

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

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

IN ATTENDANCE: County/Borough Cllr S Webb and Borough Cllr C Russell were in attendance until Item 9.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr I Simmons and Cllr J Goddard.

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

Cllr Heaton declared that the recipient of the Tree Preservation Order under Item 11.1 is one of his customers.

3.2 Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 17TH JULY 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2023 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

Items 10.1 and 10.3 – The two consultations were posted on the website.

Item 10.4 – The Clerk completed the MBC Parish Charter Review Survey.

6. POLICE

6.1 Police

No crimes have been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting.

Cllr Summersgill noted that the police are still trying to recruit community officers.

6.2 Huntonwatch

Huntonwatch have nothing to report other than road closure information will be circulated to their members when the Clerk forwards it on in future.

The Clerk will also send road closure details to Cllr Trought for the Hunton Facebook page.

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 September 2023:

The Parish Council arranged for the Oak and Maple trees near the cricket pitch to be undercut to raise the canopy for safety reasons and to allow mower access underneath. A low branch overhanging the football pitch still needs to be cut. The new Tree & Pond Warden will cut back the vegetation behind the play area. The Football Club has cut back the brambles behind the football goal at the top left of the field and the nettles behind the cricket pavilion will be cut back soon. The Beech hedge between the Bowls Club and cricket pitch is also due to be cut.

The new springy tractor will be installed and one of the low posts on the adventure trail will be replaced in the autumn; a new gate will also be installed near the cricket pavilion. Consideration is being given to a bench within the fenced play area for parents to sit on while their children play.

Rabbits are still an issue and there is some mole activity.

The Football Club is looking for someone to replace the boiler in the changing rooms but as it is run off a gas bottle it needs someone with a specific certificate to do the work.

The Playing Field Committee currently has funds of £5,496. Electronic banking will be set up to replace the use of cheques.

7.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

Cllr Summersgill noted that the cost of the bend improvements on West Street was agreed at the 12th September Parish Council Planning Committee meeting. A Traffic & Road Safety Working Party meeting will be held next week.

Cllr Trought asked whether there had been any feedback on the kerbing work outside the school. Cllr Summersgill stated that Cllr Goddard had been complimentary about the work and had emailed Kent County Council (KCC) Highways to this effect but was aware of any other feedback.

In terms of West Street surfacing, some potholes and manholes have been marked out in white paint, but not all of them. There is a bad pothole near a bend which is a hazard as drivers drive around it. County Cllr Webb met with the Director of Highways and discussed West Street. KCC Highways have advised that the road structure is sound but the cosmetic surface is not. KCC Highways will only fix potholes. Cllr Webb provides grants to charities and groups but would not be able to fund resurfacing work. It would also be too expensive for the Parish Council. Cllr Webb will follow up the bad pothole near the bend with KCC Highways. Cllr Trought asked whether the Parish Council could fill the pothole but it would not be allowed.

7.3 Tree & Pond Warden

Trees:

Cllr Summersgill reported that a new Tree & Pond Warden, Sam Andrews, will be taking over from him later this year.

Hood Tree Services have undercut the Oak and Maple trees on the field and done a very neat job. They worked until 6pm and had to make three trips to remove the tree trimmings so did not have time to cut back the tree near the village hall entrance.

The Visual Tree Assessment (VTA), carried out every 18 months, will be undertaken by Silva Arboriculture on 2nd October. The report is likely to be received towards the end of October for discussion at the next Parish Council meeting in November, when decisions can be made on which remedial work to do when, as well as any other tree work which needs doing.

Cllr Summersgill has been to look at a Cedar tree in the village, which is a heritage tree. The Hadlow Tree Warden has also been to see it.

Ponds:

Two residents have agreed access to their ponds for Great Crested Newt surveys next year.

Natural England have designated George Street and Redwall Lane as areas to have new ponds.

Most ponds do not have water in them.

8. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

8.1 County Councillor

County Cllr Simon Webb provided the following report:

The main consideration has been the KCC budget. If a Section 114 notice is issued (statutory stop on non-essential spending), the finance officer alerts the leader of the council who alerts the commissioners and then the government. KCC is currently £23million in deficit. A company has been contracted to make the savings (the company receives a percentage).

Cllr Summersgill asked if there is a reserves policy, ie whether reserves should be a certain amount. Cllr Webb is aware that a reasonable amount should be kept in reserves but does not believe there is a particular figure. The reserves do need to increase.

Cllr Webb did not have any news about Tovil tip.

8.2 **Borough Councillors**

Borough Cllr Simon Webb introduced Borough Cllr Claudine Russell (Marden & Yalding Ward) who provided the following report:

Cllr Russell is the Cabinet member for Community, Leisure and Arts. The revision of the Parish Charter falls within Cllr Russell's portfolio.

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) has a smaller budget gap than KCC of £900k, which will be closed with smaller budget savings (for example, the museum is no longer subject to business rates).

The main pressure is temporary accommodation. From her portfolio, Cllr Russell has been providing welfare support grants. Data is being used to track when people are going into crisis so they can receive help before they become homeless.

Cllr Russell organises events in the town centre; six are planned for summer 2024.

The Town Centre Strategy is in its infancy and will soon be out for consultation.

Cllr Summersgill passed on his thanks to the sustainability and climate change people at MBC. He helped with the Eco Hub, which was excellent and engaged a lot of people.

9. **PARISH MATTERS**

9.1 **Parish Councillors**

Cllr Summersgill has asked KCC to action the following:

UKPN installed a new cable on Redwall Lane last month but cut through the culvert that goes across the road. KCC have been contacted twice but have not taken any action. Water was pouring out again today.

The Clerk will contact KCC.

ACTION: CLERK

A reported blockage on East Street has still not been cleared. Cllr Summersgill will contact KCC again.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

Cllr Trought notified Members of the following events:

22nd November - Quiz Night at the Village Club

25th November - Christmas Market at the Church

4th December – Chair's drinks at the Village Club

Facebook administration is going well.

9.2 **Flooding**

Following a recent rainstorm, Cllr Summersgill drove round to check the roads and found some water on Hunton Hill. Grove Lane was fine. There was a pool of water at the junction with Mill Lane. East Street was flooded with water running down the road. No people have been affected by the flooding.

Cllr Goddard plans to become the third Flood Warden but has to complete the training first.

9.3 **Climate Change and Sustainability**

Cllr Summersgill is attending a parishes environment group meeting on 19th September. He would like the Parish Council to measure an area (for example, trees, ponds, hedgerows) from which a baseline could be taken and changes measured against. Marden Parish Council have done this. Members **Agreed** that Cllr Summersgill and Cllr Fuller should consider this further.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL/CLLR FULLER

9.4 **Speedwatch**

Cllr Summersgill recently included a Speedwatch article in the Hunton Herald.

Speedwatch is going well with seven active volunteers. During the course of 14 Speedwatch events, 102 vehicles have been recorded as speeding. 94 of those were validated with the police with 15 receiving letters (the rest being first time offenders so no letter received). Four of those who received letters have been caught twice. Of the 102 vehicles logged, 74 were recorded at the 30mph limit outside the Village Club and 28 at the 40mph limit outside the church. A vehicle travelling at 47mph outside the Club is the fastest speed registered so far.

The police officer with Speedwatch responsibility has been to Hunton and is aware of where he can use his speed gun.

The Speedwatch team try to hold a session once a week at varying times and locations.

Yalding is restarting Speedwatch soon, but Collier Street, Linton and East Farleigh have all stopped.

9.5 **Village Hall Wi-Fi Connection**

Cllr Stanbridge contacted Call Flow but it is not an option as there is no coverage at the Village Hall.

Cllr Stanbridge has also completed the form for BT but has not received a response. Cllr Stanbridge will speak to BT regarding extension of the network when ten residents' signatures are obtained once he has obtained contact details. ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE

9.6 Telephone Box

The Clerk contacted the secretary of The Community Heartbeat Trust (CHT) for information and costs on the installation of a defibrillator in the telephone box on West Street.

The CHT database shows that the kiosk is pending removal by BT and when the secretary contacted BT he was told that the kiosk had been removed. The Clerk has taken a photograph to show that the kiosk is still in situ and asked that BT is informed that it should not be removed.

Members considered various options for the defibrillator and **Agreed** on the option costing £1,495 plus VAT and delivery, with installation by CHT costing £275 plus VAT and a community training session costing £175. ACTION: CLERK

Consideration was given to decals for the kiosk, but Members **Agreed** that Cllr Trought should ask the Club Committee first as the colours are very bright. ACTION: CLLR TROUGHT

9.7 Clerk's Report

Members **Agreed** that the Clerk can attend the KALC Finance Conference on 4th October at a cost of £70 plus VAT. ACTION: CLERK

The Clerk has received an email from a company which operates an enclosed dog exercise field, asking whether the Parish Council has any unused, overgrown parcels of land that they can reclaim and use or knows of any private landowners who might be interested in cooperating with them in exchange for rental of the land. Members agreed that the Parish Council does not have any suitable parcels of land and do not know of any others.

10. FINANCE

10.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31st August 2023 was **Noted**.

10.2 Income Received

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

Hunton Parish Hall Committee – FIT	£919.42
D Heaton – Receipt for use of gazebos	£60.00

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

10.3 Payments Made

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

ICO – Data protection fee	£35.00
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – July	£508.95
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – August	£508.95

10.4 Electronic Payments

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

Hoods Tree Services Ltd – Tree surgery	£540.00
Hunton Parish Hall Committee – Contribution towards running costs (second half)	£500.00
Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery / Postage	£41.90
Hilec Ltd – Cricket pavilion EICR	£480.00

10.5 Annual Review of Insurance

The Parish Council's insurance policy is due for renewal on 1st October 2023 for the year to 30th September 2024. The current insurance provider, Zurich Municipal, has provided a quotation of £1,171.08 (2022: £949.93), a 2.3% increase from last year.

Gallagher (previously Came & Company) was asked to provide a quotation but advised that they do not have a market to compete with Zurich's premium. Gallagher did suggest that the Parish Council should be thinking about cyber insurance and provided a quotation for cyber insurance of £368.08 for the year. Clear Insurance Management have been asked for a quotation but it had not been received at the time of the meeting.

Members **Agreed** that cyber insurance did not need to be taken out with Gallagher.

Members **Agreed** that the insurance should be renewed with Zurich Municipal. The Clerk will set up an online payment for £1,171.08, for authorisation by Cllrs Stanbridge and Summersgill.

ACTION: CLERK/CLLR STANBRIDGE/CLLR SUMMERSGILL

10.6 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

CIL receipts will be used primarily for sustainability and biodiversity.

10.7 Electrical Work at the Cricket Pavilion

Hilec Ltd have completed electrical checks at the cricket pavilion. A number of issues were found, mostly due to the contractor who installed the electrics at the time the pavilion was built. A member of the Playing Field Committee has agreed to contact the original contractor to see if they would be prepared to rectify the issues. Hilec have also provided a quote for correction of the issues.

Members **Agreed** to wait for a response from the original electrical contractor before considering the Hilec quote.

10.8 Investment

The Clerk provided details of various savings accounts for the Parish Council.

Members **Agreed** to open the following accounts and deposit amounts:

The Cambridge Building Society – Council Saver account – deposit £50,000.

United Trust Bank – Business 100 Day Notice account – deposit £25,000.

ACTION: CLERK

11. PLANNING

11.1 Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

(Item taken before Item 9.1)

Cllr Heaton advised that there is a proposed TPO for Cock House on Lughorse Lane. The TPO is for three trees on the boundary following a failed planning application. It appears that MBC Planning is trying to stall future planning applications which is not what TPOs should be used for. Cllr Heaton has spoken with the owner, who has sent a letter to MBC after taking legal advice, to say that a TPO should not be applied in this case. A planning officer has not been out to look at the trees.

Members agreed that it appears to be misuse of a TPO. The trees should be assessed and discussed with the owner.

County Cllr Webb will speak to the MBC planning officer. Members **Agreed** not to respond.

11.2 Planning Committee Meeting

At the Planning Committee meeting on 12th September, members of the public raised the following issues: Riverside House, West Street – There is a new building on the site which does not have planning permission.

Little Clock House, George Street – Believe planning conditions are being breached.

Members **Agreed** to report both to MBC Planning Enforcement.

ACTION: CLERK

11.3 Planning Decisions

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

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 20th November 2023 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:49pm.