

Meopham Parish Council

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A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th March 2025 at 7:00pm at Harvel Village Hall, Harvel, DA13 0DS

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

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

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

F.C. 213 Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Haslam (away), Cllr Sims (exams) and we have pre-approved apologies for Cllr Price.

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

F.C. 214 Cllr Crow failed to declare an interest in agenda item 4.3 against the advice of the Clerk. This would be reported to the monitoring officer.

Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meetings: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18.02.25

F.C. 215 Cllr Evans PROPOSED an amendment to F.C. 199 final paragraph as the wording makes it sound as if those statements are fact, which they are not. It is, in fact, the facts and figures stated by the member of the public that come into question, not those of the Council.

Therefore, they requested that the minutes be amended to read:

A member of the public stated that, (*begin quote*) “we have just been told that just for the postage of polling cards to Culverstone and Harvel ward comes to over £4000. Given the cost of a first class stamp is £1.35 not £1.65 and that this is the smallest ward in the parish the figure of £4000 is clearly incorrect. We were previously told that the parish poll would cost £30K. This therefore calls into question all ‘facts and figures’ that the council releases.” (*end quote*)

SECONDED: Cllr Fisher. There were seven votes in favour and one abstention. The motion was carried.

Item 4: Motions from Councillors:

- 4.1 Motion proposed by Cllr Evans: Management of Meetings**
F.C. 216 To request that the chair of the Full Council meetings, and other council meetings, ensure full compliance with Standing Orders 2(a-c) and 3(e-k) at all times, with particular attention to enforcement during any Public Session (*)

SECONDED: Cllr Fisher.

A recorded vote was requested.

Cllr D Bramer	FOR
Cllr S Buchanan	FOR
Cllr P Crow	FOR
Cllr Evans	FOR
Cllr Fisher	FOR
Cllr Smith	FOR
Cllr Wade	FOR
Cllr Watson	FOR

There were eight votes in favour. The motion was carried.

- 4.2 Motion proposed by Cllr Crow: Pitfield Green Toilets**
F.C. 217 To resolve that no further action be taken on the demolition of the public toilets on Pitfield Green until the following conditions have been met:
- (a) A second survey of the toilet building has been conducted with instructions to specify what is required
 - (i) to bring the building up to the standard required by current building regulations
 - (ii) to meet the legal minimum requirement for reopening the building
- in order that competitive costings can be obtained to undertake the work for both options.
- (b) Due consideration has been given by councillors to a range of designs including a single-unit accessible toilet, as previously agreed, together with the refurbishment options based on the second survey.
 - (c) Costings have been sought for one or more options chosen by councillors, leading to a decision on a single preferred option to pursue further.
 - (d) Planning permission has been gained for the preferred option.

SECONDED: Cllr Wade made an amendment to propose that the Community Toilet Scheme budget be used to fund the second survey.

A recorded vote was requested.

Cllr D Bramer	FOR
Cllr S Buchanan	FOR
Cllr P Crow	FOR
Cllr Evans	FOR
Cllr Fisher	FOR
Cllr Smith	FOR
Cllr Wade	FOR
Cllr Watson	AGAINST

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

4.3 Motion proposed by Cllr Watson: Vote of No Confidence against the Vice-Chair, Cllr Crow

F.C. 218 This Council resolves that:

1. It has no confidence in Vice-Chair Peter Crow due to his failure to act in accordance with proper governance principles and his disregard for the advice of the Proper Officer.
2. Vice-Chair Peter Crow acted improperly in the calling of an Extraordinary Full Council Meeting against the explicit advice of the Proper Officer, failing to uphold the standards of due process and governance expected of his role.
3. The decision to cancel the improperly called meeting at the last minute caused significant reputational damage to the Council, undermining public confidence in its decision-making processes.
4. As Vice-Chair, Peter Crow had a duty to ensure compliance with procedural and governance standards but failed to provide the necessary leadership in upholding the integrity of the Council's operations.
5. This Council formally withdraws its confidence in Vice-Chair Peter Crow and requests that he consider his position in light of the disruption and reputational harm caused.

SECONDED: Cllr Evans

Cllr Watson added that following his email to the Vice Chair, he failed to make a full and truthful apology for calling and then cancelling the meeting and failing to issue notices and display them at the venue.

Cllr Watson also asked a direct question of the Vice Chair, "Did you attend the Village Hall to explain, to any parishioners that attended,

the reason for the cancellation?.” The Vice Chair stated that he had attended the venue. Cllr Watson then pressed the Vice Chair on the time that he had attended, but the Vice Chair could not give an answer. Cllr Watson then advised that he was personally in attendance at 6pm speaking to the parishioners that had turned up for the meeting.

In the ensuing debate the Clerk stated that her advice had been given prior to any summons being issued. This advice clearly gave the Vice Chair two options on how to proceed: start the process of requesting an extraordinary meeting as in the Standing Orders or the motion be put on the next full council meeting. However, the Vice Chair chose to not take the Clerks advice but instead ‘Google’ the question “Can the acting Chair call an extraordinary parish council meeting?.” The Clerk is the adviser to the council. Part of the role is to provide information and guidance as to the law. Cllr Bramer stated that Councillors do not have to take the advice given to them from the Proper Officer.

A recorded vote was requested.

Cllr D Bramer	AGAINST
Cllr S Buchanan	AGAINST
Cllr P Crow	AGAINST
Cllr Evans	FOR
Cllr Fisher	FOR
Cllr Smith	FOR
Cllr Wade	AGAINST
Cllr Watson	FOR

There were four votes in favour and four against. The Chair of the meeting, Cllr Crow, used their casting vote. The motion fell.

Item 5: Officers Report

F.C. 219 The officer’s report will be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Item 6: Swale Community Leisure: Activity Fun Days: To consider funding the activity fun days, dates as detailed in the report for 2025/2026.

F.C. 220 Councillors heard from Ben Ryder, from Swale Community Leisure and agreed to fund the activity fun days, as detailed in the report, in line with the Families and Young People budget of £6000 for 2025/2026

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

Item 7: Public Session & External Reports

7.1 Public Session

F.C. 221 Members of the public were invited to speak on matters of interest. A question was asked about the number of FOIs outstanding and how many of those have exceeded the deadline for response. They asked that this information be brought to the next meeting.

A trustee of the Meopham Cricket Club enquired about the basal cutting and the tree pollarding. The Clerk advised that the basal cutting had been scheduled as urgent and it was disappointing that it still remained. This would be followed up again. The tree pollarding would have to wait until bird nesting season was finished, but 3 quotes had been sourced, once received councillors will make the decision ready for the works to be carried out in October.

A member of the public asked when the hyperlink to the statement by the Chair of the Council published on the website would be removed. They were advised that it would be looked at on Thursday when the Clerk was next in the office.

A member of the public expressed their agreement with the motion regarding the public session, was going to read a statement that purported to the Pitfield Green toilets but motion at 4.2 had been agreed, so wasn't necessary and stated that motion 4.3 highlighted the lack of agreement amongst councillors.

A member of the public stated that MPC had applied for lottery funding for one accessible unit. This would be in breach of legislation that requires separate toilet facilities. One unit would not pass building regulations. In addition, she had started a petition which had 1400 signatures supporting the need for the toilets to remain. A councillor asked if these signatures could be verified by postcode to show they live within Meopham. They responded that it was a local petition, but not all were within Meopham. Walkers, delivery drivers, bus drivers all have a right to use a toilet.

A member of the public stated that MPC needed to stop rubbishing surveys and conduct their own. They added that the person that publishes documents can be found libel for its content.

Another member of the public expressed their appreciation that the councillors had agreed to another survey as these toilets needed saving in some way. They then expressed their disappointment that other people hadn't come forward with offers of help. He was a builder but you would need other trades such as an electrician. He then advised all those present that Lenham Parish Council were refurbishing a toilet block that was very similar to the Pitfield Green toilet block in size and looks, this had raised great concerns as they had 10 companies tender for the works and all were above £100K. This works would give them three accessible toilets and to fund this project they had sold some land.

They then proposed that a separate meeting was needed to establish options and discuss things such as funding issues just to reopen as they stand. If torn down, the use of the bricks to rebuild. They finished with the statement that everyone here were not going to all get what they want. We could all chip in, but it was just under £15K just for the 3 hand dryers. There are also other things coming down the road for Meopham.

7.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

F.C. 222 There were no Borough Councillors or County Councillor present.

7.3 Police

F.C. 223 There were no Police present.

Item 8: Pitfield Green Toilets: To consider the quotes received for the demolition of the toilet block

F.C. 224 It was agreed to accept the quote from South Kent Demolition at a cost of £6000+ VAT.

PROPOSED: Cllr Evans. SECONDED: Cllr Smith.

A recorded vote was requested.

Cllr D Bramer	FOR
Cllr S Buchanan	FOR
Cllr P Crow	FOR
Cllr Evans	FOR
Cllr Fisher	FOR
Cllr Smith	FOR
Cllr Wade	ABSTAIN
Cllr Watson	FOR

There were seven votes in favour and one abstention. The motion was carried.

Item 9: Financial Matters

9.1 Approval of Payments: To approve the payments made since the last meeting up to 28.02.25

F.C. 225 Cllr Wade queried Voucher 212 and why it had not been agreed by Full Council. The Clerk advised that she had the authority to demolish the toilet block and this could not be carried out safely until the electricity supply had been removed. Three quotes were not necessary as the works can only be carried out by UK Power

Networks and had to be paid in advance. The Chair of the Council was consulted.

Members approved the payments up to 28.02.25 as per the report.

PROPOSED: Cllr Evans. SECONDED: Cllr Smith. Agreed.

9.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 11.03.25

F.C. 226 The receipts and payments report up 11.03.25 was noted.

9.3 Bank Statements: To note the Unity bank statement and the supporting bank reconciliation as of 28.02.25

F.C. 227 The Clerk advise that the agenda should read Unity bank statement not Lloyds. The bank statement and the supporting bank reconciliation as of 28.02.25 were noted and signed by the Chairman.

9.4 Council Reserves: To note the reserves balance as of 28.02.25

F.C. 228 The council reserves were noted as at 28.02.25.

9.5 New Account: To agree the opening of a new account and the bank signatories

F.C. 229 Members agreed to the opening of a new account with Redwood Bank with a 35 day notice. All signatories to be the same as other bank accounts as these will be reviewed at the Annual Council meeting in May.

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

Item 10: New Website: To consider the quotes received for providing Meopham Parish Council with a new website

F.C. 230 Cllr Smith proposed that as Cllr Haslam was not in attendance, this item be postponed. All members agreed.

Item11: Planning Applications: To consider and make recommendations on the following planning applications:

F.C. 231 20250170 – Meopham Windmill, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend Kent DA13 0QA

Application for Listed Building Consent for the removal of failed mortar haunch from abutment junction of engine house roof with brick base to the windmill, make repairs to waterproof the roof with stepped lead flashings and soakers in place of the mortar, replace existing fibre roof cement slates with modern asbestos free fibre cement slates where required

Cllr Watson PROPOSED that the council should not raise any objection. All in favour.

- F.C. 232 20250076 – Northfield House, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend Kent DA13 0AQ**
Demolition of garage and erection of a self-build 3 bed dwelling in rear garden of Northfield House

Cllr Wade declared an interest, but stated just for clarification on Cllr Watsons comments, that it was not in a conservation area and it was not within the green belt.

Cllr Watson PROPOSED that the council should object over the concerns with the access to the site, it was a shared entrance. All in favour. Cllr Wade abstained.

- F.C. 233 20240826 – Commority Farm, Harvel Road, Meopham, Gravesend Kent DA13 0UA**
Erection of an Agricultural Livestock Building

Cllr Evans PROPOSED that the council should not raise any objection to this application. All in favour.

- F.C. 234 20250143 – Land On The Western Side Of Ridge Lane, Meopham**
Retrospective conversion of existing building to two bed dwelling, use of outbuilding for ancillary storage, hard and soft landscaping to include access, and parking amenity area

Cllr Evans PROPOSED that the council object to this retrospective application due to inappropriate development and approval would serve to encourage further such destruction. In addition MPC recommend enforcement action.

- Item 12: Planning Appeals: To note the following appeals have been received**

- F.C. 235 2025/009/REF – 42 Cricketers Drive, Meopham, DA13 0AX**
Demolition of existing rear garage and conservatory. Erection of single storey side and rear wrap around extension, hip to gable enlargement to allow for the creation of a rear dormer, installation of roof lights in the front roof slope and conversion of roof into habitable rooms.
Change of Use of Land to form a Gypsy/Traveller site comprising the siting of 1 Mobile Home, 1 Touring Caravan, and 1 Dayroom

Noted.

- Item 13: Annual Parish Meeting : To agree a new date**

F.C. 236 Cllr Buchanan PROPOSED Wednesday 30th April 2025 for the Annual Parish meeting, as it was better before the Annual Council meeting. All in favour.

Item 14: Harvel Cricket Club: To receive and note a letter from Harvel Cricket Club

F.C. 237 The Councillors asked the Clerk to write to the Harvel Cricket Club to advise that they have no statutory powers to fund this. However, they could try Active Kent & Medway and/or the National Lottery Awards for All. In addition, watch out for the Parish Council community grants scheme for 2025/2026.

Item 15: Liaison Councillor Reports: To receive liaison councillor reports for information only

F.C. 238 Cllr Watson had attended a 'Secure the Landscape' meeting at which he had raised a number of issues. The Rural Taskforce were being pulled away from the area even though they had been funded to police around here. The lack of enforcement down Whitepost Lane, Cobham had also been raised, again where are the rural taskforce and why are the sites down there being treated differently?

The meeting closed at 8.48pm

Agenda Item: **5 – Tuesday 18 March 2025**

Title: **Officer's Report**

Prepared By: **Lisa Winter – Clerk and RFO**

Cancelled Extraordinary Meeting

The Clerk is the adviser to the council. Part of my role is to provide information and guidance as to the law to aid council members. I have to ensure that statutory and other provision governing or affecting the running of the council are observed. As the Proper Officer to the Council in law, I am answerable to the council as a whole if I fail to do this.

Prior to any summons being issued for the Extraordinary meeting, I gave the Vice-Chair unbiased advice regarding the process of requesting an extraordinary meeting. I also stated that the motion could go on the next full council agenda. The Vice-Chair chose to disregard my advice and not follow the correct process. The result being that the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 5th March 2025 was not legally constituted and therefore any decisions taken would have been null and void.

The Vice-Chair made the decision to cancel the meeting.

Judsons

I have this week received some correspondence back from The Colts. This needs looking at in detail and reading alongside the lease.

They understand that the arrangements for booking Judson's have been put in place by the Manager, but they still need to collate the procedure details and will send them in due course.

They are also still yet to provide us with keys following changing the locks.

Meopham Cricket Club

I have this week received some correspondence back from the Cricket Club Trustees. This needs looking at in detail and reading alongside the lease.

We have today received a decision from Gravesham Borough Council allowing the pollarding of 6 x lime trees at the rear of the cricket pavilion. The pollarding needs to be carried out between October and March to avoid the bird nesting season. So unfortunately this work will now have to wait until October. However, we have approached three companies to obtain quotes for the works so that councillors can agree the funding and everything can be in place for October.

I was also disappointed to see that the basal has still not been cut at the rear of the cricket pavilion, even though I have instructed this to be carried out as a matter of urgency, along with all the trees on Meopham Green having this work carried out.

I will follow this up again.