

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 25th January 2023 at 7.30pm in
The Scouts Hut

Cllr Powell welcomed all present to the meeting.

Public discussion

A resident thanked Cllr Stanley for the use of a walker and the Parish Council for the beautiful flowers and card received, following her accident before Christmas.

1 Present

Cllr E Powell, Cllr G Dean, Cllr T Sams, Cllr J Sams, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr C Roots, Cllr R Dayes, Cllr S Luck, Cllr S Brown, RFO/Amenity Manager Mr M Cuerden and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst
1 Member of Public

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr T Griffiths, Community Warden Martin Sherwood

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 30th November 2022 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Roots, seconded by Cllr Dean; with 7 in favour and 2 abstentions.

4 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr G Dean: Agenda Item 6.2 (Recommendations from the Environmental Committee) as she lives adjacent to Woodlands Walk

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

5 Planning

5.1 The outstanding planning applications were noted.

5.2 The approved applications were noted.

5.3 The refused applications were noted.

5.4 Other Planning Matters

- Cllr Powell reported on the recent Planning Appeal for Firswood Lodge & Jays View; a decision should be made within 6-8 weeks. Cllr Roots commented that the s106 document had already been signed and it only detailed funding towards open spaces. There was general discussion relating to the unacceptable tone of the hearing. Both the legal team for the applicant and the Inspector had come across as intimidating and offensive towards speakers. Cllr T Sams stated that, in light of this, the Parish Council should employ proper legal representation for any future large appeals.
- Pilgrims Retreat Planning Committee Meeting: It was noted that the two outstanding planning application for Pilgrims Retreat will be discussed at a Planning Committee meeting to be held on the 23rd February. Documents should be circulated ahead of the meeting.
- Local Plan Examination: Cllr Powell read out the following statement regarding the recent Local Plan Examination (Stage 1): *The Inspector's initial findings in respect of Heathlands are a vindication to all of those who raised issues before, during and after the Reg 18 and 19 consultations that the garden settlement elements of the strategy was misguided. However, this is not an outright win for any group as the Inspector has suggested ways in which Heathlands can be brought to heel and satisfy the issues of soundness he has identified. If this happens, then the policy will be found to be sound. It remains to be seen how MBC will deal with this and, at present, the PC should be considering how to push MBC into confirming timings for the response requested by the Inspector and anticipated dates for the Stage 2 sessions, so that the maximum amount of time can be afforded into considering what position the PC is to take in respect of the sessions and the resourcing required.*

MBC needs time to consider and digest the Inspector's comments, however, this should not be left to run on for too long. In that regard, consideration is being given to writing a letter to MBC to try and draw out some details from them if a response is not received by early February. Counsel remains engaged and will assist with this going forward, but in the meantime (and in the absence of any MIQs from the Inspector for Stage 2), consideration needs to be given to the policies and issues being considered at Stage 2 and insofar as they are relevant to the PC. These can be found in the Inspector's note of 6th July 2022 ("Guidance Notes for Participants") at para 15.

Cllr Powell suggested that the Parish Council sends a letter, putting pressure on MBC, requesting an update of when they will respond to the correspondence from the Inspector. It was agreed that this could be drafted at the next Planning Meeting on the 3rd February. **ACTION: Planning Cttee**

Cllr T Sams suggested that this be coordinated with Lenham Parish Council, who will also be writing. Cllr Dean stated that the Parish Council's barrister is due to speak with Lenham's soon and Cllr Powell added that some of the issues for the two Parishes are different, with the main joint issues being highway and ecology related. Cllr Powell added that he would speak with Cllr Britt (Lenham PC Chairman). **ACTION: Cllr Powell**

6. Environmental

6.1 Minutes of the Meeting held 16th January 2023: The Minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Stanley; with 4 in favour (those present at the meeting).

6.2 Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:

- That Contractor A should be awarded the Woodlands Walk contract, and Contractor B should be awarded the Medical Centre: This was proposed by Cllr T Sams, seconded by Cllr Dayes, with all in favour. The Amenity Manager reported that Contractor A was Kent Valley and Contractor B was Isle Landscapes (both current Council contractors).
 - That the previous supplier be approached to provide another chalk treatment for the lake, so long as the cost isn't massively inflated: The Amenity Manager stated that the cost in 2021 was £2,007 and he would not expect to see a quote for more than £2,500. This was proposed by Cllr T Sams, seconded by Cllr Dayes, with 8 in favour and 1 abstention.
 - New Burial Ground:
 - HPC to undertake all necessary assessments, planning permissions etc required on the land
 - All being well, we seek to get the church to take the NBG on, either as a new ground or as an extension
 - If all successful, the Parish Council will offer to maintain the NBG and the churchyard in perpetuity.
 - If all proceeds as above, the Parish Council will share the repair costs to the north wall

The Amenity Manager asked that, instead of maintaining the churchyard in perpetuity, Councillors consider amending this to 'maintain the churchyard whilst the burial ground is still in active use', as it will then be closed and ownership would need to be agreed. After discussion, it was proposed by Cllr T Sams to progressed with the roadmap, as per the recommendation from the Environmental Committee (with the amendment removing 'in peretuity'). This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour. Cllr T Sams then proposed that the Clerk & RFO be given delegated powers to progress with the necessary work. This was agreed by all present.

The Clerk stated that the trial pits could cost in the region of £5,000, but a free Risk Assessment will be completed first to determine the level of investigation required. The Amenity Manager added that, worst case scenerio, the new burial ground would be deemed unsuitable and the churchyard would have to be closed.

 - That the Pre-School be informed that, if they wish, the Parish Council would support their application for planning permission to move the hut on to the New Burial Ground: The Amenity Manager gave the background to the current situation regarding the hut. Initial discussions had indicated that, as the hut was a temporary structure, no permissions would be required. However, a member of the Diocese Achitecultural Commitee had visited the church and subsequently stated that the hut needed a faculty, which would likely be refused, and it needs to be removed from the churchyard immediately. It was noted that the Pre-School is a village asset, which the Parish Council does not want to see close, due to losing the hut. It was proposed by Cllr Roots to support the Pre-School in any application they submit to move the hut into the new burial ground. This was seconded by Cllr Luck, with all in favour.
- It was noted that the Pre-School would have to arrange the application, subsequent hut move and any access that would be required from the churchyard into the new burial ground.

6.3 Other Environmental Matters

Cllr T Sams suggested that the Annual Village Litter Pick be held on Saturday 1st April 9am-11am (meeting on the village green). All Councillors agreed with this date.

7. Finances

7.1 Income and Expenditure spreadsheets: The finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr J Sams, seconded by Cllr Luck; with all in favour. Cllr Dean queried whether the money being used to fund the VHT will be recouped in the future and asked whether it could be added to their loan repayments. Cllr Roots stated that this is not possible, due to the current Trust constitution. It was felt that this would be something for future discussion.

7.2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th January 2023: The Minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Roots; with 5 in favour (those present at the meeting).

7.3 Recommendations from the F&GP Committee:

- Budget & Precept for 2023/2024: The Clerk reminded all present that the proposed budget and Precept for 2023/2024 had already been circulated to all Councillors. The proposed recommendation is that the precept cost per band D property be held at £95.47 for the forthcoming financial year, giving a precept of £131,481. This will result in there being no increase to residents but, due to the decreases in Band D properties, the decision would result in the precept funding being decreased by £716 for 2023/2024. It was proposed by Cllr Roots that **the precept for the forthcoming year be set at £131,481, with no increase per Band D household**. This was seconded by Cllr T Sams, with all in favour.
- Further Grant Request for 2022:
- Friday Coffee Morning: Booth Hall hire costs: It was noted that this would amount to approximately £1,000 across the year. It was proposed by Cllr Powell to pay the cost of the hall hire for the Friday morning coffee morning for the forthcoming year. This was seconded by Cllr Brown, with all in favour.

8. **Highways**

It was noted that a report had been circulated to all present. The roads are in a particularly poor state, following the recent bad weather, will potholes being constantly reported. County Cllr Prendergast has now confirmed that the 20mph West Street scheme has been approved and work is scheduled for April/May. Cllr T Sams asked that thanks be noted to Shellina, for all of her support pushing for the scheme to be passed, following the recent JTB meeting. With regards to the A20 average speed camera project, the Engineer has been chased regarding a start date for the installation and they are currently waiting on some final input from the contractor. The Officer will contact the Clerk again, as soon as she hears anything.

9. **Civility & Respect Pledge**

Following Councillors approving to sign up for the Civility & Respect Pledge at the November meeting, the Clerk had circulated two policies (Dignity at Work & Dignity policy and Equality & Diversity policy) for the Council to approve. The Clerk added that both were new policies written jointly by NALC, SLCC and One Voice Wales. It was proposed by Cllr T Sams to approve and adopt both policies. This was seconded by Cllr Dayes, with all in favour. The Clerk gave each Councillor a training questionnaire, to be completed and returned, to help highlight any support that Councillors may need to fully undertake their role as a Parish Councillor. These are to be returned by the next meeting, at the latest.

10. **Santa's Grotto**

Cllr Griffiths had circulated a report before the meeting.

11. **KALC Climate Change Carbon Footprint Calculator**

Cllr T Sams is to circulate some bullet points to be considered by Councillors at each of the Council's next Committee meetings. **ACTION: Cllr T Sams**

12. **King's Coronation (incorporating the Big Lunch)**

Cllr Dean reported that the Big Lunch will be held on Sunday 7th May, as part of the King's Coronation celebrations. Volunteers will be needed to assist and Cllr Dean would be grateful for any raffle donations. Cllr T Sams confirmed that the toilets have been booked.

The Craft groups are making bunting for around the village and some crochet crowns. The group would like to erect 3 maypoles (both ends of West Street and near to the Co-op) with the bunting attached. A Just Giving page has been set up, however the group may need some additional funding from the Parish Council. It was confirmed that Councillors are happy to support this project. It was noted that HIB are starting to work on the flower designs for the flower beds.

The Clerk then reminded all present that Councillors had previously agreed to purchase a commemorative item for the children in the village (up to the age of 11). The Clerk had contacted a company who is organising a commemorative coin and these would cost £1.95 (+vat) each, if over 500 are ordered. After brief discussion it was proposed by Cllr Roots to purchase 650 commemorative coins. This was seconded by Cllr J Sams, with all in favour.

ACTION: Clerk

13. **Play Area Inspections**

The Clerk reminded all present that MBC has notified Parish Clerks of their intention to stop carrying out the monthly play inspections at the end of March 2023. With this in mind, the Clerk has obtained quotes for continuing with the checks from April.

Company 1 had quoted for 12 inspections - £630.00 (obligation free quote for any repairs)

Company 2 had quoted for 12 inspections - £900.00 (can undertake minor repairs)

The Clerk added that she had not obtained a 3rd quote, due to the prices offered by the two companies detailed. Contact would have been made with the Company who provides the annual (larger) safety inspection; however, it would be beneficial for this to be undertaken by an independent company.

It was proposed by Cllr T Sams to ask Company 1 to carry out the monthly safety inspections from April 2023. This was seconded by Cllr Roots, with all in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

The Clerk reported that Company 1 was SafePlay.

14. Future Events

King's Coronation Big Lunch - Sunday 7th May (Glebe Field)
Coffee Morning - every Friday in the Booth Hall (10am - midday)

It is hoped that the Ploughmans in the Church will commence again in April.

15. Items for Future Consideration

Christmas Lights - *Cllr Roots*
Venue for Parish Council Meetings - *Clerk*
Annual Parish Meeting - *Clerk*
Promoting Becoming a Parish Councillor - *Cllr Roots*

16. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 22nd February 2023 at 7.30pm in the Scouts Hut

With no further matters to discuss the main meeting was closed at 9.10pm.