

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



50 Pepys Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3LL

DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 6th March 2024

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace ~ Chair
Cllr K. Mansell
Cllr S. Back
Cllr T. Hall
Cllr P. Dumke ~ Vice Chair
Cllr N. Blown
Cllr S. Hall
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: One (1)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace opened the public session at 7.00pm and thanked the seven (7) Councillors and the one (1) member of the public for attending.

Part A. Public Discussions

The one resident sat in the public gallery spoke to complain that dogs were being exercised in the Recreation Grounds and playparks throughout the village, despite notices being placed at all the entrances to confirm that dogs were prohibited.

She also spoke to complain about a broken street lamp, situated on the outskirts of the Lower Stoke Car Park and enquired if Stoke Parish Council could consider granting some Funds towards the 'Festival One' event, due to be held in Cross Park, Allhallows on Saturday 8th June to raise money for Cancer Research.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

No further questions were raised and the public session closed at 7.32pm.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 7864:24 None.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 7865:24 None

3. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 24th January 2024

a). To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th December 2023.

Min 7866:24 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 24th January 2024, were circulated.

It was proposed by the Vice-Chair, Cllr P. Dumke and seconded by Cllr S. Hall that the minutes be approved as a correct record. This motion was carried after it was unanimously agreed.

4. Matters arising from the minutes (not otherwise on the agenda)

Min 7867:24 None.

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5. Ward Councillor report

a). A report by Ward Councillor Chris Spalding

Min 7868:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen reported that Ward Cllr C. Spalding had telephoned her earlier that day to pass on his apologies for absence, owing to his attendance at meeting elsewhere.

She advised however that Cllr C. Spalding had expressed concerns that he had not been provided with any flood reports from Cllr S. Back, despite asking to see copies of these documents several times.

Cllr S. Back spoke in response to confirm that he had volunteered for this position through the Environment Agency and not through Medway Council. Owing to this, all his reports had been sent to the relevant parties as requested by the Environment Agency, which had not included the Ward Councillor.

Finally, the Clerk reported that Cllr C. Spalding had also emailed her to confirm that he felt no need to provide a report to the Parish Council in his absence, as he felt most residents could pick up on his recent work from the information he had uploaded onto Facebook.

b). Correspondence sent by Ward Councillors Ron Sands, Michael Pearce & George Crozer

Min 7869:24 The members acknowledged receipt of the two letters, circulated by Ward Councillors Ron Sands, Michael Pearce & George Crozer, which related to the closure of Frindsbury Hill and the Hoo Peninsula Community Infrastructure Framework.

6. Planning

a). Applications

Min 7870:24 It was acknowledged that there had been no new planning applications submitted since the last Parish Council meeting.

b). Decisions

Min 7871:24 It was acknowledged that there had been no new planning decisions made since the last Parish Council meeting.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7872:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen referred the members to the recent correspondence she had received from Medway Council concerning 'Sturchfield'.

Accordingly, the Parish Councillors acknowledged that Medway Council were closely monitoring the site, where they accepted that the Unitary Authority were aware of the recent increase in dwellings, and were seeking legal advice on the most appropriate way to move forward.

7. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 7873:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace referred the members to the bank statements provided in their meeting packs where she talked them through the bank balances shown.

Min 7874:24 In response to the recent summary of accounts, the Clerk was asked to include a balance carried forward figure too, by Cllr K. Mansell.

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for February 2024

Min 7875:24 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for February 2024, where they concluded that these balances were acceptable.

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c). Accounts paid since the last meeting to be ratified.

Min 7876:24 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they concluded that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 7877:24 After careful consideration the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Back, seconded by the Vice-Chair, Cllr P. Dumke and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£646.07	February 2024 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – February 2024
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£26.60	Tax & NI charges (February 2024)
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£41.16	Broadband & Telephone line rental for February 2024
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 25
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 27
Cartridge People.com	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£351.90	4 X Toner Cartridges for office printer INV: GB240221-LA5852126-1
KPS Office Supplies	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£5.00	50% costs towards coloured paper INV: 58853
KPS Office Supplies	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£72.18	50% costs towards stationery INV: 58522
Medway Council	Min 5077:21	DIRECT DEBIT	£212.50	Lower Stoke Car Park Lease Payment INV: (TO FOLLOW)
RBL Poppy Appeal	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£22.50	Donation to RBL Poppy Appeal (£50 total donation agreed per year in budgets).
ICO	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£35.00	2024 Data Protection Fee
Go Cardless	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£11.99	Stoke Parish Council Hugo Fox Website INV: 4338
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£54.61	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for February 2024
TOTAL			£1,774.51	

e). Payment requests to be discussed for approval and payment.

Min 7878:24 None.

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8. Management of the Council's land and property

a). To review the play park inspections for:

i Button Drive Playparks Road Playpark

ii Heron Way Playpark

iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 7879:24 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to advise that there was no change to any of the play equipment in all three (3) parks.

She speculated that the play equipment had become too wet for the children to use this month, owing to the recent spell of poor weather the Country had been experiencing.

b). Cleaning of play equipment.

Min 7880:24 Cllr K. Mansell reported that the equipment was still being cleaned on a regular basis and that the bins were being emptied.

c). Defibrillator

Min 7881:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to report that she had received a telephone call from a concerned resident, on her way out the door this evening, to advise that the light on the inside of the defibrillator cabinet (mounted on the outside of the Village Hall), was not working. The idea was mooted that maybe the switch (to keep the cabinet temperate constant) had been accidentally turned off by the previous hall hirers. In response to this complaint Cllrs S. Back and Cllr P. Dumke offered their assistance in locating the switch, to help rectify the issue.

Min 7882:24 The members also spoke in depth about purchasing a defibrillator for Middle Stoke, where again several concerns were raised as to where the device could be housed in order to receive a constant supply of electricity.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to keep this item on the agenda but, to place a note next to it to advise that there were ongoing issues with its siting and that it would be deferred until further notice.

Finally, the members asked the Clerk to enquire if Ward Cllr C. Spalding, might be willing to lend his expertise in finding a suitable location to house a new heated cabinet for a defibrillator in Middle Stoke, since the members had drawn a blank.

d). 'No Dogs' signs in Recreation Grounds

Min 7883:24 The Clerk was asked to upload a post onto social media to remind the residents that the dogs are not permitted in either the Recreation Grounds or playparks.

e). Lower Stoke Car Park

i). Abandoned Car.

Min 7884:24 The Clerk referred to a recent email she had received from Medway Council, concerning the abandoned car in the car park. This letter confirmed that the car was currently registered on a SORN, and owing to this, the vehicle was under further investigation.

ii). Broken light.

Min 7885:24 The Parish Councillors discussed the broken light, which was situated on the outskirts of the car park. It was acknowledged that, despite several complaints to Medway Council requesting them to fix the light, the Unitary Authority were adamant the street lamp was situated within the confines of the Lower Stoke Car Park and was therefore the responsibility of the Parish Council to repair (as the tenants).

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A further discussion ensued and the Clerk was asked to refer this matter to Ward Cllr C. Spalding to enquire if he could speak further with Medway Council to organise for the light bulb to be replaced.

9. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 7886:24 Cllr S. Back reported that he had somehow managed to catch a resident, who almost fell over on overgrown MHS footpath that ran between Heron Way and the High Street, (apparently also known as Home Oaks).

He advised that since this incident he had been chasing MHS Homes to clear the alleyway, whose surfacing was also showing signs of deterioration too, but MHS Homes were no longer corresponding with him in regards to this matter.

Cllr P. Dumke, the Vice-Chair spoke in response to stress the importance of this pathway being cleared, especially as it now posing a risk to health and safety. He recommended that since MHS Homes were not taking this matter seriously the Parish Council should consider asking Ward Cllr C. Spalding to become involved to chase MHS Homes directly, which the members agreed with.

b). Lighting

Min 7887:24 Please see report in 8e (ii), reference: **Min 7885:24** .

c). Highways and verges

Min 7888:24 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 7889:24 The members spoke about the various potholes that were appearing around the manhole covers on the A228 / Grain Road, in particular the drain cover which appeared to be constantly overflowing.

Following on from the above report, a concern about another constantly leaking drain was also raised, which was apparently situated on Malmaynes Hall Road, outside Turkey Hall Farm.

Min 7890:24 Finally, Cllr S. Back spoke to report that he had been in touch with Medway Council concerning the blocked drains in the village, (as part of his voluntary role as Flood Warden), where he understood the drains had been categorised as 'Stage 1' (whatever that meant!).

e). Fly tipping

Min 7891:24 Cllr S. Hall advised that several more tyres had been abandoned along Cuckolds Green Road and Hoopers Lane.

f). Grass cutting

Min 7892:24 No report.

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 7893:24 Cllr S. Back spoke to complain about the leaking drains both on Shepherds Way and Grain Road.

Min 7894:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace also spoke to advise that she understood the Rural Liaison Committee would be discussing problems connected to Southern Water and associated drainage issues at their next meeting.

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h). Salt / Grit Bins.

Min 7895:24 Cllr S. Back spoke to inform the members that MHS Homes had reneged out of their agreement to provide a grit bin, claiming that they did not own half the properties in the village anymore. He closed his report in confirming that the village only had one (1) grit bin currently, which was situated at the bottom of Button Drive.

i). Flood signs

Min 7896:24 The members discussed the possibility of purchasing some temporary flood signs for the village. Concerns were raised however that these signs might be removed by the Highways team, as previous handmade signs, made by Cllr S. Back, had been. Accordingly, the Clerk was instructed to make contact with Medway Council or the Highways Agency (whichever was applicable), to ask for some permanent fixed 'flood signs' to be installed throughout the village.

10. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website

b). Social Media Page

Min 7897:24 The members collectively agreed to utilise their website and social media page more often to help promote the Village Hall's fundraising events and to remind residents that dogs are not permitted in either the playparks or Recreation Grounds in Stoke.

Min 7898:24 The Clerk also referred the members to the correspondence she had received from KALC concerning the use of personal laptops, tablets and devices. The members carefully evaluated this response, where they understood it was personal choice if they wished to use their own devices as long as they were aware of any complications in regards to GDPR restrictions.

11. Internal Committee Updates

a). Neighbourhood Plan

Min 7899:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to report that there was a Neighbourhood Plan Engagement meeting scheduled to take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 20th March, starting at 7.30pm. She urged as many Parish Councillors and residents to attend as possible.

b). Stoke Village Hall

Min 7900:24 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to report that the Village Hall committee were meeting the next week.

The Vice-Chair, Cllr P. Dumke also spoke to raise concerns that the roof was still leaking, where a new leak within the confines of the 'Doctor's Surgery' had been identified.

Min 7901:24 Finally, the Clerk Mrs J. Allen spoke to address a mix up that had occurred with two insurance premiums, following the amalgamation of Stoke Parish Council's insurance with the Village Hall's insurance. She confirmed that she had asked the Village Hall to bank the part refund that had been sent by cheque to the previous Chairman (Mr B. Stone), which should have been sent directly to the Parish Council, where she hoped to liaise further with the committee, once the balance had cleared.

c). Stoke Community Project

Min 7902:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to report that she understood the members of the Stoke Community Project were taking a break from organising any village events this year

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However, she informed the meeting that the team had been nominated as finalists for a 'Pride of Medway' award.

She closed her report in confirming that she would be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt in the garden of the Nags Head Public House, using funds raised from the weekly meat raffle.

12. External Committee Updates

a). KALC.

Min 7903:24 No report.

b). Rural Liaison

Min 7904:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to report that she had attended the last Rural Liaison Committee meeting, held on Tuesday 5th March. During this meeting the committee had received a report from UK Power Networks, on the different categories of power cuts there were, alongside a report from Birdwise, concerning the protection of birds, and an update on the Local Plan.

She closed her report in confirming that a Climate Change Action Plan working party had also been formed and she would circulate slides from this meeting once she had received them.

13. Warden Reports

a). Flood Warden

Min 7905:24 Cllr S. Back spoke to report that Mr D. Pappin, of the Middle Stoke Airfield, had volunteered to assist him in his role as flood warden, in reporting the various issues with flooding in Middle Stoke to ease his workload.

He closed his report in confirming that he would circulate a note of his new flood warden email address and duty telephone number in case of emergency.

b). Snow Warden

Min 7906:24 Cllr S. Back spoke to report that, following calls for more residents to come forward act as voluntary Snow Wardens, two (2) additional Parishioners had offered their expertise.

In response to this influx of help, a new Facebook Snow Warden page had been set up to allow the team to share updates with the village, in the event of a new cold weather front.

14. External Contractors

a). To discuss and approve any new work requests or discuss any existing orders.

Min 7907:24 None.

15. Events

a). 80th Anniversary of D-Day on 06/06/2024

Min 7908:24 The members discussed ideas on how to mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day. In response to this conversation, Cllr N. Blown offered to speak to Mrs G. Bucknall, Church Warden to St Peter & St Paul's Church in Upper Stoke, to enquire if the Church might be willing to ring the bells on Thursday 6th June for 'peace', as communicated in KALC's D-Day Commemoration recommendations.

b). Stoke's Annual Parish Meeting (scheduled to take place on 01/05/2024).

Min 7909:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to suggest the members could consider offering refreshments at the end of their Annual Parish Meeting, which had been scheduled to take place on Wednesday 1st May.

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After careful consideration, and bearing in mind the poor turn out at their December meeting (where they had offered refreshments), the members decided against this suggestion as they felt it was a poor use of Parish funds.

16. IT Equipment

a). To consider trialling a new tablet for Parish Council members

Min 7910:24 Following a discussion held during item 10 (a & b) ref : Min 7898:24, the members decided against purchasing any additional tablets for Parish Council members at this present time.

17. Stoke Parish Council Surgery

a). To consider holding a Parish Council surgery once a month in the Village Hall, to address any concerns residents may have.

Min 7911:24 Following the poor turnout at recent Parish Council meetings and other group gatherings, it was felt that there would be no appetite to hold a Parish Councillor surgery once a month, although the members agreed that they still felt it was a good idea.

18. Correspondence

Min 7912:24 None.

19. Any other business

Min 7913:24 None.

20. Section 100A (4)

Min 7914:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace read out loud the statement listed on the agenda in relation to Section 100A (4). Accordingly, it was proposed by Cllr S. Back that the public be excluded from the next item, which was seconded by Cllr T. Hall and was unanimously agreed.

The one (1) member of the public left the meeting at 8.30pm.

21. Personnel

a). Litter picker / Street Cleaner

To consider a proposal to employ a litter picker or Street Cleaner for the village of Stoke (all three areas).

Min 7915:24 The members discussed in detail the idea of employing a Street Cleaner to litter pick all three (3) areas of the Village on a weekly basis.

It was proposed by Cllr N. Blown, that the Parish Council should prepare an advert for the new vacancy of 'Village Street Cleaner' on a four (4) hours per week basis, at £11.44 per hour on a temporary three (3) month contract (to trial the idea). This proposal was seconded by Cllr S. Hall and was unanimously agreed.

22. Date of next meeting

Min 7916:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to remind the members that the next meeting had been scheduled to take place the Village Hall on Wednesday 17th April 2024, where instead of a Parish Council meeting, the members had previously decided to hold a Finance Meeting in its place.

23. Close of meeting

Min 7917:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace closed the meeting at 8.47 pm and thanked the Parish Councillors for attending.

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The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 17th April Finance Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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Tasks agreed:

Clerk to upload post on social media and on the Parish Councils webpage to remind residents that dogs are not permitted in the recreation grounds or playparks.

Clerk to include an item on next agenda to consider a grant towards Cancer Research Concert, organised by a resident in Stoke during the month of June in the Allhallows Cross Park.

Clerk to amend finance paperwork to show a balance carried forward.

Clerk to ask Ward Cllr C. Spalding to find a suitable site for defib for Middle Stoke and to keep the item listed on agenda with note to indicate this is an ongoing matter, due to issues with sighting (which will be deferred until further notice).

Clerk to refer issue with light in Lower Stoke Car Park to Ward Cllr C. Spalding to assist with.

Clerk to email Ward Cllr C. Spalding to ask for assistance in chasing MHS to clear footpath between Heron Way & the High Street in Stoke.

Clerk to contact Highways Agency to ask for official flooding signs for the whole of Stoke.

Cllr N. Blown to email the Clerk a copy of the poster to promote boot fair in Village Hall on Sunday 17th March, which the Clerk will then in turn upload to Facebook and on the Parish Council's webpage.

Clerk to promote Neighbourhood Plan meeting, scheduled to take place on Wednesday 20th March, in the Stoke Village Hall, starting at 7.30pm.

Clerk to promote the flood warden / snow warden's contact details (including email address and telephone number) to social media and on the Parish Council's webpage.

Cllr N. Blown to speak to Mrs G. Bucknall, concerning D-Day commemorations at St Peter & St Paul's Church.

Clerk to prepare an advert for a village 'Street Cleaner'.