

HUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7:30PM AT HUNTON VILLAGE HALL

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

IN ATTENDANCE: County/Borough Cllr S Webb was in attendance from Item 7.2 until Item 9 and one member of the public was in attendance until Item 8.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence as all Members were present at the meeting.

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 18TH SEPTEMBER 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 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 9.6 – The Clerk contacted The Community Heartbeat Trust to order the defibrillator for installation in the telephone box. The secretary confirmed that the box has been taken off the BT removals list and he will supply a formal quote and order link.

Item 9.7 – The Clerk attended the KALC Finance Conference on 4th October.

Item 10.5 – The insurance was renewed with Zurich Municipal.

Item 11.2 – Two issues were reported to Maidstone Borough Council (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:

04/10/23 - West Street - Somebody smashed a window of a residential property.

07/10/23 - Hunton Hill - Somebody smashed a window of an Alexander Dennis coach driving along the road.

Cllr Fuller was aware that a catapult has been used; there have also been incidents involving catapults in Headcorn, Yalding and Nettlestead.

6.2 Huntonwatch

Huntonwatch provided the following update:

Attempted burglary at a property in Hunton Road, Chainhurst. The resident disturbed three people who had entered through locked gates and were attempting to break into the annex; they left without gaining access.

Broken window in a property on West Street (see Item 6.1).

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 16th November 2023:

The new springy tractor has been installed in the fenced play area.

Nettles behind the cricket pavilion have been cut down and some trees on the field have been undercut.

Other work which needs actioning includes: cutting a low branch overhanging the football pitch; cutting back behind the play area; trimming the Beech hedge between the Bowls Club and cricket pitch; replacement of a low post on the adventure trail; installation of a new gate near the cricket pavilion; and cutting back a branch near the security light.

A new bench will be installed within the fenced play area next year for parents to use while their children play. The potholes in the car park will also be filled.

The Playing Field Committee currently has funds of £4,208. The Annual Return has been submitted to the Charity Commission for the previous financial year.

Cllr Summersgill noted that there are a lot of apples in the Community Orchard; these could be picked and there is an apple press available for use.

7.2 Traffic & Road Safety Working Party/Highways

Cllr Goddard reported on the three key objectives from the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP):

- KCC Highways have agreed to put a 'Slow' marking on the road at the bottom of Hunton Hill but will not action this until a police report has been issued on an accident which took place a year ago.
- Payment has been made for the chevrons for installation on the sharp bend on West Street.
- The 'Slow' marking on East Street will be moved next to the 'Oncoming vehicles in middle of road' sign.

Once these items are complete, other items can be moved further up the HIP.

Cllr Summersgill advised that there is a Kent Highways Parish Seminar which can be attended remotely or handouts could be received; he will circulate the details. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

Cllr Summersgill reported the following from the Traffic & Road Safety Working Party meeting on 8th November:

- Six people attended the meeting.
- The 7.5T limits, Lorrywatch signs and salt bins will be followed up. Cllr Summersgill will bring details of preferred locations of salt bins to a future Parish Council meeting. Another two or three salt bins are required, which KCC Highways will not fund. The cost is £300 per salt bin. Members **Agreed** that the Parish Council should fund two or three (depending on requirement) salt bins at £300 each. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL
- KCC Highways have not been supportive of reduced speed limits and other measures previously. Cllr Simmons will prepare a plan of speed limit changes/other measures to present to KCC Highways. Residents will be consulted for their opinions on highways issues, most likely early in 2024 through a drop-in coffee morning at the Village Club. Cllr Fuller suggested placing an article in the Hunton Herald. Cllr Summersgill advised that East Farleigh have applied for 30mph speed limits on all lanes, so speed limit changes are possible. ACTION: CLLR SIMMONS
- The culverts/drains have been cleared on West Street; drainage is much better now and there has been less flooding.
- After blockages in East Street were reported three times, KCC Highways now plan to dig it out and put a cover over.
- Work is being undertaken on the hedge near the Peace Cottages which will improve visibility. There is also room for a mirror near the Grove Lane exit to further assist vehicles exiting Bishops Lane. Cllr Simmons will measure the post for the bracket size. Members **Agreed** to purchase a mirror at a cost of £25.99 plus VAT. ACTION: CLERK

Cllr Fuller advised that school parents are parking dangerously on and near the Grove Lane/West Street junction. Cllr Simmons will contact the school so parents can be advised in the school newsletter. ACTION: CLLR SIMMONS

- Drain blockages, trenches made by tractors and potholes have been reported to KCC Highways. A dead tree leaning on a telephone line was reported to Openreach and removed two days later.
- Domestic debris outside one of the cottages on Redwall Lane is being removed by the new owners.

Cllr Summersgill advised that there is a KCC consultation on the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Members **Agreed** that it should be posted on the Hunton website. ACTION: CLERK

7.3 **Tree & Pond Warden** (Item moved before Item 6)

7.3.1 **Visual Tree Assessment**

Cllr Summersgill advised that he is continuing as Pond Warden (nothing to report on ponds this time) and Sam Andrews has now taken over as Tree Warden.

Cllr Summersgill reported that Silva Arboriculture conduct a Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) every 18 months, alternating between Spring and Autumn. The latest VTA was undertaken in October 2023. The following was reported:

- Two dead Poplar trees on the northern boundary of the recreation ground; one needs to be felled to the ground and the other cut down to a 1-2 metre stump. This work will be done when the ground is drier as it is too wet for the large machinery required.
- A branch (from storm damage) is hanging over the fence from Hunton Engineering. They have been notified.
- Fungus is growing on the Turkey Oak; recommend a climbed inspection by the same person who did the last inspection.
- Around the Village Hall there is deadwood and epicormic growth on two Lime trees at the front and epicormic growth on a Lime outside the entrance. The Village Hall Committee has also asked for a limb to be cut back near the entrance.

The Playing Field Committee has asked for a tree to be cut back near the security light above the container. The remedial work will be undertaken in two parts; the work near the Hall will be done sooner and the work on the field will be done in the Spring when the ground is drier. None of the work is urgent; the recommendation is for it to be conducted between 3-6 months.

A quote of £500 plus VAT has been obtained from Hoods Tree Services Ltd for the work around the Hall as they have previously provided the lowest quotes for tree work, have been used previously and do a good job. Cllr Summersgill and Mr Andrews will scope the work on the playing field.

Members **Approved** the quote for the work around the Hall. ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

7.3.2 **Turkey Oak Climbed Inspection**

Cllr Summersgill advised that the VTA recommended a climbed inspection to allow closer examination of visible fungus. A quote of £240 has been received from Tregoning's Trees but Crispin Tregoning has broken his arm so it may be necessary to obtain other quotes.

Cllr Summersgill was asked if the fungus is specific to the Turkey Oak or whether it could spread; it does not spread spores although birds could spread them (but there needs to be a weak point in the tree for the fungus to get into).

Members **Approved** the quote for Tregoning's Trees to conduct the climbed inspection (or for another contractor to carry out the work if Crispin Tregoning is unable). ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

Any work necessary as a result of the climbed inspection will be undertaken at the same time as the other work on the playing field.

7.3.3 **Powered Hedge Trimmer**

Cllr Summersgill advised that the Tree Warden is happy to undertake any trimming back of vegetation but a powered hedge trimmer would be required.

Members **Approved** a budget of up to £500 for the trimmer.

ACTION: CLLR HEATON / CLLR SUMMERSGILL

8. **COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS**

8.1 **County Councillor**

County Cllr Simon Webb provided the following report:

The main focus is still on the KCC budget.

There have been some changes to Cabinet members; the new Cabinet Member for Highways is excellent. Hunton Hill will be closing for a day for work on the road.

There is a consultation out to increase Coxheath Primary School by another Form of Entry (FE) to 3FE; the consultation ends on 11th December. Cllr Webb believes an extra FE is too much and will be pushing for ½FE. KCC interpret birth rate data and make assumptions on where children will go to school based on historic rather than preference basis. The assumption is that children will go to their local school but they tend to migrate. It is a concern that, for the small primary schools around Coxheath, the parents will automatically choose Coxheath Primary School. The risk is that less children will attend the smaller

schools in the future. Cllr Webb has responded to the consultation and requested a meeting. Cllr Simmons advised that most children at Hunton CEP School do not live in Hunton. Hunton CEP will be making a representation. Cllr Simmons will forward the consultation letter to the Clerk for the Hunton website to make people aware of the consultation. ACTION: CLLR SIMMONS / CLERK

8.2 Borough Councillors

Borough Cllr Simon Webb had nothing to report.

Cllr Heaton mentioned the two recent incidents of windows being broken by an offensive weapon and asked whether the police attended; Cllr Webb advised that he has not heard anything on policing at all. Cllr Summergill asked whether there was any update on the Maidstone Local Plan; Cllr Webb advised that the Local Plan is still in the consultation period.

9. PARISH MATTERS

9.1 Parish Councillors

No issues raised.

9.2 Flooding

Following recent rainfall, the River Beult did not rise too much and lowered quite quickly. The Linton Growing Land planning application (23/503752/FULL) seeks to put a balancing pond in the middle of the flood plain near the river. Cllr Summersgill has submitted two responses as Flood Warden and KCC have also disagreed with the calculations and queried why a pond is being located in a flood plain. The applicant has responded with further documentation and Cllr Summersgill will submit a third response as Flood Warden to state that the pond is not allowable as 'essential infrastructure' in a flood plain according to national guidance, nor will it work in the way outlined in the document. Members **Agreed** that the response should be submitted with the support of the Parish Council.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL

9.3 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability

Cllr Summersgill reported that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) held a webinar which was attended by a councillor from Marden Parish Council. The Government sent out guidance about biodiversity duty in May 2023 but many parish councils are unaware of the guidance. It requires parish councils to consider biodiversity, agree policies and act on the policies. Marden Parish Council is developing a biodiversity policy; Cllr Summersgill will find out more at the next Marden meeting. Linton Parish Council have had a biodiversity policy for over two years. At Hunton Parish Council, biodiversity is considered when planning applications are reviewed and it is also a standing agenda item.

9.4 Speedwatch

Cllr Summersgill reported the following on Speedwatch:

- There have been 41 Speedwatch sessions in five months.
- Sessions are held once a week now, previously twice a week.
- Seven people are active volunteers with 3-4 people at each session.
- 132 vehicles have been recorded as speeding. Of these: 114 have been recorded once (no letter until recorded twice); 18 have been sent letters (two have been recorded three times); and one vehicle passed the Village Club at more than 50% over the speed limit (47mph in a 30mph zone) and received a letter even though it was the first time it had been logged.
- Yalding has restarted Speedwatch but East Farleigh, Collier Street and Linton have all stopped.

9.5 Parish Council Meeting Dates 2024

Members **Agreed** to the following meeting dates for 2024:

Monday 15th January 2024

Monday 18th March 2024

Monday 13th May 2024 (Annual Meeting)

Monday 20th May 2024 (Annual Parish Meeting)

Monday 15th July 2024

Monday 16th September 2024

Monday 18th November 2024

All meetings to be held at 7:30pm.

9.6 Village Hall Satellite Internet

Cllr Stanbridge has contacted BT and Call Flow about installing Wi-Fi at the Village Hall with no success. He has subsequently spoken with a resident who uses Starlink. A small satellite dish needs to be installed on the roof and the cost of the equipment is £450 with a £75 monthly cost. There is no tie-in to a contract. Members agreed that the ongoing cost is relatively expensive and suggested sharing the Hunton & Linton Pre-school BT line. Cllr Stanbridge will contact the Pre-school secretary to establish the cost and the renewal date with BT. If it is not an option or not viable to share the line then other options, such as satellite, will be considered again.

ACTION: CLLR STANBRIDGE

9.7 KALC Community Awards Scheme 2024

The 2024 KALC Community Awards Scheme has been launched, 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 in their community that has made a significant contribution to the local community. There are no pre-determined criteria for what the contribution to the community might be. Any nominations to KALC must be made by 2nd February 2024.

Members **Agreed** to adopt the Scheme. The nomination will be decided at the Full Council meeting in January 2024.

9.8 Clerk's Report

The school secretary has emailed to thank the Parish Council for consideration of the matters recently raised by the school.

An article has been submitted to the Hunton Herald on ditch clearance.

The Playing Field Committee has not contacted the original cricket pavilion electrical contractor yet regarding issues raised in the electrical report by Hilec Ltd; the paperwork has been located by the Chairman and contact will be made.

10. FINANCE

10.1 Budget Monitoring Report

The Budget Monitoring Report to 31st October 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	£797.60
------------------------------------	---------

The bank reconciliation was reviewed and signed by Cllr Stanbridge.

10.3 Payments Made

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

Unity Trust Bank – Service charge	£18.00
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – September	£508.95
SO – Sharon Goodwin – Salary & office allowance – October	£508.95
Kent County Council – Implementation of West Street bend improvements	£1,188.15

The following payments were authorised at the Planning Committee meeting on 16th October 2023:

VCS Websites Ltd – Web hosting	£100.00
KCPFA – Annual membership subscription	£20.00
Npower – Streetlight electricity	£21.08
KALC – Training – Finance Conference	£84.00
Mazars LLP – Limited Assurance review	£378.00

10.4 Electronic Payments

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

Sharon Goodwin – Travel expenses / Stationery £32.20

10.5 CIL Neighbourhood Receipts

No further use considered.

10.6 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) & Audit 2022/23

Members noted that, following the audit of the 2022/23 AGAR, Mazars LLP have not raised any matters of concern and have issued the Parish Council with a ‘clean’ certificate. Mazars did raise an ‘other matter’ which does not affect their opinion:

The Council holds general reserves of £72,184 (excluding earmarked reserves of £14,197) compared to its annual precept of £26,338 and expenditure of £40,595. The Council has no powers to hold revenue reserves for general purposes other than for reasonable working capital and should consider earmarking funds for specific purposes.

The statutory ‘Notice of conclusion of the audit’ and audited AGAR were displayed on the notice boards and parish website by the Clerk before the deadline of 30th September 2023.

10.7 Review of Clerk’s Salary

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed new pay scales applicable from 1st April 2023 (a flat £1,925 increase for all scale points from the 1st April 2022 scales).

Members **Approved** the increase in the Clerk’s salary (at SCP 12) in line with the NJC pay scales from 1st April 2023. Members **Approved** the Clerk’s back pay of £258.02 for the 7 months from April to October 2023 and **Agreed** to authorise the standing order mandate to increase the Clerk’s monthly salary payment from November 2023. The back pay and standing order mandate will be authorised online.

ACTION: CLLR SUMMERSGILL/CLLR STANBRIDGE

10.8 Hunton Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee is planning redecoration and repair work to the interior and exterior of the hall. Two quotes have been obtained and the One2One Decor Ltd quote was selected. The Committee have requested a £4,425 grant from the Parish Council for the work on the exterior.

Members remarked that the upgrades to the Hall over the last few years have significantly improved it. Cllr Fuller commented that it would benefit further through installation of roof insulation. It was noted that the centenary of the Hall is in 2026.

After consideration of the quote, Members **Agreed** to give the grant of £4,425 to the Village Hall Committee (under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976). The Committee will pay the contractor’s invoices which the Parish Council will then reimburse.

10.9 Heart of Kent Hospice

An email has been received from the Heart of Kent Hospice, seeking a grant. In the past 12 months, the Hospice cared for three people from Hunton parish.

Members **Agreed** not to contribute.

10.10 Saver Accounts

At the last full council meeting, Members agreed that £50,000 should be transferred to The Cambridge Building Society Council Saver account (interest rate 2.9%) and £25,000 should be transferred to the United Trust Bank Business 100 Day Notice Account (interest rate 4.25%).

The Cambridge Building Society – Members **Agreed** that there should be four signatories: Cllr Heaton, Cllr Stanbridge, Cllr Goddard and the Clerk. The account opening form was completed and signed. Cheque 300416 for £50,000 was signed by Cllr Goddard and Cllr Stanbridge (cheque required to open the account).

Unity Trust Bank - Members **Agreed** on the same four signatories as for The Cambridge Building Society account. The account opening form was completed and signed. An electronic transfer of £25,000 will be made once United Trust Bank have opened the account.

ACTION: CLERK

11. PLANNING

11.1 Planning Applications

11.1.1 25 Bensted Close - 23/505149/FULL

Garage conversion into a habitable space with the erection of a first floor side extension above. Erection of a detached garden shed in the front garden.

Parish Council recommendation: No objection.

11.1.2 Stonewall, East Street - 23/504732/SUB

Submission of details pursuant to conditions 4 (details of materials), 5 (lime-based mortar details), 8 (schedule of works and repairs), 13 (floor/floor joist construction details, structural engineers report, log burner details) and 14 (archaeological monitoring programme) of application 22/505899/LBC.

Parish Council recommendation: No comment.

11.2 Planning Decisions

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

11.2.1 The Old Post Office, Hunton Hill - 23/503735/LBC

Listed Building Consent for insertion of replacement slim line double glazed windows.

Parish Council recommendation: No objection.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Permitted.

11.2.2 Weavers House, Barn Hill - 23/504040/FULL

Erection of a detached double garage and store with office/gym above.

Parish Council recommendation: Object, due to:

- A lack of accurate information to allow the application to be properly considered.
- Weavers House is a listed building. Listed building consent has not been obtained for the proposed building work.
- The scale of the proposed building, which is double height and would overlook the Greensand Way. It represents approximately 60% of the footprint of Weavers House and would be disproportionate.
- The application states that the building will not be visible from the public footpath or public road. It will be visible from both.
- The proposed work will directly affect the public footpath.
- Inappropriate use of materials. Slate roof tiles would be completely out of keeping with other nearby buildings; there are no slate roofs anywhere in the vicinity.
- Weavers House does not solely own the access driveway. It is jointly owned by Weavers House and Jennings Oast.
- The cess pool is being moved, to be discharged to a new sewage treatment plant, but no detail is provided.
- No details of how construction would take place in the trees Root Protection Zones.

Maidstone Borough Council decision: Application withdrawn.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next full Parish Council meeting will be held at 7:30pm on Monday 15th January 2024 at Hunton Village Hall.

There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 9:52pm.