

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 18TH MARCH 2024 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Four members of the public were in attendance until Item 10.4. County/Borough Cllr S Webb was in attendance from Item 7.2.2 until Item 10.4

OPEN SESSION:

Borough Councillor Claudine Russell introduced herself and Tristan Russell, who will both be standing for election for Marden & Yalding Ward on 2nd May.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr J Fuller.

2. FILMING, RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

The members of the public did not wish to film, record or photograph the meeting.

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

3.1 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2024 had been previously distributed and were agreed as an accurate record. The Chairman signed the official copy of the minutes.

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

Item 9.1 – Advice was sought from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Planning on whether planning permission was required for change of use of land on East Street. Following the response from MBC, it was discussed further at a Planning Committee meeting on 4th March 2024.

Item 9.6 – The nomination was submitted for the KALC Community Award.

Item 10.1 – Cllr Summersgill submitted a response to the Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 consultation.

Item 11.6 – Q-Tec Solutions investigated the CCTV camera that was previously not working and found it to be working and recording. There was no charge for the investigation.

Item 11.7 – A response was sent to Hunton CEP School PTA regarding the grant application.

Item 11.9 – The Parish Precept Requirement 2024/25 form was submitted to MBC.

Item 12.2 – The increase in mobile homes on the Little Clock House site was reported to MBC Planning Enforcement.

6. POLICE

6.1 Police

The following crimes have been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting:

03/02/24 – Grove Lane – A young person attempted to open the door of a vehicle parked in the road.

22-23/0224 – West Street – Somebody smashed a window of a car parked in the road.

6.2 Huntonwatch

A report has not been received from Huntonwatch.

7. LOCAL COMMUNITY

7.1 King George V Playing Field Committee

The Chairman of the Playing Field Committee, Simon Taylor, was unable to attend the meeting. The following is a summary of the last Playing Field Committee meeting on 13th March 2024:

Work to be undertaken includes: replacement of a low post on the adventure trail; remedial work on the multiplay; fixing the Community Orchard gate; installation of a new gate near the cricket pavilion; cutting a low branch overhanging the football pitch; and filling the potholes in the car park. Most of this work has not been possible due to the wet conditions.

A new bench is being ordered for the fenced play area.

Quotes are being obtained for the grounds' maintenance (grass cutting) of the field.

Following the electrical inspection of the cricket pavilion last year, an attempt has been made to encourage the original contractor to carry out remedial work relating to the original installation, with no response.

The Playing Field Committee currently has funds of £2,686.

Cllr Heaton explained that the electrical inspection at the cricket pavilion took two days. The main finding was that the cable running from the Village Hall to the pavilion is undersized, with the recommendation being to reduce the number of showers from four to two or replace the showers. However, there have never been any issues, the electricity has never tripped, and the electrical installation was signed off by the original electrical contractor. A quote of £1,323 plus VAT has been received for remedial work. Members **Agreed** that a second opinion should be obtained from Q-Tec Solutions Ltd. **ACTION: CLERK**

7.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

7.2.1 Update

Cllr Goddard reported that the chevron signs have been installed on the sharp bend on West Street. These were funded by the Parish Council.

Cllr Goddard met with Greg McNicholl from Kent County Council (KCC) Highways. The 'Slow' signs on East Street and Hunton Hill are the current road improvement proposals. A new Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) has not been provided to KCC Highways due to the street improvements proposal (see Item 7.2.2), but the items on the current HIP are being worked through.

Cllr Summersgill reported on the last Traffic & Road Safety Working Party (T&RSWP) meeting, held on 26th February:

The replacement of the wooden fingerpost at the bottom of Barn Hill is still outstanding, which Cllr Heaton will action.

The KCC 7.5T limits map is still not correct and does not match the signage. Cllr Summersgill and County Cllr S Webb have asked for a response from KCC.

Regarding drainage, there are significant blockages on East Street, Redwall Lane and George Street. Cllr Summersgill received a call from KCC, who were only aware of the George Street blockages. Another two blockages have been reported since. Cllr Summersgill will follow these up.

Five HGVs have been reported on East Street since November 2023; four of these were foreign lorries.

The road surface on West Street has deteriorated further; Cllr Goddard has made a complaint about this previously.

Several fly tips have been reported by residents to KCC, which were cleared quickly, within 48 hours.

The next T&RSWP meeting will be in June/July.

Cllr Heaton noted that the manhole cover near Scotts House has blown; Cllr Summersgill has reported it to KCC.

7.2.2 Street Improvements Proposal

Cllr Simmons has produced a project proposal to make Hunton's streets and lanes safer and more effective for local needs, which was shared at the last T&RSWP meeting. He has met with Greg McNicholl (KCC Highways) online and shared the proposal without costings to see if KCC officers will engage at an early stage; they will not. Previously, the T&RSWP has put forward issues to KCC on a piecemeal basis, but it was felt that it would be more effective to put a whole village proposal forward which links to the KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy 2021-2026.

The idea is to engage with residents, establish their views and contact KCC with an overall proposal that the officers will buy in to. In terms of governance, it is proposed that the Parish Council takes the lead and provides funding and KCC gives the authority and possibly funding. A Steering Group would be created with representatives from the Parish Council as well as other stakeholders.

The budget in the project proposal is £20,000 but is more likely to be £2,000; it is difficult to determine costs without input from KCC.

Cllr Trought commented that the proposal focusses on West Street and that there appears to be a plan which the T&RSWP is aware of which is not detailed in the proposal; it would be helpful to have more information about possible outcomes. Cllr Trought expected the proposal to include obstacles and threats, as well as suggestions for changes which could be made. The KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy is referenced but that strategy relates to reducing traffic-related deaths, so it is unclear how that relates to Hunton.

Cllr Simmons advised that there is no specific plan in mind as the intention is not to impose views on people, but to obtain residents' views and reflect these in the proposal to KCC. The community will be consulted at each stage of the process. There is a specific focus on West Street as most of the bigger issues relate to that road and is where most people live but other roads will be included. The KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy is the only suitable document that sets out the process; it can be used to reflect back to KCC and engage with political representatives. Cllr Simmons has seen that in other counties, smaller villages have a 30mph speed limit throughout and larger villages have 20mph in the centre of the village, which is not often the case in Kent. In East Farleigh, nearly every road is 30mph, which Hunton would like.

Cllr Goddard advised that engagement with KCC is vital, but the current process limits the number of suggestions for improvement which can be considered each year. This is an attempt to change the process of working with KCC, by obtaining step change through the submission of a big proposal, driven by residents.

Members **Agreed** to the project proposal and approved a budget of £2,000 for resources for Stage 1, if required.

Cllr Stanbridge suggested that terms of reference should be set out for the Steering Group, which Members **Agreed**.
ACTION: CLLR SIMMONS

7.3 Tree & Pond Warden

Cllr Summersgill, on behalf of Tree Warden Sam Andrews, advised that remedial tree works near the Village Hall are complete. An estimate will be obtained for the tree works on the field; a cherry picker will be required for the work on the Poplar tree in the corner. Sam Andrews is looking into the work required on the Turkey Oak tree. A hedge clipper needs to be purchased.

Cllr Summersgill, as Pond Warden, reported that ponds are currently quite full. The second stage of the Great Crested Newt pond surveys will take place in April.

8. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

8.1 County Councillor

County Cllr Simon Webb reported that KCC have set the budget for 2024/25, which was strongly challenged by Scrutiny Committee. Savings of £65million need to be made, but it is not clear how this will be done. The auditor has allowed the budget. The budgets for Adult Social Care, Special Educational Needs and home to school transport are all increasing.

An application has been made for Coxheath Primary School to increase from 60 to 90 pupils per year (ie increase from two to three form entry). Cllr Webb believes this is excessive as the birth rate is plummeting. Parents are likely to send their children to a larger school, so if Coxheath Primary School increases in size the smaller schools may attract less children and will lose out on funding. Cllr Webb is submitting an alternative proposal to reduce the increase in size.

Cllr Webb has met with KCC Highways to discuss various issues. Regarding the repair of the West Street road surface, he has been assured that the potholes will be filled, and resurfacing is likely within 18 months. Cllr Goddard noted that Susan Laporte (KCC Highways) has said that Highways are waiting for KCC Drainage before this work can be done; Cllr Webb advised that this was not mentioned in the meeting. Cllr Heaton suggested mentioning that the drainage board do not undertake any work north of the River Beult even though residents are paying for it.

8.2 Borough Councillors

Borough Cllr Simon Webb advised that the meeting to propose the Maidstone Local Plan will take place in the coming week. It is important that it is agreed, or it would be open for developers to build houses.

Elections will be held on 2nd May. There has been a change in the Ward boundaries.

There is a change of contractor for refuse collection; information will be provided to residents on the dates when refuse will be collected.

9. PARISH MATTERS

9.1 Parish Councillors

Cllr Summersgill advised that, in terms of the Maidstone Local Plan, nothing has changed for Hunton from the previous version. Hunton is classed as a smaller village, with a requirement for 25 new dwellings in the last ten years of the Plan. There is also very little change for Marden and Yalding. In Coxheath, the Planning Inspector wants a piece of land to be redefined as smaller, so no more than 100 houses can be built on it. East Farleigh is now defined as a larger village, with a requirement for 50 more houses, but the Inspector does not want the houses to be built at the beginning of the Plan.

9.2 Flooding

Cllr Heaton advised that vegetables will be grown in the field near the Village Hall which may increase the risk of flooding.

Cllr Summersgill advised that there have been two instances since the last meeting where the flooding signs could have been placed on the road to stop traffic passing through, but a decision was made that the roads were passable for vehicles and the water subsided.

There has been flooding on George Street due to a blocked culvert. Cllr Heaton advised that there is also a blocked culvert near Cheveney. Cllr Summersgill advised that KCC should be cleaning the culverts, but there is no evidence of this in the last three years.

9.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability

Cllr Summersgill advised that a Parishes Environmental Network meeting will be held during the week. The biodiversity policy produced by Marden Parish Council will be discussed.

9.4 Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill advised that there have only been three Speedwatch sessions in the last two months, due to the weather and volunteers being away. The most recent session was in the previous week outside the Village Club. One in six vehicles were found to be speeding. One vehicle was recorded travelling at 45mph; the driver will receive a letter. Another Speedwatch session will be held this week.

9.5 Village Hall Wi-Fi

Cllr Stanbridge has tried to contact the Pre-school about their Wi-Fi but has not received a response yet. He suggested that a booster could be used with the Pre-school router to increase the signal in the main part of the Village Hall. If the signal is sufficient, Members **Agreed** that the Parish Council could contribute half of the cost currently paid by the Pre-school. Cllr Stanbridge will research Wi-Fi boosters and advise on which to purchase.

ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE / CLERK

9.6 Parish Council Election

Parish Council elections, including Hunton, will take place on 2nd May 2024.

For those wishing to stand again, the deadline for submission of nomination papers to MBC is 5th April; the Clerk has booked a slot on 27th March to submit the papers. Members **Agreed** to meet on 25th March to complete the forms.

ACTION: ALL CLLRS / CLERK

9.7 Annual Parish Meeting

Members **Agreed** the speakers' invitation list and format of the Annual Parish Meeting (APM), to be held on 20th May 2024. Cllr Trought will obtain posters for the wooden boards, to advertise the meeting two weeks before and the Clerk will include an article in the Hunton Herald to publicise the APM. Cllr Summersgill will ask Marden History Group if a representative would like to give a talk at the meeting.

ACTION: CLLR TROUGHT / CLLR SUMMERSGILL / CLERK

9.8 Clerk's Report

The National Non-Domestic Rate demand has been received for the cricket pavilion. As 100% Small Business Rate Relief has been applied, the amount due is £0.

10. POLICIES

10.1 Standing Orders

The Parish Council last reviewed the Standing Orders on 20th March 2023. The NALC Model Standing Orders, on which the Parish Council's Standing Orders are based, have not changed since that time. Members reviewed the existing Standing Orders and **Agreed** to adopt them with no changes.

10.2 Financial Regulations

The Parish Council last reviewed the Financial Regulations on 20th March 2023. The NALC Model Financial Regulations, on which the Parish Council's Financial Regulations are based, have not changed since that time. The Internal Auditor recommended some changes to sections 1.15, 2.9 and 7.4 at his visit in 2023, which Members **Agreed**.

Members reviewed the revised Financial Regulations and **Agreed** to adopt them.

10.3 Public Participation Policy

The Parish Council last reviewed the Public Participation Policy on 29th March 2021. The policy has been updated, with changes to sections 2.2 and 5.8.

Members reviewed the revised Public Participation Policy and **Agreed** to adopt it.

Members **Agreed** that in future 'registered electors' should be changed to 'residents' on the Parish Council agendas, regarding the 15 minutes open session allocated for questions. ACTION: CLERK

10.4 Press & Media Policy

The Parish Council last reviewed the Press & Media Policy on 29th March 2021. No changes have been made.

Members reviewed the existing Press & Media Policy and **Agreed** to adopt it.

11. FINANCE

11.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 29th February 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	£429.91
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The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

Cllr Summersgill will check the process with E.ON for changing the FIT administration from himself to the Clerk. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

11.3 Payments Made

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

SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – December	£545.81
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – January	£545.81
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – February	£545.81

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 4th March 2024:

Kent County Council – Kerbing on West Street	£3,712.70
Silva Arboriculture Ltd – Visual tree inspection	£445.00
Hood's Tree Services Ltd – Remedial tree work	£600.00
Robert Cox – Maintenance of permissive footpath hedge and verges	£510.00

11.4 Electronic Payments

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

Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery	£33.71
Steve Jones – Spare barrier keys	£22.50

11.5 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

Nothing further considered.

11.6 Meet the Village Event

The event will take place on 12th April; an opportunity for new people in the village and those more established to meet together. A request has been received for funding of up to £100 for pizza. Members **Agreed** to the request, which will be taken from the Chairman's Allowance budget.

11.7 Village Hall Insurance

The Village Hall Committee has paid the Village Hall buildings and contents insurance premium, to which the Parish Council has contributed 80% in previous years. The premium this year is £1,104.53, of which £785.63 relates to the buildings' insurance element. An 80% contribution calculates as £628.50.

Members **Agreed** to contribute £628.50. The Clerk will set up an online payment for Cllrs Summersgill and Stanbridge to authorise.

ACTION: CLERK / CLLR SUMMERSGILL / CLLR STANBRIDGE

11.8 Parish Services Scheme Grant 2024/25

MBC is to decrease the Parish Services Scheme Grant by 4%, from £1,728 in 2023/24 to £1,655 in 2024/25. While the general principle is that grants will increase by 3%, the impact of using the 2021 census figures for the first time in calculating the grounds maintenance grant has caused the grant for Hunton to decrease.

Members **Noted** the decrease in the Parish Services Scheme Grant for 2024/25.

11.9 Saver Account

At the 15th January meeting, Members agreed that £25,000 should be transferred to the Redwood Bank 95 Day Savings Account with an interest rate of 4.30% (currently 4.55%).

Members **Agreed** that there should be four signatories: Cllr Trought, Cllr Simmons, Cllr Stanbridge and the Clerk.

The account opening form was completed and signed.

New account details will be sent by post and email if the application is successful and the deposit can be made by electronic transfer or cheque once the account is open.

ACTION: CLERK

12. PLANNING

12.1 Planning Applications

12.1.1 Meadowside, East Street - 24/500804/FULL

Change existing external finish of dwelling and adjacent garage, from exposed facing brick to an applied render finish.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to comment.

12.1.2 Scotts House, West Street - 24/500658/LBC

Listed Building Consent for replacement external doors and windows. Erection of a new boundary fence and entrance gate to driveway.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object.

12.2 Planning Decisions

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

12.2.1 Linton Growing, Burford Farm, Redwall Lane, Linton - 24/500562/AGRIC

Prior notification for a concrete access road to provide all year round weather access to the tray field area.

For its prior approval to: - Siting, design and external appearance.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to comment.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Prior notification not required.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Parish Council meeting will be the Annual Meeting, to be held at 7:30pm on Monday 13th May 2024 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:26pm.