

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7:30PM
AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllr D Heaton in the Chair, Cllrs T Stanbridge, A Trought and M Summersgill, and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk. Cllr J Goddard was present from Item 6.

IN ATTENDANCE: No one.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr S Webb. Borough Cllrs C Russell and G Couch had also sent their apologies.

2. FILMING, RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

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

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

3.1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

3.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15TH JULY 2024 AND EXTRA ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2ND SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meetings held on 15th July 2024 and 2nd September 2024 had been previously distributed and were agreed as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copies of the minutes.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES NOT INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA

Item 12.7 – East Farleigh Parish Council requested a contribution towards the cost of reducing the speed limit on a section of Heath Road. The Parish Council's response has been forwarded to the East Farleigh Highways Working Group.

Item 13.3.4 – The Clerk wrote to the Head of Planning about the lack of consultation on planning application 24/501440/FULL following submission of a drainage document. A response was received from the planning officer.

6. POLICE

6.1 Police

No crimes have been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting. Cllr Summersgill advised that a Ward Cluster meeting had been held in the previous week. He had provided an article from the Hunton Herald which detailed the inadequate police response to an incident in the village; the Inspector has subsequently contacted Cllr Summersgill to ask for additional information. The Ward police are aware of the incident.

6.2 Huntonwatch

Huntonwatch had nothing to report.

7. LOCAL COMMUNITY

7.1 King George V Playing Field Committee

The Chairman of the Playing Field Committee, Colin Slattery, was unable to attend the meeting. The following is a summary of the last Committee meeting on 11th September 2024:

The potholes in the car park and at the entrance to the car park have been filled. Weeds on the play area surfaces have been treated. One of the posts holding the netting near the Bowls Club has been tightened.

Work to be undertaken includes: remedial work on the multiplay; fixing the Community Orchard gate; fitting the new gate near the cricket pavilion; and installing the new bench in the play area.

The water leak on the field has been repaired.

The Playing Field Committee currently has funds of £6,553.

It was agreed that the yoga group can use the cricket pavilion for part of the year.

There has been some antisocial behaviour on the playing field; any further behaviour will be logged and reported.

The trustees agreed (if the Parish Council is also in agreement) to gift two assets to the Parish Council so they can be included under the Parish Council's insurance cover. Zurich has stated that the Parish Council can only insure the assets if it has an insurable interest, which is possessed through ownership. The assets are a bench and tractor springer (combined value of £1,073 excluding VAT).

Members **Agreed** to take ownership of the bench and tractor springer and include them under the Parish Council's insurance cover, with the agreement that the Playing Field Committee is responsible for any maintenance.

7.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

7.2.1 Update

Cllr Goddard and Cllr Summersgill had nothing to report, other than another road closure on Redwall Lane soon.

Cllr Heaton noted that part of Lughorse Lane had been covered in water which could be due to a blocked culvert. The water main is also leaking on Hunton Hill; Cllr Summersgill advised that this has been reported. Members **Agreed** that the Parish Council should also report the leaking water main to South East Water as it is getting worse and will be dangerous if it freezes when the weather gets colder.

ACTION: CLERK

7.2.2 Hunton Safer Streets & Lanes Steering Group

Cllr Simmons was unable to attend the meeting so the draft terms of reference will be considered at the next Full Council meeting on 18th November.

7.3 Tree & Pond Wardens

The Tree Warden, Sam Andrews, was unable to attend the meeting but had provided the following report: The lime tree near the entrance to the Village Hall and the lime tree touching the Bowls Club roof have both been cut back.

The walnut tree near the play area will be cut back when the hedges are cut by the Tree Warden in October. A quotation of £180 has been received from Hood's Tree Services for the inspection of the turkey oak tree. Members **Approved** the quotation.

Cllr Summersgill reported that two more ponds on East Street contain Great Crested Newts. Cllr Summersgill attended the annual Tree Warden meeting on 14th September. Kent County Council (KCC) are undertaking a research project in Parkwood. There was nothing applicable to Hunton.

8. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

8.1 County Councillor

County Cllr Simon Webb was unable to attend the meeting.

8.2 Borough Councillors

Cllr Summersgill had provided a written report. The Lidsing Judicial Review will be held on 17th September. It will not be possible for Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to produce a new Local Plan within the new four year administration, so the most recent Local Plan will remain. A Gypsy & Traveller document timetable is being set out at an MBC meeting on 16th September. The document will be separate to the Local Plan, but will not be ready until the end of 2025.

9. PARISH MATTERS

9.1 Parish Councillors

Cllr Trought advised that the following events will be taking place over the next few months:

24th September – Ladies Group Open Evening (talk on 'From Sextant to Sat Nav') – Village Club

19th October – Harvest Supper – Village Hall

25-27th October – Green Hop Beer Weekend – Village Club

14th November – Walk / Lunch – Village Club
16th November – Wine Tasting – Village Club
30th November – Wreath Making Workshop – Village Hall

9.2 Flooding

Cllr Summersgill reported that recent torrential rain was short-lived and did not cause any issues in Hunton.

9.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability

Nothing to raise.

9.4 Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill reported that there has been very little activity recently due to Speedwatch volunteers being away in the summer and the recent wet weather. When Speedwatch sessions have taken place, only one or two vehicles are recorded as speeding per session, so Speedwatch is acting as a deterrent.

9.5 Broadband Services

Cllr Stanbridge has asked for a meeting with the KCC representative responsible for high speed internet; a date has not been arranged yet. **ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE**

9.6 Village Hall and King George's Field

The Clerk contacted Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) to clarify the Parish Council's responsibility for the Village Hall; the response was that the Parish Council is just the Custodian Trustee. The Managing Trustees appointed by the charity (Hunton Parish Hall Committee) run the day-to-day affairs of the hall and are responsible for insuring it. The Parish Council as a collective body is the Custodian Trustee but is not appointed as the Custodian Trustee by the charity. The only function of the Parish Council is to hold the deeds. The same would apply to King George's Field. Members agreed that clarification had been received and no further action needs to be taken.

9.7 Permissive Footpath on West Street – Hedge and Verges Maintenance Contract

The two-year contract for the maintenance of the hedge and verges near the permissive footpath on West Street is at an end. Members reviewed the specification for the next two-year contract without making any amendments.

Members **Agreed** to ask Robert Cox and Crispin Tregoning for quotations. Cllr Goddard will try and find information for another contractor and the Clerk will contact Cllr Simmons for details of a contractor who recently did some work at the school. The deadline for responses was agreed as 31st October 2024.

ACTION: CLERK / CLLR GODDARD

9.8 Clerk's Report

Steve Davies, a military grave restorer, recently cleaned the Victoria Cross grave of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Drummond Barton in Hunton churchyard free of charge. He advised that he could do the restoration work at a cost of £150 per annum in future. Members **Agreed** that the Parish Council could fund the work on a biennial basis, but only if the Parochial Church Council agree. **ACTION: CLERK**

10. POLICIES

10.1 Co-option Policy

The Parish Council last reviewed the Co-option Policy on 20th September 2021. The policy has been amended in view of National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) guidance.

Members reviewed the Co-option Policy and **Agreed** to adopt it.

10.2 Grant Awarding Policy

The Parish Council last reviewed the Grant Awarding Policy on 10th September 2024. No changes have been made to the policy.

Members reviewed the existing Grant Awarding Policy and **Agreed** to adopt it.

11. FINANCE

11.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31st August 2024 was **Noted**.

11.2 Income Received

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

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – FIT	£711.24
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The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

11.3 Payments Made

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

DD – ICO – Data protection fee	£35.00
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – July	£545.81
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – August	£545.81

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 19th August 2024:

Hood's Tree Services Ltd – Tree surgery	£960.00
Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Grant for exterior works	£4,425.00
Sam Andrews – Hedge cutter	£197.10

11.4 Electronic Payments

Members **Approved** the following payments. Cllrs Stanbridge and Heaton will authorise the payments set up in Unity Trust Bank using online banking (*Note: Cllr Summersgill authorised the payments instead of Cllr Stanbridge*):

Invicta Cleaning Group – Clean solar panels	£65.00
Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Contribution towards running costs (second payment)	£1,000.00
South East Water Ltd (Waterlink) – Repair water leak on playing field	£456.00
KALC – Training – Climate Change Conference	£84.00
Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery	£41.84
Redwood Bank 95-day savings account – Transfer	£24,999.00

11.5 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

Members suggested that some of the CIL monies could be used for the expenditure on the defibrillator.

11.6 Annual Review of Insurance

The Parish Council's insurance policy is due for renewal on 1st October 2024 for the year to 30th September 2025. The current insurance provider, Zurich Municipal, has provided a quotation of £1,187.13 (2023: £1,171.08), a 1.4% increase from last year. This includes insurance of the assets gifted by the Playing Field Committee (Item 7.1). Gallagher (previously Came & Company) do not have a market to compete with Zurich's premium.

Members **Agreed** that the insurance should be renewed with Zurich Municipal. The Clerk will set up an online payment for £1,187.13, for authorisation.

ACTION: CLERK

11.7 Defibrillator

At the Parish Council meeting on 2nd September, it was agreed that a defibrillator should be purchased to replace the existing defibrillator on the exterior of the Village Hall, which is no longer fit for purpose. A budget of £2,500 was agreed. Having spoken with the Pre-School, it was established that a replacement cabinet is also required.

The Clerk contacted the British Heart Foundation which recommended the iPad SP1 fully automatic defibrillator and locked external cabinet package at a cost of £1,469.99 plus VAT. The cabinet needs to be connected to an electricity supply as it is heated. The Clerk has asked Q-Tec Solutions Limited for a quotation to disconnect and remove the existing cabinet and connect the new cabinet.

Members **Agreed** that the defibrillator and cabinet should be ordered and, to expedite the installation, the quotation for the electrical work will be emailed to councillors for approval. **ACTION: CLERK**
Cllr Stanbridge advised that he would be able to safely dispose of the old defibrillator and cabinet if the electrician does not.

11.8 **Hunton Village Hall**

During recent repair and redecoration work on the exterior of the Village Hall, the contractor found additional repair work which is required, relating to the guttering and replacement of roof tiles. Cllr Heaton met the contractor on site and confirmed that the work is necessary. A quotation of £2,952 was obtained from the contractor. The Village Hall Committee has requested a grant for this amount from the Parish Council.

Members **Agreed** that the Village Hall Committee should ask for a second quotation but would be happy to provide the grant (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976)) if a second quotation cannot be obtained. **ACTION: CLERK**

11.9 **Hunton Church of England Primary School**

Hunton Primary School has requested a contribution from the Parish Council to celebrate their Vision and Values Day in October 2024. The estimated cost of the day is £2,000. Members **Agreed** that it is not within the Parish Council's remit to provide the funding; any funding would need to be made under s137 expenditure but would not provide direct benefit to enough inhabitants of the parish. The Clerk will inform the school. **ACTION: CLERK**

11.10 **Street Naming Plaque**

Cllr Trought advised that the residents of The Square no longer want a street plaque.

11.11 **Risk Assessment**

The risk assessment was reviewed at the Parish Council meeting on 15th July. Several changes were requested, and the amendments were subsequently made. Members reviewed the risk assessment and **Agreed** to adopt it. Cllr Heaton signed the document.

11.12 **Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) & Audit 2023/24**

Members **Noted** that, following the audit of the 2023/24 AGAR, Mazars LLP has not raised any matters of concern and issued the Parish Council with a 'clean' certificate. Mazars did raise an 'other matter' which does not affect the opinion:

The Council holds general reserves of £88,385 (excluding earmarked reserves of £30,796) compared to its annual precept of £26,338 and expenditure of £29,507. The Council has no powers to hold revenue reserves for general purposes other than for reasonable working capital. Where reserves exceed the greater of 115% of the precept or total payments, the Council should consider earmarking funds for specific purposes.

The Clerk advised that a similar 'other matter' was raised last year and consideration needs to be given to earmarking more of the general reserves, otherwise Mazars will probably raise a qualification point next year. Members **Agreed** that, when the budget is set in January 2025, consideration will be given to earmarking more reserves. It was suggested that £25,000 could be earmarked for EV chargers.

ACTION: ALL COUNCILLORS

The statutory 'Notice of conclusion of the audit' and audited AGAR were displayed on the notice boards and parish website on 16th September, prior to the deadline of 30th September.

In the letter from Mazars which accompanied the audited AGAR, it states:

'If the Council and councillors are not using generic email addresses by 31 March 2025, then this could result in either a qualification or other matter on the 2024/25 AGAR'.

The Practitioner's Guide advises the use of .gov.uk domains for websites and emails. Members **Agreed** that .gov.uk website domain and email addresses should be included as an agenda item for the next Full Council meeting on 18th November and the Clerk should obtain costings from the website provider.

ACTION: CLERK

12. **PLANNING**

12.1 **Planning Enforcement**

Members **Noted** the following update on current enforcement cases:

Little Clock House – The Enforcement Officer has advised that the investigation is ongoing, and he will arrange to visit the site soon.

12.2 Planning Decisions

No planning decisions have been made by Maidstone Borough Council since the last Planning Committee meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 18th November 2024 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:04pm.