllr Bramer, Cllr Buchanan, Cllr Green, Cllr Price and the Clerk. The working group would meet to discuss potential arrangements for the event before reporting back to Full Council.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. All in favour.

11.2 Picnic on the Green: To consider options for organising a Picnic on the Green event on Sunday 6th August 2023

F.C. 71 It was agreed to adopt the Clerk’s recommendation to postpone Picnic on the Green for 2023, in order to focus on preparations for a larger village fete event for 2024.

The Clerk would however explore the potential for an indoor, small-scale event to be held around Christmas time so that an event is held by the council in 2023.

11.3 Family Fun Days: To consider the proposals from Swale Community Leisure for hosting Family Fun Days throughout the year

F.C. 72 It was agreed to approve the proposals from Swale Leisure to host Family Fun Days in August and October, along with a Christmas pantomime at a total cost of £2500.

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

Item 12: Council Administration

12.1 St Johns Centre: To note that Meopham PCC have declined to enter into discussions about the possibility of taking a long-term lease on St Johns Centre

F.C. 73 This was noted.

12.2 Bulletin for New Councillors: To consider the quote received for delivery of the one-off newsletter to advertise councillor spaces

F.C. 74 This item was dealt with under Item 4.

12.3 Meeting Recordings: To consider terminating the policy of making official council recordings of meetings due to the office receiving frequent FOI requests for them

F.C. 75 It was agreed to terminate making official recordings of meetings because of the workload pressures being created by a frequent FOIs being made by one person after every council meeting.

It was acknowledged if members of the public wished to know what happened at a meeting, in addition to the minutes, they simply had to attend the meeting.

PROPOSED: Cllr Green. SECONDED: Cllr Ogden DL. Six votes in favour and one against. The motion was carried.

Item 13: Planning Application Received: To consider making a comment on the following planning application

23/01352/FUL – Lazzat, Gravesend Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 7JS

Demolition of existing restaurant and outbuildings and removal of car park, erection of 2 dwellings

F.C. 76 It was agreed to raise no objection to the application.

Item 14: Items for Information: To receive verbal reports from all councillors, for information only

F.C. 77 The following verbal reports were received:

- Cllr Ogden DL reported he had been unable to attend the most recent meeting of the KALC Area Committee but would be attending the next one
- Cllr Bramer reported that the Hogarth lorries were continuing to park in the bus stop

- Cllr Wade had visited Judsons along with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to remove an unauthorised swing that had been created, and to secure the car park following the fence damage
- Cllr Price reported the Harvel Fete would be held on 1 July 2023. Cllr Price would also be visiting the office to go through the council invoices and reconcile them against Scribe.
- Cllr Buchanan reported she had been unable to attend the Meopham Village Hall Management Committee meeting. They had however raised they need their salt bin filling. It was confirmed this is the responsibility of KCC Highways, Cllr Buchanan would advise them of this.

Item 15: Progress Tracker: To note the progress tracker of council decisions

F.C. 78 The progress tracker was noted.

The meeting closed at 8:54pm