

# **HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Cllr D Heaton in the Chair, Cllrs A Trought, T Stanbridge, I Simmons, J Goddard and S Webb (from Item 10.8), and Mrs S Goodwin, Clerk.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** No one.

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr M Summersgill. Borough Cllr G Couch had also sent her 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 interest.

#### **3.2 Dispensations**

There were no requests for dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 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 9.1 – The property behind Bull Oast was found to be on the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Planning Portal.

Item 9.7 – The Employment Allowance is not applicable to parish councils.

Item 10.1 – A response was submitted for the Maidstone Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Development Plan Document consultation following a meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Item 12.7 – The Unity Trust Bank account management form was submitted to amend the bank signatories.

Item 12.8 – The parish website has moved to a .gov.uk domain.

Item 12.9 – The quotation for the permissive footpath maintenance contract has been accepted.

### **6. POLICE**

#### **6.1 Police**

The following crime has been logged on the e-watch website since the last Parish Council meeting:  
19/11/24 – Lughorse Lane - Somebody tried to break into a residential property.

#### **6.2 Huntonwatch**

Huntonwatch provided the following written report:

We have been busy on a number of matters, but none have been crime related:

Flooding and road closures - gathering information from the Clerk, Yalding Parish Council, Facebook and our members and passing this out to our members for information.

Field gate - following a conversation with a couple of members we have asked the Parish Council if the broken gate into the field opposite The Square can be mended because of the danger of a dog or young child running straight into West Street.

Kent hounds - we helped unite a lost hound with its owners after it became separated from the pack during the recent hunt in Coxheath. Some of our Members were involved too.

Prior to Christmas we sent round advice on how to reduce the risk of being burgled.

Regarding the issue of the broken gate, Members noted that the majority of public footpaths are owned by the landowner. It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain footpaths and gates, rather than the Parish Council. Members agreed that the footpath gateway does exit directly on to West Street but there are other footpaths in the village that also lead straight on to roads. A resident has already notified the landowner about the broken gate and the Clerk has reported it to Kent County Council Public Rights of Way (KCC PROW). As there is no livestock in the field now, KCC PROW are unlikely to see the necessity for a new gate. The Clerk will follow up with the resident who reported the gate. Members agreed that they could reconsider if the gate is not fixed.

ACTION: CLERK

Cllr Heaton noted that the footpath at the bottom of Barn Hill is blocked by vegetation. The Clerk will report it to KCC PROW.

ACTION: CLERK

## **7. LOCAL COMMUNITY**

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

The Chairman of the Playing Field Committee (PFC), Colin Slattery, was unable to attend the meeting.

The following is a summary of the last PFC meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025:

A quote has been accepted for remedial work on the multiplay equipment. The play area will need to be closed while the work is carried out.

Other work to do includes: fixing the Community Orchard gate; cutting the beech hedge between the Bowls Club and cricket pitch; cutting back the northern boundary of the field; cutting the roadside hedge on the eastern side; and fixing the wall at the entrance to the car park.

The PFC currently has funds of £4,324. Due to an increase in costs (particularly water and grounds maintenance), the PFC would like to request a £1,000 increase in the annual grant from the Parish Council to £8,000 for 2025/26.

Landscape Services have carried out the grass cutting for many years, but due to a steep rise in the cost and some issues with the service in the last year, Steven Waring will be used for the grounds maintenance work in 2025/26.

The Football Club has asked if the Parish Council will consider installing three electric showers in the changing rooms, which would be less expensive than the installation of an LPG boiler, which had been considered previously.

Members **Agreed** to increase the grant to the Playing Field Committee to £8,000 for 2025/26.

Members **Agreed** to fund the installation of three electric showers in the Football Club changing rooms.

The Clerk will inform the Committee and obtain quotations.

ACTION: CLERK

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

#### **7.2.1 Update**

Cllr Goddard did not have anything to report.

Cllr Summersgill had provided the following report in his absence:

The next Traffic & Road Safety Working Party (T&RSWP) meeting is at the end of February, so there is no meeting to report on since November, but there have been several skids/crashes in two East Street locations this month which will be addressed. Cllr Summersgill has reported the demolished chevron sign at the south end sharp corner. Cllr Summersgill has been trying to get permission from landowners to place two salt bins in locations that the Parish Council agreed to fund but cannot find out who owns the 'green' at the bottom of Hunton Hill, and two landowners at the south end of East Street are not able to assist. Adding to the delay is that no one at KCC Highways can confirm if they will fill/replenish the new bins if they have not been badged by KCC.

Cllr Trought asked if the T&RSWP could consider the installation of deer signs on Hunton Hill as there have been several sightings of deer. Cllr Goddard advised that the Parish Council would need to pay for the signs.

#### **7.2.2 Hunton Safer Streets & Lanes Steering Group**

Cllr Simmons reported that the Steering Group has not met yet. He will be meeting with the school this week to establish the most effective method of consulting with parents on use of the highways in Hunton.

### **7.3 Tree & Pond Wardens**

The Tree Warden (Sam Andrews) and Pond Warden (Cllr Summersgill) did not have anything to report.

The lime trees near the Village Hall need cutting back and there is a cherry tree near the cricket pavilion which needs some work. Members **Agreed** that these should be added to any work which is required following the next Visual Tree Assessment. **ACTION: CLERK**

## **8. COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS**

### **8.1 County Councillor**

*Item discussed after Item 11.2.*

County Cllr Simon Webb had provided a written report prior to the meeting.

Cllr Webb added that the Devolution White Paper was published on 16<sup>th</sup> December, inviting councils to apply for priority status. KCC and Medway Council had already put themselves forward in September to be part of devolution. A joint letter was sent on 10<sup>th</sup> January which left the 14 borough councils ten working days to reach a consensus on which way to go. The decision was made to request to move under priority status to a Mayoral Statutory Authority with three unitary authorities. The government will announce whether Kent has been accepted by the end of January.

There are two separate issues – the Devolution White Paper and local government reorganisation. Devolution would dissolve KCC, Medway and all the borough councils and the local government reorganisation means KCC have asked for the county elections to be postponed. The reason for this is that, if the decision comes back at the end of January to start work on the local government reorganisation, it is pointless to go into purdah in the last week of March when politicians cannot make decisions until after the elections. This has gone forward to the government as a second request. If everything follows the route the government presumably wishes to follow, the Mayoral Strategic Authority will be drafted in place for Kent and Medway. The timescale is:

- The government will consult with every resident in Kent and Medway by the end of March 2025.
- Mayoral elections take place in May 2026.
- A Shadow Authority begins from May 2026.
- Formal unitary election of councillors in May 2027 or May 2028.

The number of people employed in the current authorities will decrease and the number of councillors will also reduce to 25 per unitary authority.

There will be no Police & Crime Commissioner as it will be subsumed under the Mayoral Statutory Authority.

Members asked the following questions:

*Will there be three boundaries for the unitary authorities?* There will be three bands (north, middle and south) with 500,000 residents in each.

*Will there be any changes to parish councils?* No, but they may be given more authority.

*What will happen to the contracts KCC hold?* They would be dissolved or taken up by the new authority (novation).

*Will planning take place at unitary authority level?* Yes.

*What will happen to the Local Plan – will it remain?* Yes, it will continue until the unitary authority supersedes it at a certain point.

Cllr Webb asked (as Parish Councillor) if the next Parish Council meeting could be moved from 17<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> March. Members **Agreed**.

### **8.2 Borough Councillors**

Borough Cllrs Summersgill and Couch had provided a combined written report and Borough Cllr Russell had also provided a written report prior to the meeting.

Cllr Summersgill had subsequently provided an update to say that Devolution has been keeping the Cabinet busy. There is a Cabinet meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, much of which is about budget setting, but there are two items that could be related to Hunton. These are: supporting Kent farmers and growers more positively and an attempt to give the Greensand Ridge better landscape protection in planning terms (possibly as a 'National Landscape', formerly AONB, but this will need to be considered beyond the borough and needs Natural England support).

Cllr Simmons is pleased that the borough councillors serving Hunton (and the wider Marden & Yalding Ward) are so active, and all are making a strong effort on behalf of the communities they serve.

Cllr Heaton noted that MBC is now using drones for enforcement (planning, fly tipping, etc).

## **9. PARISH MATTERS**

### **9.1 Parish Councillors**

Cllr Summersgill had provided the following report in his absence:

A resident at Brickyard Cottages has complained to MBC about early morning noise from the Linton Growers site and has raised a planning enforcement issue about work starting on the cabins for workers before pre-conditions have been submitted.

The MBC Cabinet is looking at various sites in the borough for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) off-site provision, where developers who cannot achieve BNG on their site, 'buy' equivalent credits from owners with sites that are able to be improved for biodiversity and are protected and maintained for 30 years. One such site is in Yalding, but riverside sites attract the highest 'value', and it may be that the triangle of land near the bridge to Chainhurst would be suitable for BNG improvement and would cost very little to bring into usage (an ecologist's survey and some fencing). Cllr Summersgill is willing to assess the potential if there is confirmation that the Parish Council does own that triangle. This could potentially earn the Parish Council some long-term funds and also improve the looks of the site. Boughton Monchelsea parish (through Boughton Monchelsea Amenity Trust) already have a site that they get BNG funding on.

Members **Agreed** that KCC should be contacted again about the triangle of land. ACTION: CLERK  
Cllr Summersgill has received an email from the Senior Community Resilience Officer and Kent Fire & Rescue Headquarters to enquire whether assistance is needed to develop a Community Resilience Plan. Cllr Heaton noted that there appear to be more caravans on The Chances site than usual. Members **Agreed** that it should be reported to MBC Planning Enforcement. ACTION: CLERK

The main house and outbuildings at Buston Manor have had the windows replaced with UPVC. Listed building consent has not been given. Members **Agreed** that it should also be reported to MBC Planning Enforcement. ACTION: CLERK

### **9.2 Flooding**

Cllr Summersgill had provided the following report in his absence:

The recent event saw the River Beult as high as it was previously at Christmas 2019, but not as high as in 2013. Cllr Summersgill will be hearing Yalding Parish's view of what happened to them at their parish meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January. The Flood Warden at Chainhurst was assisted with two sets of Hunton's 'Road Flooded' signs/frames – as he could not get to Marden due to the flooded road and the police wanted signs put out at the east end of Green Lane. Cllr Summersgill also put a sign up to warn of the flooding at Bridge House. Signs were put out at Cheveney. The dip in East Street did not significantly flood.

Unrelated to this, waters along East Street that turned into ice are related to both groundwater springs but also to an uncleared ditch alongside the highway, which now seems to have blackened, odorous water in it, spilling onto the road since November. Likewise, there were frequent waters over the road in George Street, due to partial culvert blockages exacerbated by hedge cuttings. KCC attended and cleared the cross-highway blockage on 15<sup>th</sup> January but did not jet/clear upstream. Cllr Summersgill has sent a repeat article in for the next Hunton Herald about the riparian duties of landowners to both maintain their ditches and to clear their hedge cuttings away (which block culverts).

Cllr Heaton noted that the flood waters went down quite quickly, and the water was relatively clean.

### **9.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability**

The next Parish Councils Environment Network meeting has been postponed to 26<sup>th</sup> February.

### **9.4 Speedwatch**

Cllr Summersgill had reported that there has been no Speedwatch activity, but it will recommence in a month or two. Another Co-ordinator is needed, and an article has been placed in the Hunton Herald for more volunteers.

### **9.5 Broadband Services**

Cllr Stanbridge has contacted Trooli (previously CallFlow) customer services, who were unhelpful. He then drove to the Trooli offices at Paddock Wood but the staff could not find him as a Trooli customer or the entire village on their system. Cllr Stanbridge was given the manager's details at the Kings Hill office, so he will visit there next. ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE

Cllr Stanbridge thinks that Hunton as a community will need to petition Trooli and BT Openreach about the deployment of a network, but he will investigate it further first. He has also spoken to KCC, but they have no control over how networks are deployed.

Members discussed the possibility of the Parish Council providing funding for Hunton to have fibre if Trooli do not think it is commercially viable for them. However, it would be necessary to ensure that the whole village has access to it and not just part of the village (which has happened elsewhere). Members agreed that the local MP could be contacted once the process is further along. Members **Agreed** that funding could be considered at the Finance Working Party meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

ACTION: FINANCE WORKING PARTY

#### 9.6 Defibrillator

The Clerk contacted the Community Heartbeat Trust to ensure that the defibrillator and cabinet purchased from them could be installed on the wall of the Village Club instead of inside the telephone box. They confirmed that it can be installed at the Club, but they require an installation form to be completed for the installers, which will require input from the Club.

Cllr Trought **Agreed** to ask Club members to complete the installation form. ACTION: CLLR TROUGHT

#### 9.7 KALC Community Awards Scheme 2025

KALC has launched the 2025 KALC Community Awards Scheme, with member councils having the option of adopting the Scheme in their local area. Member councils that adopt the Scheme make their own decisions about how they want to identify a person or group (who must live/work within the parish boundary) that has made a significant contribution to the local community.

Members **Agreed** to adopt the Scheme.

Members **Agreed** that the recipients of the award should be Lesley and Roger Lee. Cllr Heaton will check that they are happy to receive the award.

ACTION: CLLR HEATON / CLERK

#### 9.8 Clerk's Report

The Development Project Manager at MBC has thanked the Parish Council for supporting the Housing Needs Survey which will be funded by MBC. Rural and Community Housing Enabling will organise the survey.

The Clerk checked that all the parish councillors have been contacted by VCS Websites to advise on how to set up their .gov.uk email addresses; they have.

At the Parish Council meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September, Members agreed that the Parish Council could fund the cleaning of the Victoria Cross grave of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Drummond Borton in Hunton churchyard if the Parochial Church Council (PCC) agrees. Reverend Lorna Faulkner has advised that she does not object to the grave being cleaned but the PCC is unable to legally give permission or take responsibility for it as it remains the remit of the family. Members **Agreed** not to fund the cleaning of the grave as express permission has not been given by the family.

### 10. FINANCE

#### 10.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 was **Noted**.

#### 10.2 Income Received

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

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Maidstone Borough Council – Parish Services Scheme grant 2024/25 (2 <sup>nd</sup> half) | £827.56   |
| S Heaton – Use of gazebos   | £10.00    |
| The Cambridge Building Society – Bank interest  | £1,402.22 |

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Trought.

Cllr Webb is now an authorised signatory on the Unity Trust Bank account.

#### 10.3 Payments Made

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

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – October                | £6.00   |
| SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – November | £570.50 |
| SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – December | £570.50 |
| Unity Trust Bank – Service charge – November               | £6.00   |

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Mythic Beasts Ltd – Website domain registration                         | £230.40 |
| Hunton Village Club – Chairman’s Allowance – Drinks for Christmas event | £203.30 |
| Sharon Goodwin – Chairman’s Allowance – Food for Christmas event        | £348.44 |

#### 10.4 Electronic Payments

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

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Npower – Street light electricity                        | £35.63    |
| Forvis Mazars LLP – Limited assurance audit              | £252.00   |
| Q-Tec Solutions Ltd – Annual CCTV maintenance            | £325.84   |
| Hunton Parish Hall – Grant for external work on the hall | £1,556.00 |
| Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery            | £25.15    |

#### 10.5 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

Cllr Summersgill had provided the following report in his absence:

Cllr Summersgill would like to do further Great Crested Newts surveys in April/May on two new ponds and has asked Medway Valley Countryside Partnership about their availability and costings.

Cllr Summersgill would like to use some of the CIL monies to improve the footpaths. This has been a common expenditure of CIL monies in other parishes. Consideration could be given to: replacing the gate opposite The Square and better visibility splays; putting a ‘better’ stone surface down on paths that get particularly muddy and/or need vegetation cleared (for instance the short one at the bottom of Barn Hill, leading south into the field); and the central route through Church Woods could also be improved so that buggies and children can use it.

Members **Agreed** that use of CIL monies should be considered at the Finance Working Party meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and proposals from that meeting will be considered at the March full council meeting.

ACTION: FINANCE WORKING PARTY

#### 10.6 Computer

Members **Agreed** that the following items should be purchased so the Clerk has a Parish Council owned computer:

Laptop - £409

Wireless mouse - £9.99

12 month Microsoft 365 subscription - £59

ACTION: CLERK

#### 10.7 CCTV

Q-Tec Solutions undertook the annual CCTV maintenance on 24<sup>th</sup> December. The engineer reported that one of the cameras is not functioning correctly and cannot be repaired.

Members **Agreed** that the camera should be replaced and that Q-Tec Solutions should be asked for a quote.

ACTION: CLERK

#### 10.8 Items For Events

Members **Agreed** that the Parish Council will fund the following from the Entertainment Fund:

- material to cut into tablecloths for village events; and
- bicycle locks for the event boards.

ACTION: CLLR TROUGHT / CLERK

#### 10.9 Budget and Parish Precept 2025/26

Members received the budget papers prepared by the Clerk prior to the meeting.

Members **Agreed** the budget for 2025/26.

Members **Agreed** that the Precept should be set at £26,338, the same amount as the last six years. This creates a tax of £80.41 per property, an increase of £0.09 on last year. The Chairman and Clerk signed the Parish Precept Requirement 2025/26 form for submission to MBC.

ACTION: CLERK

## **11. PLANNING**

### **11.1 Planning Applications**

#### **11.1.1 Stonewall, East Street - 25/500096/LBC**

Listed Building Consent for the repairs to garage building including replacement of floor slab, new weatherboarding and roof tiles and changes to fenestration. Repairs to boundary including dismantle and re-build using new concrete footings and salvaged rag stone to match existing.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object.

### **11.2 Planning Decisions**

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

#### **11.2.1 Hunton C Of E Primary School, Bishops Lane - KCC/MA/0056/2024 / 24/503893/COUNTY**

County Application - Expansion of school car park and provision of new external canopy for outdoor play.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to object but would like clarification on the following:

- Why is a permeable surface not being considered for the car park?
- Drainage is to a soakaway (not shown on the drawings). Will this be a new soakaway?
- Will the soakaway be adequate to contain reasonable rainfall?
- There is no indication of ground levels on the drawings. Is there a slope?
- Will surface water be contained on the site and not discharge onto the highway?

Clarification was received from KCC Planning.

Kent County Council decision: Permitted.

#### **11.2.2 Wheelwrights, Hunton Hill - 24/504268/FULL**

Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey extension with balcony and external staircase.

Parish Council recommendation: Do not wish to comment.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

#### **11.2.3 The Barn, The Bothy, Lughorse Lane - 24/504489/PNQCLA**

Prior notification for the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from agricultural to 2 no. dwellinghouse 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: Do not wish to comment.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next full Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at Hunton Village Hall.

**There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:28pm.**