

## HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

**PRESENT:** Cllr D Heaton in the Chair, Cllrs A Trought, T Stanbridge, J Fuller, J Goddard, and I Simmons, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk

**IN ATTENDANCE:** No one.

#### 1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Trought proposed, and Cllr Stanbridge seconded, that Cllr Heaton be elected as Chairman for the forthcoming year. All councillors were in agreement and Cllr Heaton completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Proper Officer.

#### 2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Goddard proposed, and Cllr Trought seconded, that Cllr Summersgill be elected as Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year. All councillors were in agreement. Cllr Summersgill was unable to attend the meeting but had stated his willingness to stand as Vice Chairman. The Clerk will arrange for Cllr Summersgill to complete the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. ACTION: CLERK

#### 3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr M Summersgill.

#### 4. FILMING, RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

There were no members of the public to film, record or photograph the meeting.

#### 5. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

##### 5.1 Declaration of Interests

Cllr Heaton declared an interest in Item 17.1.1 as the property owner is a customer of his and has approached him.

Cllr Heaton declared an interest in Item 17.1.2 as the property owner is a neighbour and has approached him.

##### 5.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

#### 6. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 had been previously distributed and were agreed as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copy of the minutes.

#### 7. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA

Item 9.7 – The Clerk attended the KALC ‘Year End & Audit’ Zoom workshop on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

Item 10.1 – Cllr Summersgill provided a response to the KCC Community Services Consultation.

Item 12.5 – The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership agreement for pond surveying in Hunton has been signed.

#### 8. POLICE

##### 8.1 Police

One crime has been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting:

01-02/05/23 - East Street - Somebody tried to break into a commercial property. The main entrance door was damaged.

## 8.2 **Huntonwatch**

Steve and Sue Wyles from Huntonwatch have provided the following report:

We have seen a significant increase in the number of scams circulating and some are getting quite sophisticated. There is usually a tell-tale sign if you look hard enough and they all tend to have similar themes but a more vulnerable person might miss these and be duped into passing on vital personal information.

Membership has pretty much stagnated and our recent Herald article resulted in no new joiners. We also know that, despite people moving away and giving our details to the new residents, only one family has actually contacted us.

The regular contact we used to have with the police via a PCSO has long since disappeared and all we now get from Kent Police are the emails that the Clerk forwards to us.

The only crime that we have been told about in recent months was the theft of some plants from a garden in the east of the village, and we know of one or two fly tipping episodes in the village.

## 9. **LOCAL COMMUNITY**

### 9.1 **King George V Playing Field Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee was unable to attend the meeting. The following is a summary of the last Committee meeting on 10th May 2023:

A post and rail fence has been installed between the orchard fence and the cricket roller shed, and a close-boarded fence has been fitted between the old cricket club changing rooms and the new pavilion.

The issues arising from the annual play inspection report (all low or very low risk) will be checked during the boundary walk prior to the July meeting.

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, funds carried forward to 2023/24 were £2,543.

A tractor on a spring for infants and small children will be installed in the play area during the Spring.

Maidstone Borough Council have stopped their monthly safety inspections of the play equipment; these will be undertaken by the Committee in future.

Minor projects still to be undertaken include: fitting racking in one of the containers in the car park; fitting a new gate post at the rear of the Community Orchard; replacing a missing post on the activity trail; and the purchase and fitting of a Little Owl nesting box.

### 9.2 **Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways**

Cllr Goddard is still pushing KCC Highways for an installation date for the kerbs outside the school; he would like it to be completed in the summer holidays.

Jamie Cunningham of KCC Highways has advised that KCC Drainage wants Highways to pay for the surfacing work on West Street.

There is no update on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). Additional items have been added but there has been no response from the KCC planners.

Cllr Heaton advised that a resident on West Street who is moving out of the village was told by the purchaser's solicitor that West Street is not fully maintained by Highways, according to an app the solicitor used. This is erroneous as it is actually Grove Lane that is not maintained; something to be aware of.

Cllr Simmons has produced a flyer in the school's name for cars that park on pavements and too close to junctions on West Street. They will be placed on car windscreens and posted through residents' doors.

Cllr Summersgill was unable to attend the meeting but had provided the following report:

There has been no Traffic & Road Safety Working Party (T&RSWP) meeting since the last Parish Council meeting; the next one will be in mid-June. New HGV signs have been put up at Wares Farm by the new owner, Driscolls, but still not right on the highway. Three culverts are still blocked/reported on East Street, Redwall Lane and George Street, evidenced by recent rainstorm. KCC had marked out the supposed East Street gully under tarmac for 'action' in February; they may need a reminder.

Cllr Summersgill has been confirmed as Speedwatch Co-ordinator. Five people have joined/renewed (three new volunteers) and passed Induction & Training in Equipment. The police have visited West Street locations (church and outside Claremont) and confirmed these two sites have been re-approved, now in both directions. South Lodge is still unacceptable due to the location of the 30mph sign, which would need to be moved northwards. The first Speedwatch should be held later this month, albeit probably still 'training'.

### 9.3 **Tree & Pond Warden**

Cllr Summersgill was unable to attend the meeting but had provided the following report:

Trees - nothing significant to report, except that Cllr Summersgill will be calling for a replacement volunteer at the Annual Parish Meeting next week after ten years in post, to hopefully be in place for the next Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) in October.

Ponds – Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) specialists carried out the Great Crested Newt (GCN) survey on 18<sup>th</sup> April. None were found in the George Street pond, but it is a habitat suitable for them, and there is a possibility of DEFRA funding to reinstate the pond, if the landowner permits. Two other ponds on Redwall Lane were considered unsuitable habitats for GCNs, but MVCP subsequently found they had been reported in other Redwall Lane ponds in the past to KRAG (Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group). Half of the budget for the surveys has been spent; two other ponds on East Street will be surveyed next Spring with the remnant CIL monies with both residents willing to allow access.

### 10. **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES**

Members **Agreed** to the following Committee and Working Party arrangements for the forthcoming year:

- Planning Committee – a minimum of three Councillors is required for the Committee to be quorate. All Councillors are members of the Planning Committee.
- Traffic & Road Safety Working Party – a minimum of two Councillors and one member of the public is required for the Working Party to be quorate. Cllrs Goddard, Summersgill and Simmons are members of Traffic & Road Safety Working Party.

### 11. **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

Members **Agreed** to the following appointments for the forthcoming year:

- KCC Highways – Cllr Goddard and Cllr Simmons
- KALC Area Committee – Cllr Summersgill
- Policing matters – Cllr Trought and Cllr Heaton
- Hunton Primary School – Cllr Simmons
- Representative Trustees of the King George V Playing Field Committee - Cllr Heaton and Cllr Stanbridge
- Trustees of the Hunton Village Hall Committee – Cllr Trought and Cllr Heaton

The Parish Plan Steering Committee was removed from the list as it is no longer active.

Members **Agreed** to the following Parish Council responsibilities:

- Footpaths and ditches – Cllr Heaton (primary) and Cllr Goddard (secondary)
- Road conditions and speed limits – Cllr Goddard (primary) and Cllr Simmons (secondary)
- Events and communications – Cllr Trought
- Planning issues and consultations – Cllr Summersgill
- Liaison with KALC, MBC and other external bodies – Cllr Summersgill (primary) and Cllr Heaton (secondary)
- Utilities (broadband, water, electricity) – Cllr Stanbridge (primary) and Cllr Summersgill (secondary)
- Speedwatch – Cllr Summersgill (primary) and Cllr Trought (secondary)

The Hunton Parish Plan/Neighbourhood Plan was removed from the list.

### 12. **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR**

Members **Agreed** to appoint Lionel Robbins as the Internal Auditor for the forthcoming year.

### 13. **COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS**

#### 13.1 **County Councillor**

County Cllr Simon Webb was unable to attend the meeting.

#### 13.2 **Borough Councillors**

Borough Cllrs Lottie Parfitt-Reid, Simon Webb and James Reid were unable to attend the meeting.

### 14. **PARISH MATTERS**

#### 14.1 **Parish Councillors**

Cllr Heaton advised that he has received emails from a London Trust regarding a defibrillator. The

telephone box on West Street was purchased some time ago by an organisation with the intention of installing a defibrillator in the box, but nothing has happened yet. Members **Agreed** that the Clerk should contact the organisation to suggest that they install a defibrillator within six months, otherwise the Parish Council could organise it.

ACTION: CLERK

Cllr Stanbridge suggested that an alternative could be to install a defibrillator on the outside of the Village Club. Members **Agreed** that Cllr Trought should put the idea to the Village Club Committee.

ACTION: CLLR TROUGHT

#### 14.2 Flooding

Cllr Summersgill was unable to attend the meeting but had provided the following report:

A second Flood Warden has undergone online training. A third (Cllr Goddard) is awaiting a rescheduled training course. There have been no flood alerts so far in 2023.

#### 14.3 Climate Change and Sustainability

Cllr Fuller had attended the KALC Climate Change conference. It was not too useful for Hunton as discussion centred around communities joining together to purchase solar panels etc.

Cllr Fuller also attends the Parish ECN meetings, the latest meeting being held on 25<sup>th</sup> April. Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council have undertaken a number of green initiatives but have not released information about them.

Other issues raised that are not pertinent to Hunton included cycle laws, traffic solutions using bio-diesel and five minute buses. Traveller sites were also covered – as travellers are mobile the laws (safety, sanitation) do not apply, which concerns small parishes.

Cllr Fuller believes smaller councils need to join together to have a stronger voice.

Cllr Simmons agreed that dealing with issues in a semi-urban way does not work, but some smaller initiatives could work in Hunton, such as sustainable drainage systems, creating biodiversity – these would be relevant to Hunton as a rural area.

#### 14.4 Bench Replacement/Repair

The Clerk submitted a 'Love Where You Live' grant application for a new bench near the bus stop by the Village Club, which was unsuccessful, however Borough Cllr Parfitt-Reid has advised that MBC could provide a bench at no charge. The Chairman of the Village Club has advised that it would not be easy to install a new bench as the old one had concrete supports which are fixed into its base. The old rotten wooden slats have been removed and if the Parish Council could pay for the slats (a quote of £195 has been obtained), the Club would install them.

Members **Agreed** to fund the replacement of the slats in the bench, which Cllr Heaton will confirm with the Club.

ACTION: CLLR HEATON

#### 14.5 Village Hall Wi-Fi Connection

Cllr Heaton advised that the only Wi-Fi in the Village Hall belongs to the Pre-school and is not for the use by the public. It would be useful for the hall to have its own Wi-Fi as it is a hub for the village and would improve the efficiency of Parish Council meetings by enabling online viewing of planning applications and other documents. It could be possible to install a new line or a satellite dish on the roof.

Members considered the idea of connecting other houses in the area as it may be possible to get a reduced rate, but BT would need to install a network and it could be a slow process. Another suggestion was involving the Pre-school, but they may prefer a separate line as they look after children.

Cllr Stanbridge advised that using Call Flow would be a much faster process and their speeds are good.

Members **Agreed** that Cllr Stanbridge should obtain a quote and speed rating from CallFlow and also contact BT.

ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE

#### 14.6 Clerk's Report

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) application process has now opened (closing date 21<sup>st</sup> May). Maidstone Borough Council is encouraging as many rural communities as possible to come forward and apply for a REPF grant for rural communities to upgrade a community facility, improve sustainability and ensure it remains fit for the future. The Parish Council can make an application if it chooses. Cllr Fuller suggested insulation of the hall, but this would be up to the Village Hall Committee.

MBC Planning Enforcement have investigated the complaint about breach of condition regarding tree protection and removal of trees at Wilsons Yard, stating that the breach has been resolved. A further response has been received to say how it has been resolved which will be provided to Cllr Summersgill for review.

## 15. CONSULTATIONS

### 15.1 Maidstone Borough Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document – Preferred Approaches Consultation (Regulation 18)

Maidstone Borough Council has committed to delivering a Design and Sustainability Development Plan Document (DPD) to site alongside its Local Plan and forthcoming Local Plan Review. The consultation document puts forward a range of draft policies around themes of placemaking; streets and buildings; open space and nature; movement; sustainable buildings; and design quality. New developments will be assessed against these themes. The Preferred Approaches document is accompanied by a consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal.

Members **Agreed** not to respond to the consultation.

### 15.2 KALC Membership Survey 2023

KALC is undertaking the review of its services to help ensure that KALC continues to provide a high-quality service to meet members' needs. The results of previous Surveys have helped the KALC Executive Committee to produce and review the KALC Strategic Plan, which is then adopted annually at the Annual General Meeting.

The Clerk has completed the survey from her point of view.

Members **Agreed** that if they have any comments to make, they will submit them to the Clerk before the deadline, otherwise the Clerk's responses should be submitted.

**ACTION: ALL MEMBERS/CLERK**

## 16. FINANCE

### 16.1 Statement of Internal Control

The Council needs to review the effectiveness of the system of internal control for the Annual Governance Statement in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). A Statement of Internal Control was prepared by the Clerk to assist in this review. Members reviewed the Statement and **Agreed** that it could be signed and included with the year-end accounts. The Statement was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

### 16.2 Annual Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit

In carrying out the Council's annual review of Internal Audit, Members **Agreed** that:

- the Internal Auditor is independent of the Council and has no involvement or responsibility in the financial decision making, management or control of the Council;
- the Internal Auditor is competent to carry out an effective audit of the Council's system of internal control;
- the review and scope of the internal audit adequately assesses the Council's internal controls, governance processes and management of risk;
- they understand the importance of the relationship between the Internal Auditor and the Council;
- adequate preparations are made for the audit procedure to facilitate the work of the Internal Auditor, including making available all relevant documents and records and supplying any information or explanations required; and
- reports received from the Internal and External Auditor are actioned when necessary.

### 16.3 Internal Audit Report

The Internal Auditor, Lionel Robbins, carried out the internal audit on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 but has not provided his final report yet. He has completed the Annual Internal Audit Report on page 3 of the 2022/23 AGAR. Members **Noted** the report.

The separate report will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

### 16.4 Accounts 2022/23

Members reviewed the Council's Statement of Accounts, year-end Financial Book and Fixed Asset Register. The Accounts were signed by the Chairman and the Clerk, and the Chairman also signed the Financial Book.

## 16.5 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23

### 16.5.1 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement

Members considered the Annual Governance Statement contained in Section 1 on page 4 of the AGAR, consisting of 9 assertions. To properly consider the assertions, the Clerk provided Members with a table comparing the Parish Council's practices to proper practices according to the 'Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide – March 2022'.

Members **Agreed** that statements 1 to 8 could all be answered "Yes" and statement 9 should be answered "N/A". Members **Resolved** that the Annual Governance Statement be approved and page 4 of the AGAR was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

### 16.5.2 Section 2 – Accounting Statements

Members considered the Accounting Statements contained in Section 2 on page 5 of the AGAR and **Resolved** that they be approved. The Clerk had already signed page 5 of the AGAR according to the requirements of the external auditor. The Accounting Statements were signed by the Chairman. The period for the exercise of public rights will be 12<sup>th</sup> June to 21<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

### 16.6 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 was **Noted**.

### 16.7 Income Received

Members **Noted** that the following income has been received since the last meeting:

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – FIT receipts	£242.56
Maidstone Borough Council – Precept for 2023/24	£26,338.00

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Stanbridge.

### 16.8 Payments Made

Members **Approved** the following payments made since the last meeting:

SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – March	£508.95
Unity Trust Bank – Service charge	£18.00

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023:

Robert Cox – Maintenance of permissive footpath hedge and verges	£510.00
Npower – Streetlight electricity	£15.60
KALC – Training – Climate Change Conference	£48.00
KALC – Training – Year-end & Audit	£48.00
VCS Websites Ltd – Web hosting	£100.00

### 16.9 Electronic Payments

Members **Approved** the following payments. Cllrs Stanbridge and Fuller will authorise the payments set up in Unity Trust Bank using online banking:

SLCC – Annual membership subscription	£112.00
KALC – Annual membership subscription	£349.36
King George's Field, Hunton – Contribution for 2023/24	£7,000.00
Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Contribution towards running costs (1 <sup>st</sup> half)	£500.00
Cllr Heaton – Reimbursement for drinks/mugs for King's Coronation tea	£202.82
Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery / Food and supplies for Coronation Tea	£600.36

### 16.10 History of Hunton Booklet

Members **Agreed** to fund the £560 cost of printing 200 copies of the booklet on the history of Hunton. The Clerk will set up a payment to Hadlum Printers in Unity Trust Bank, to be authorised by Cllrs Stanbridge and Fuller.

ACTION: CLERK / CLLRS STANBRIDGE AND FULLER

## **16.11 Funding of Village Events Promotional Items**

Cllr Trought proposed that the Parish Council funds the cost of signs and other promotional material to promote village events, using the Entertainment Fund. Members **Agreed** to the proposal.

Cllr Trought also suggested taking photographs at the Coronation Tea which could be transferred to canvases for use in the hall. Cllr Heaton advised that a resident has some old pictures of the village which could form the basis of another booklet on Hunton.

## **16.12 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts**

Members **Agreed** that this item should be left on the agenda but should primarily be used for green issues and biodiversity.

## **17. PLANNING**

### **17.1 Planning Applications**

#### **17.1.1 Cock House, Lughorse Lane - 23/501862/FULL**

Erection of a single storey annexe, ancillary to the main dwelling, including an attached 2 bay garage and workshop.

Parish Council recommendation: No objection.

#### **17.1.2 1 New Cottages, Barn Hill - 23/501505/FULL**

Sub-division of existing dwelling to create 1 no. separate dwelling, including erection of a single storey front extension and creation of a new access and parking.

Parish Council recommendation: No objection, but comment that the driveway should remain shared to retain the same number of accesses to the highway and to retain the beech hedge.

### **17.2 Wilsons Yard, George Street**

Cllr Summersgill was unable to attend the meeting but had provided the following comments for clarity and information to those Members not present at the Planning Committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April:

Cllr Summersgill, as requested at the 27<sup>th</sup> February Planning Committee meeting, had enquired directly to the Environment Consultant about the membrane visible on just three of the six plots. He was advised by Ecologia that this was a waterproofing membrane designed for those three plots only, and hence the differing external 'view' that had been queried. It was also confirmed at that Planning Committee meeting that MBC's Environmental Health Unit had approved the Ecologia 'closure report' and that the Condition 3 of MA/21/506545 had been discharged on 17<sup>th</sup> March.

The developer had emailed Cllr Summersgill on 17<sup>th</sup> April, with a suggestion that a representative of Ashurst Construction could meet him on site to discuss any technical queries about gas membranes, but this had been changed by another Ashurst email on 20<sup>th</sup> April, which the Chair would be replying to. This email had referred to legal action which Members did not appreciate when the Parish Council is discharging its duties as a democratically accountable body. The Parish Council comments on the condition were made prior to it being approved by MBC.

### **17.3 Planning Appeal**

#### **17.3.1 Hilltop Farm, Shingle Barn Lane, West Farleigh – 22/501811/FULL**

The erection of a single storey dwelling and detached plant room (following the approval of 20/503182/FULL and 19/505751/PNQCLA).

Members **Agreed** not to comment to the Planning Inspector on appeal APP/U2235/W/22/3313301 relating to this planning application.

### **17.4 Planning Decisions**

Members **Noted** the following planning decisions, made by Maidstone Borough Council since the last Planning Committee meeting:

#### **17.4.1 Stonewall, East Street - 22/505899/LBC**

Listed Building Consent for internal and external repairs and alterations.

Parish Council recommendation: Bearing in mind the historic value of the building to the village, Members would like the Listed Building Consent to be approved.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

**17.4.2 Gennings Cold Stores - 23/501186/PNQCLA**

Prior notification for the change of use of agricultural building to 3no. dwellinghouses and associated operation development. For its prior approval to: - Transport and Highways impacts of the development - Noise impacts of the development - Contamination risks on the site - Flooding risks on the site - Whether the location or siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the use of the building to change from agricultural use to C3 (dwellinghouses) - Design and external appearance impacts on the building - Provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses.

Parish Council recommendation: No objection but made the following comments:

- The proposed footprint is larger than the existing footprint.
- There is Japanese Knotweed on the site which would need to be properly treated to eradicate it.
- There is asbestos on the site which would need to be removed.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Refused.

**18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next full Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at Hunton Village Hall.

**There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:12pm.**