

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 4th October 2023

Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

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

Members of the public: Three (3)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace opened the public session at 7.00pm and thanked the Councillors and the three (3) members of the public for attending.

Part A. Public Discussions

A member of the public spoke and expressed her concerns that Stoke did not have a Neighbourhood Plan. She conveyed her feelings towards instigating one and invited Cllr E. Cutting, who was sat next to her to speak.

Cllr E. Cutting, from Hoo Parish Council, spoke and provided an in-depth report on how Hoo Parish Council first instigated their Neighbourhood Plan. She also advised that grant funding was available via the Government with possible further funding available through ACOM for a Design Code (where the village could potentially dictate what sort of dwellings developers would be able to build).

She informed the meeting that a Neighbourhood Plan was a lot of work and that it would require a group of volunteers to drive the plan forward. She also spoke of the need to employ a competent Planning Consultant and spoke of Hoo Parish Council's difficulties in securing a contractor who was willing to work for the Government's capped rate, which apparently seemed insignificant in comparison to the rate contractors could charge privately.

She reported that all associated costs for the Neighbourhood Plan could be offset against the grant, which could include hall hire costs, printing costs (including banners), display boards and even the professional distribution of any correspondence.

Cllr E. Cutting closed her report in expressing the need to urgently apply for the grant funding before the end of this Financial Year, otherwise she thought the village would need to wait until June 2024. She spoke of an idea that has previously been put forward for a 'three-way plan' with the villages of Grain and Allhallows, however she understood that each village would be entitled to a grant in their own right and that she felt it would be more cost effective to instigate a plan individually in order to apply for the maximum funding and then maybe combine forces at a later date.

The member of the public spoke again to thank Cllr E. Cutting for coming and sharing her experience(s) with the meeting, she asked for everyone present to spread the word of starting a Neighbourhood Plan and spoke of her concerns about the Environmental impact any new dwellings would have on the Peninsula including its bio diversity.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

The Parish Councillors and the three members of the public spoke of organising an 'Open Meeting' to take place, in order to discuss the idea of instigating an Neighbourhood Plan, which would take place independently to the Parish Council.

Finally, an update was received from the Stoke Community Project, who had planned a Halloween Disco to take place in the garden of the Nags Head Public House later in the month and for their 'Senior Afternoon Tea' Event to take place in November, where they requested a £100 grant from the Parish Council.

Cllr J. Wallace, spoke in response to the Community Group's request for a grant, where she confirmed that this event had already been budgeted for and she would organise for the Clerk to send over the payment.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items
None.

The main meeting officially opened 7.50pm and Cllr E. Cutting left.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 7730:23 None.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 7731:23 None.

3. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 6th September 2023
a). To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th September 2023.

Min 7732:23 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 6th September 2023, were circulated.

It was proposed by Cllr K. Mansell and seconded by Cllr P. Dumke that the minutes be approved as a correct record. This motion was carried after it was unanimously agreed.

3. Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature

Min 7732:23 None.

4. Vacancies

a). To discuss any applications received relating to the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy.

Min 7733:23 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen advised that she had not received any further applications relating to the Parish Council's current outstanding vacancy.

A discussion ensued as to whether the Clerk would be able to place advertisement in the next edition of the Village Voices publication to promote the post.

5. Ward Councillor report

a). A report by Ward Councillor Chris Spalding

Min 7734:23 It was noted that Ward Councillor Chris Spalding had informed the Clerk that he would not be attending the meeting, and in his absence he did not provide a report.

7. Planning

a). Applications

Min 7735:23 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to confirm that there had been no further applications submitted since the last meeting.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

b). Decisions

Min 7736:23 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 7.55pm to receive a report from a member of the public who had attended the last Medway Council Planning Committee meeting at Gun Wharf, where the following application had been considered:

- **MC/23/0106 – Land at Middle Stoke, Adjacent to 1 & 2 Jubilee Cottages**

The member of the public reported that the above planning application had been passed for preliminary approval, despite a comprehensive objection submitted by Ward Cllr C. Spalding. She advised that only one (1) of the fifteen (15) members present had objected to the application, compared to nine (9) members that had objected to it previously, when it had first been discussed.

She spoke of Medway Council's SLAA document (Strategic Land Availability Assessment) where it was noted that the Airfield at Middle Stoke had been listed.

The meeting reconvened at 8.00pm.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7737:23 It was noted that the Parish Council were still waiting for an update from Medway Council regarding the concerns they had raised previously about a property being built without planning permission, within the confines of the 'Sturchfield'.

8. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 7738:23 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 showing.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, informed the meeting that owing to a change in Hugo Fox's terms and Conditions, the Parish Council's webpage was no longer free of charge and as such Stoke Parish Council were now being charged £11.99, per calendar month, for their most basic package.

After careful consideration the bank balances were deemed as accurate.

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for September 2023.

Min 7739:23 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance against the budget for September 2023, where they concluded that these balances were acceptable.

The Clerk was instructed however to amend the heading on the Parish Council's spreadsheet from 'Sundry Donations', to the 'Stoke Community Project' for future reference.

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

Min 7740:23 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they concluded that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 7741:23 After careful consideration the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by Cllr S. Back seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and unanimously agreed.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£605.01	September 2023 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – September 2023
HMRC	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£18.40	Tax & NI charges (September 2023)
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£41.16	Broadband & Telephone line rental for September 2023
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks
KPS Office Supplies	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£10.70	50% costs towards 2 x reams of blue copier paper (for meeting packs) INV: 48611
KPS Office Supplies	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£23.09	50% costs towards additional envelopes, A4 white paper & a new hole Punch INV: 48504
RBL Poppy Appeal	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	CARD	£27.50	Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Day 2023, from Stoke Village.
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£51.13	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for September 2023
TOTAL			£941.99	

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

Min 7742:23 It was proposed by Cllr N. Blown, seconded by Cllr J. Chisnall & unanimously agreed that the Clerk would make a payment for £100 to the Stoke Community Project, for their 'Senior Afternoon Tea Event' (which had already been budgeted for).

9. 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 7743:23 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to advise that the equipment in all the parks was in a 'shoddy state'. She advised that there was litter strewn everywhere at Heron Way recreation ground and that the bins were overflowing, where no one appeared to have a key to open the locks to change the bags.

She closed her report in speaking of the need to replace the bird scarers that resided on the top of the play equipment, as she had recognised the existing cable ties were past their best.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

b). Cleaning of play equipment.

Min 7744:23 Cllr K. Mansell reported that the arrangement with the new contractor appeared to be working well and that the equipment was now being regularly cleaned, including the removal of any bird droppings.

c). Defibrillator

Min 7745:23 Cllr S. Back spoke to inform the members that a new defibrillator scheme had been set up by the British Heart Foundation, where he understood that they were offering to either match any donations up to the value of £750 or less, or contributed the maximum grant of £750 per application.

The Councillors also spoke of writing to the developer of planning application MC/23/0106 (Land at Middle Stoke, Adjacent to 1 & 2 Jubilee Cottages) to ask them to fund a defibrillator for Middle Stoke, where it was concluded that there was no developer.

They discussed the need to link the Middle Stoke defibrillator to a power source to help maintain the device at a constant temperature, where it was recognised that the Parish Council had previously come unstuck at prior conversations.

d). Christmas Tree 2023

Min 7746:23 The members collectively discussed the festive celebrations for the village. Accordingly, the Clerk was deployed to order a big tree (larger than the one that had been kindly donated last year).

They also spoke of asking for a band to perform at the lighting ceremony, where Cllr S. Back advised he would happily speak to the St John Ambulance's band to find out if they might be willing to assist.

10. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 7747:23 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 7748:23 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 7749:23 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 7750:23 It was reported that further pot holes in the village had been filled in.

Min 7751:23 Cllr J. Chisnall spoke to complain about the gas works that were taking place the village, where he enquired if any of the other members knew how long these works were scheduled to take place?

A discussion ensued and it was expected that these works were likely to extend into December, if not into the New Year.

e). Fly tipping

Min 7752:23 None.

f). Grass cutting

Min 7753:23 No report.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 7754:23 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen reported that she needed to chase Medway Council for an update, as she hadn't received any further reports on the status of the leaking manhole cover.

11. Communications

To receive an update on the following methods of communication:

a). Website

Min 7755:23 Following item 8c, reference **Min 7738:23**, it was reported that Hugo Fox were now charging the Parish Council £11.99 per month, to enable the Parish Council to use their website.

b). Social Media Page

Min 7756:23 No report.

c). Parish Council owned tablets

Min 7757:23 It was agreed that a training session would be held on Tuesday 24th November at 7.00pm in the Nags Head Public House garden to fathom out how all the members were able to use and access their emails on the Parish Council owned tablets.

12. Village Hall

a). To receive an update on the status of the Village Hall

Min 7758:23 Cllr K. Mansell reported that she had submitted a grant application on behalf of Stoke Village Hall to Veolia, to apply for some funding towards a replacement roof. She understood the Committee's application was in the process of being assessed and that they might not hear back until the beginning of December, owing to Veolia's published guidelines.

In the interim she reported that the Village Hall Committee had been very busy, repairing and improving their facilities, where she provided the following comprehensive list of tasks that had been recently completed:

- I. The steps outside the front of the village hall had been repaired.
- II. The leak in the gent's toilet had been fixed.
- III. The limescale that had built up in toilets and sinks, had been gradually removed.
- IV. There had been a new smart meter installed, (to enable the committee to accurately monitor its energy consumption).
- V. All the posters and leaflets pinned to the walls of Village Hall had been laminated and re-organised.
- VI. A new Facebook page for the Village Hall was in the process of being set up.
- VII. A banner to advertise the facility for rent had also been agreed to be placed on the outside of the building.

The members spoke collectively about further ideas they had had for the Village Hall, which included boot fairs and placing some colourful decals on the walls.

They also discussed the Village Hall's current rates, where they indicated that these should be revised.

Finally, a vote of thanks was proposed by Cllr J. Wallace for all Cllr K. Mansell's hard work in transforming the Village Hall and for submitting a grant application on behalf of the committee. This proposal was seconded by Cllr N. Blown and it was unanimously agreed.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

13. External Contractors

Min 7759:23 None. Although the Clerk expressed concerns as to whether the moss had been treated in the playparks from last year, where she recalled a conversation, she had had with the contractors, who had agreed to treat the moss earlier this year once the weather had improved (over the summer months).

14. Stoke Community Project

a). **To receive a report from the Stoke Community Project concerning their latest projects.**

Min 7760:23 Please see the following update, listed in Part A of the public session:

“Finally, an update was received from the Stoke Community Project, who had planned for A Halloween Disco to take place in the garden of the Nags Head Public House later in the month and for their ‘Senior Afternoon Tea’ Event to take place in November, where they requested a £100 grant from the Parish Council”.

15. Flood Update

a). **To discuss holding an extraordinary meeting to host a consultation on behalf of Medway Council, regarding their proposed flooding prevention solutions for the Village and surrounding area.**

Min 7761:23 Cllr S. Back spoke to inform the members that he had been in contact with the portfolio holder at Medway Council and that he would be arranging for a face-to-face meeting in order to discuss the flooding issues in Stoke, first hand.

Min 7762:23 The conversation then digressed to holding an extraordinary meeting to enable Medway Council to consult on the results of their recent flood prevention investigations.

After careful consideration the members unanimously agreed to relinquish their meeting spot on Wednesday 1st November in order to accommodate an open meeting instead. It was felt that this meeting would not only allow Medway Council to consult on their findings following their flooding investigations but also enable the village to hold an open discussion the suggestion of instigating a Neighbourhood Plan.

16. Local Plan

a). **To discuss the idea of potentially organising a local plan for the village of Stoke.**

Min 7763:23 The members agreed that it was a Neighbourhood Plan that the village was potentially interested in participating in and not a Local Plan, that had been incorrectly listed on the agenda.

They referred to their above idea, which involved relinquishing their November meeting date to accommodate an ‘Open Meeting’ to take place instead, where the suggestion of a Neighbourhood Plan could be discussed by the village in an open forum and directed by a ‘Steering Group’.

17. External Committee Updates

a). **KALC**

Min 7764:23 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, reported that there was some confusion over who had been appointed as the new KALC Clerk, where she understood a meeting date was in the process of being organised to take place in the new year.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

b). Rural Liaison.

Min 7765:23 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, spoke to advise that she had attended the last Rural Liaison meeting.

She confirmed that the committee had been provided with a report by the Climate Change Team and an in-depth update on the status of the Lower Thames Crossing had also been provided.

As a result of the report on the Lower Thames Crossing, Cllr J. Wallace spoke of her concerns surrounding the large increase of traffic there would be in the surrounding area(s), not only owing to construction traffic but also users of the crossing, once it had opened.

She closed her report in offering to circulate the slides from this meeting to the Parish Councillors, once she had received them.

18. Correspondence

Min 7766:23 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to report that she had received an email from a neighbouring Parish Council who were potentially interested in setting up a joint 'Speedwatch' scheme.

The Clerk spoke further to inform the meeting of what was involved, where it was unanimously agreed that owing to the lack of volunteers, there was likely to be no appetite for this idea sadly.

19. Any other business

Min 7767:23 None.

20. Date of next meeting

Min 7768:23 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 6th December 2023.

21. Section 100A(4)

Min 7769:23 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 K. Mansell that the public be excluded from the next item, which was seconded by Cllr P. Dumke and was unanimously agreed.

The two (2) remaining members of the public left at 9.00pm.

23. Village Hall's Grant Application for Veolia

Min 7770:23 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to provide an update on the Village Hall's Grant Application for Veolia, where she asked the members to consider providing sponsoring the 10% deposit required for the repairs to the roof, should their application be successful.

A discussion ensued, where after careful consideration it was proposed by Cllr S. Back to provide sponsorship for the Village Hall, up to the value of £3,750. This proposal was seconded by Cllr N. Blown and was agreed with five (5) out of the six (6) members present voting in favour and one (1) member abstaining.

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

24. Village Hall's Insurance Policy 2023 / 2024

Min 7771:23 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to advise the members that she had received an email from the Chair of the Village Hall Committee, asking the Parish Council to consider adapting their insurance policy to provide cover for the Village Hall too, which was felt would save the village a balance of funds in the long term.

The Clerk disclosed that she was unsure what the new insurance premium (to include cover for the Village Hall) would be, when the Parish Council's policy came up for renewal in May 2024. However, she raised concerns that the Parish Council would not be able to afford to pay the Village Hall's insurance premiums and provide a yearly grant of £1,000 (as budgeted for at their annual finance meeting).

An in-depth discussion ensued.

After careful consideration it was proposed by Cllr J. Chisnall that the Parish Council should agree to pay the insurance premium for the Village Hall, however in doing so they should also withdraw their £1,000 annual grant towards maintenance costs. This proposal was seconded by Cllr S. Back and was unanimously agreed.

25. Close of meeting

Min 7772:23 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace closed the meeting at 9.10 pm and thanked the Parish Councillors for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 6th December	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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