

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



A Civility & Respect
Pledge Council

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

Members Present: Cllr A Evans
 Cllr D Fisher
 Cllr C Price (Chairman)
 Cllr D Sims
 Cllr G Smith
 Cllr P Watson

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

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

F.C. 146 Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Adam (prior engagement), Cllr Bramer, Cllr Buchanan (family commitment), Cllr Crow, Cllr Haslam (prior engagement) and Cllr Wade.

Cllr Price as Chairman asked that her disappointment at the number of last minute apologies received for the budget setting meeting be noted.

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

F.C. 147 There were no declarations of interest received.

Item 3: **Minutes of Previous Meetings: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19.11.24**

F.C. 148 PROPOSED: Cllr Smith. SECONDED: Cllr Fisher. All in favour.

Item 4: **Public Session & External Reports**

4.1 **Public Session**

F.C. 149 Mr Ferrin raised a number of points in connection with the draft budget which Cllr Price addressed or advised that the rationale for inclusion would be discussed during the budget item later in the agenda. Mr Ferrin asked a question about Reserve amounts and it was confirmed that this information would be provided.

Mr Cleary made a statement that the toilets in Cobham had been closed and then reopened.

Two trustees of Meopham Cricket Club were in attendance to report damage to the green which had occurred to the outfield whilst installing the Christmas tree. The Chairman agreed to meet with the trustees and make a site visit with the Clerk, with any remedial works deemed necessary being the responsibility of Meopham Parish Council.

Mr Leggett was in attendance to represent the owner from Costcutter of Camer Parade. He advised that following the new road design they had a 10% decline in sales and asked about the parking issues and whether time limits had been considered or if they could be put in place.

Cllr Price advised that we were awaiting a displacement activity report from Gravesham Borough Council following the new road layout and that, although the safety issues had been addressed, the parish council had an ongoing dialogue with Gravesham regarding the parking, better use of School Close and are aware of the fact that there are 2 differing parking restriction (length of stay) notices in force at the parade which exacerbate the problem and need to be looked at further. Cllr Price confirmed that she would visit Mr Leggett in the new year to discuss matters further.

4.2 Borough Councillors and County Councillor

F.C. 150 There were no Borough Councillors or County Councillor present.

6.3 Police and Community Warden

F.C. 151 There were no Police and Community Warden present.

Item 5: Council Services – Pitfield Green Toilets: To receive a report from the Surveyor and agree the future of the public toilet block

F.C. 152 The Chairman read out a summary document which noted the structural condition and the compliance issues along with the options in the surveyor's report. She detailed the parish poll results. Advised on the utilisation figures with extrapolated cost per visit for 250, 500 and 728 visits per year and highlighted the fact that even the supporters of re-opening the toilets agreed that most users are identified as non-parishioners.

Cllr Price PROPOSED:

1. the demolition of the existing building to slab level. The slab to remain if it was fit for purpose; and
2. the parish investigate the installation of a single-unit accessible toilet subject to grant funding and approval from Gravesham Borough Council due to the site being in a conservation area and opposite the war memorial.

SECONDED: Cllr Smith. All in favour.

F.C. 153 Closed Session – all public, press and parish councillors with an interest in items 6 and 7 were asked to leave the meeting.

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

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 were asked to leave the meeting

Item 6: Personnel Committee:

6.1 To receive the report and documents submitted to the Personnel Committee

F.C. 154 Members received the report and documents.

6.2 To receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 10.12.24

F.C. 155 Members received the draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 10.12.24.

6.3 To agree the settlement figure, with the maximum figure being inclusive of costs, as recommended by the Personnel Committee

F.C. 156 Members agreed the settlement figure, with the maximum figure being inclusive of costs, as recommended by the Personnel Committee, to come from general reserves.

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

6.4 To implement the recommendations at 7.2 of the report and at P.C. 9 of the minutes

F.C. 157 Members agreed the implementation of the recommendations.

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

Item 7: Employment Tribunal: To agree the budget figure

F.C. 158 Members agreed the employment tribunal figure for the budget with the rest being taken from general reserves.

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

END OF CLOSED SESSION

Item 8: Personnel Committee – Terms of Reference: To agree the terms of reference

F.C. 159 It was agreed to adopt the Personnel Committee terms of reference.
PROPOSED: Cllr Price. SECONDED: Cllr Smith. All in favour.

Item 9: Personnel Committee – Membership: To elect member as per the agreed terms of reference

F.C. 160 It was agreed that the Personnel Committee would consist of the Chairman and the following permanent members: Cllr Fisher, Cllr Sims, Cllr Smith and Cllr Watson.

It was agreed that Cllr Adam and Cllr Evans would serve as substitute members.

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

Item 10: Planning: To review the arrangements in place which were agreed for a period of 3 months, to allow for the reduction in available Officer resource. If members wish to continue to run it as a Working Group, new terms of reference will need to be agreed at the next Full Council meeting

F.C. 161 Members agreed that it should run as a Working Group with the terms of reference to be agreed at the next Full Council meeting.

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

Item 11: Planning – Membership: To elect members to Planning for the interim period

F.C. 162 It was agreed that Planning would consist of the Chairman and the following members: Cllr Adam, Cllr Fisher, Cllr Evans, Cllr Haslam, Cllr Sims, Cllr Smith and Cllr Watson.

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

Item 12: Parish Council Representatives on External Bodies: To note the representatives for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year

F.C. 163 It was agreed to appoint the following representatives for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year:

Meopham Village Hall Committee	<i>Vacant</i>
Kent Association of Local Councils	Cllr Price and Cllr Watson <i>(empowered to appoint proxies in their absence)</i>
Meopham Windmill Trust	Cannot appoint at this time – Mr D Denman and Mr A Parker (2023-27)

Culverstone Community Association	Rotating amongst Cllr Adam, Cllr Evans and Cllr Price as members for the Culverstone and Harvel ward
-----------------------------------	--

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

Item 13: Liaison Councillors: To note the councillors for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year

F.C. 164 The liaison councillor roles for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year were noted.

Item 14: Council Administration – Employee Assistance Programme: To consider the quotes for providing an EAP for both staff and councillors, to be funded from general reserves for the remainder of this financial year and a budget line has been added for 2025/26

F.C. 165 It was agreed to accept the quote from Life and Progress at a cost of £650+ VAT per annum.

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

Item 15: Financial Matters

15.1 Approval of Payments: To approve the payments made since the last meeting up to 10.12.24

F.C. 166 Members approved the payments up to 10.12.24 as per the report.

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

15.2 Receipts & Payments Report: To note the receipts and payments report up to 10.12.24

F.C. 167 The receipts and payments report up 10.12.24 was noted.

15.3 Bank Statements: To note the Unity bank statement and the supporting bank reconciliation as of 30.11.24

F.C. 168 The Unity bank statement and the supporting bank reconciliation as of 30.11.24 were noted and signed by the Chairman.

15.4 Expenses Claim Form: To consider authorising the expenses claimed by the Clerk

F.C. 169 It was agreed to approve the expenses from the Clerk totalling £68.94.

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

15.5 Financial Risk Assessment: To review and approve the Financial Risk Assessment

- F.C. 170** The Financial Risk Assessment was approved. However, it was agreed that this was a work in progress document which needed adding to the decision tracker so that the document could be reviewed. Cllr Smith identified the need for probability, which he would address before the next review.

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

15.6 External Audit: To note the External Auditors report and Certificate for the year ended 2023-2024, Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Parish Council has been received. The notice of conclusion of audit will remain on display for 14 days in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

- F.C. 171** This was noted.

15.7 Interim Audit Report for 2024-2025: To receive the Interim Audit Report from Mulberry and Co and consider its recommendations

- F.C. 172** The Interim Audit Report was noted as being received and the recommendations implemented.

Item 16: Budget Monitoring for 2024-2025: To receive a budget monitoring report from the Responsible Financial Officer for the 2024-2025 financial year

- F.C. 173** The budget monitoring report as of 16th December 2024 was received.

- F.C. 174** Suspension of Standing Order 3(x) – a meeting shall not exceed a period of two hours

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

Item 17: Council Budget for 2025-2026

17.1 Budget for 2025-2026: To approve a budget for the 2025-2026 financial year

- F.C. 175** The draft budget was considered by Council. The budget was discussed line-by-line. Members agreed two final budget options for 2025-2026:

- A: £288,394 including some Employment Tribunal Compensation Costs; OR**
B: £232,394 Employment Tribunal settled Pre Jan 2025

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

17.2 Precept for 2025-2026: To set the precept for the 2025-2026 financial year

F.C. 176 An income of £824 is expected in 2025-2026. The precept for 2025-2026 was agreed at:

A: £287,570; OR

B: £231,570

A copy of the budget will be attached as an appendix to the minutes.

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

Item 18: Liaison Councillor Reports: To receive liaison councillor reports for information only

F.C. 177 Cllr Evans updated on the final arrangements for the Carols on the Green event. Cllr Evans was formally thanked for all her time and effort that she had put into organising this event.

The meeting closed at 9:47pm

MEOPHAM PARISH COUNCIL
PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2025/26

Council Projects & Events	A: include some ET Compensation Costs	B: ET Settled pre Jan	Information
Community Events	£7,000	£7,000	
Meopham Windmill	£5,000	£5,000	Allowance in the event that the Windmill Trust need financial support
Judson's Pavilion	£6,000	£6,000	Provisioning for Judson's Pavilion assuming that basis of the Lease with The Colts is amended to remove the self-repair clause. This figure may need to cover the running costs of the pavilion depending upon the terms put forward to the colts. The Colts have indicated that the running costs of the building are approximately £6k per annum. This figure does not allow for any further legal costs involved in the lease renegotiation (see professional fees below)
Library Service	£12,500	£12,500	Following discussions with KCC, it was clear that they will be reviewing the number of libraries that they keep open in the next fiscal year (there are 99 in Kent)
School Close	£5,000	£5,000	Discussions to take place with GBC to bring the question of School Close Car Park back to the table.
Pitfield Green Toilets	£15,000	£15,000	
TOTAL - Council Projects	£50,500	£50,500	
Council Services			Information
Service Contract & Litter Collection	£20,000	£20,000	
Trees	£3,300	£3,300	
Arboricultural Survey - Rolling Provision	£1,650	£1,650	
Defibrillator Maintenance Contract	£150	£150	
Community Grants Scheme	£3,000	£3,000	
Families and Young People	£6,000	£6,000	
Community Engagement	£3,000	£3,000	
Bus Shelter Cleaning	£1,200	£1,200	
Village Sign & Flagpole	£1,000	£1,000	
Speedwatch	£1,500	£1,500	Split with Cobham to buy the equipment
Streetlights	£11,040	£11,040	
TOTAL - Council Services	£51,840	£51,840	
Council Administration			Information
Staff Salaries, Tax & NIC	£88,101	£88,101	
Staff Pension	£13,600	£13,600	
Cllrs and Staff Expenses	£400	£400	
Professional Memberships	£4,816	£4,816	
Employment Tribunal	£56,000		Compensation costs Balancing figure from Reserves 30000 = £86000
EAP	£780	£780	
Chairman's Allowance	£100	£100	
Insurance	£3,000	£3,000	
Office Rent	£6,525	£6,525	
Venue Hire for Meetings	£720	£720	
Office Supplies	£1,200	£1,200	
Software Licences	£1,080	£1,080	
Internal & External Audit Fees	£1,200	£1,200	
Payroll Services	£360	£360	
Bank Charges	£372	£372	
Professional Fees	£5,000	£5,000	
Photocopier Contract	£700	£700	
Communications & IT	£2,100	£2,100	
Total - Council Administration	£186,054	£130,054	
TOTAL ALL	£288,394	£232,394	
Income (See Below)	£824	£824	
Receipts (Transfer from General Reserves)			
PRECEPT (Total expenditure less income and receipts)	£287,570	£231,570	
TAX BASE 2025-26	3,064	3,064	
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the previous year	£ 63.44	£ 63.44	
Amount Payable per Band D Household for the year shown	£ 93.85	£ 75.58	
Increase/(Decrease) per Household (£.p per annum)	£ 30.41	£ 12.14	

Increase/(Decrease) per Household (% per annum)	48%	19%	
Estimated Income			
Income source	Amount	Amount	
Allotment Association - Rent	£433	£433	The rent was last reviewed in Feb 2023, and cannot be reviewed again for another three years
Judsons Pavilion - Rent	£200	£200	The rent review is at ten-year mark which would be 2030
Wayleave - EDF	£170	£170	The wayleave figure is not adjustable
Cricket Club rent	£1	£1	The lease provides only for charging a peppercorn rent.
Bank Interest	£20	£20	Uplifted due to increase in interest rates
Total	£824	£824	