

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES
Wednesday 1st March 2023
Parish Council Meeting
Village Hall ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace ~ Vice-Chair Cllr G. Blackman
Cllr K. Mansell Cllr P. Egan
Cllr K. Copping Ward Cllr G. Crozer
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Twenty (20)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Part A. Public Discussions
None.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

A member of the public spoke to urge the Parish Council to reconsider their previous decision and to install a new defibrillator in both Upper Stoke and Middle Stoke. A discussion ensued in regards to possible locations, where it was identified that the apparatus would require electricity to regulate its temperature.

Several members of the public spoke to object to planning application MC/23/0106, where various complaints were aired, that included (but were not limited to):

- The lack of current infrastructure in place to support the proposed new properties, in particular gas mains, pipe capacity and sewage drainage.
- The dwellings were being built in a high flood risk area.
- The placement of the new dwellings could put existing properties at risk.
- The biodiversity of the site.
- Animal welfare, after it was identified that there were protected species of animal(s) living on/or near the site.
- The lack of a Local Plan.
- The allocation of only one car parking space per house.
- That the development could set a precedent for more properties to be built in or around Middle Stoke.

It was understood that the closing date for objections had been scheduled to take place on Tuesday 21st March and that the next Medway Council Planning Committee meeting was due to take place on Wednesday 5th April.

The residents spoke collectively about knocking on the doors of other Parishioners to inform them of this planning application and organising a leaflet drop for Middle Stoke. They also asked the Parish Council to lend their support and lodge an objection in response to the application.

Cllr P. Egan spoke in response inform the meeting that he was already formalising his objection. He advised that upon assessment of all the documentation uploaded to the unitary authority's webpage, he had identified at least 36 points he could use in his letter of objection.

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A further discussion in regards to Cllr P. Egan's observations ensued and following a plea from villagers, Cllr P. Egan agreed to write a draft letter of objection for any residents wishing to use his grievances to form part of their own objections.

Finally, Mr C. Spaulding, a candidate from the last local by-election, spoke to inform the meeting that he felt this application was very significant for Stoke. He urged the residents not to ignore it and reconfirmed the closing date for applications. He appealed to any residents wishing to lodge an objection to submit their comments by either 18th or 19th March, to allow for these documents to be uploaded to Medway Council's Planning Portal, and to be counted.

The public session closed at 7.40pm and subsequently a large proportion of the residents left.

The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace officially opened the main part of the meeting and thanked the Councillors and the remaining members of the public for attending.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Min 7486:22 An apology for absence was received from Cllr B. Stone, who was on annual leave.

2. **To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Min 7487:22 None.

3. **Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting**

a). To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 25th January 2023.

Min 7488:22 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 25th January 2023, were circulated.

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

4. **Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature**

Min 7489:22 None.

5. **Local Elections 2023**

a). Confirmation of the Local Election dates for 2023.

Min 7490:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace referred the members to their meeting packs, where a reminder of the Local Election dates, that ranged from Tuesday 28th March until Tuesday 4th April, had been included. She informed the members that she understood anyone wishing to apply had to book an appointment with Ms J. Ringham, Head of Election and Member Services at Medway Council, to submit their nomination papers to her before 4.00pm on Tuesday 4th April.

6. **Ward Councillor report**

a). A report by Ward Councillor George Croze

Min 7491:22 Ward Councillor G. Crozer referred to his report, which he had relayed part of ahead of the public session. He closed his address in encouraging residents and Parish Councillors alike to get back in touch with him if he could be of any further assistance, before relaying how impressed he had been by the public turnout in response to the controversial planning application.

7. **Planning**

a). Applications

Min 7492:22 Cllr K. Copping spoke to acknowledge receipt of one planning application that had been received since the last meeting, where following the comments made by the Parishioners

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during the public session (see above), he strongly urged the members to consider writing to Medway Council to lodge an objection.

- **MC/23/0106 – Land Adjacent To 1 Parsonage Cottages**

A vote took place, where it was proposed by Cllr K. Copping that the members should lodge their own objection, this proposal was seconded by Cllr P. Egan and was unanimously agreed.

A further discussion ensued and it was agreed that the members would post their letter of objection on their webpage, on their social media account and place a notice in their notice-boards to inform the Parish that they were opposed to the application.

b). Decisions

Min 7493:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the meeting that there had been no further planning decisions made.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7494:22 None.

8. Finance

a). Bank balances

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for January & February 2023.

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

d). Accounts for payment.

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

Min 7495:22 It was proposed by Cllr K. Copping and seconded by Cllr K. Mansell, that points a, b, c d & e be approved en bloc, this motion was carried after it was unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£535.93	February 2023 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – February 2023
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£46.39	Broadband & Telephone line rental for February 2023
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£69.00	Litter picking and Cleaning INV: 3670
Methodist Church	-	PAID BY BACS	£100.00	Annual Donation for 2022
St Peter & St Paul's Church	-	PAID BY BACS	£100.00	Annual Donation for 2022
Amazon	-	PAID BY CARD	£24.49	ERROR (Microsoft Key for High Halstow).
Medway Council	Min 5077:21	DIRECT DEBIT	£212.50	Lower Stoke Car Park Lease Payment Quarter 3 INV: (TO FOLLOW)

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Stoke Community Project	Min 7420:22	PAID BY BACS	£100.00	Seniors Afternoon Tea Event held on 20/11/2022.
Jenolite	Min 7343:22	PAID BY CARD	£23.98	Anti-rust primer & multi surface spray paint INV: [Order #43714]
Jenolite	Min 7343:22	PAID BY CARD	£41.98	Anti-rust primer & multi surface spray paint INV: [Order #44807]
Land Registry	Min 7472:22	PAID BY CARD	£3.00	Boundary Search for Button Drive INV: 1000002009935
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£42.87	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for January 2023
TOTAL			£1,335.14	

9. Management of the Council's land and property

a). To review the play park inspections for:

- i Allhallows Playparks Road Playpark
- ii Heron Way Playpark
- iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 7496:22 Cllr P. Egan provided a verbal report from the most recent play inspections, where he paid tribute to Cllr K. Mansell & Ms S. Horne for all their help in maintaining the play parks.

He advised that the majority of the work he had been undertaking had been centred around repainting the play equipment to preserve its current condition and to prevent any further rusting.

b). To receive an update on the long-term upkeep of the Button Drive, Heron Way & Upper Stoke Playparks.

Min 7497:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to inform the members the matting that surrounded the play equipment was coming to the end of its natural life and accordingly the Parish Council needed to set aside a budget for this.

He also reported that he was drawing up an action plan, following his community meeting with the youth of the village, to upgrade the playparks on a minimal budget.

c). To receive an update on the installation of three Platinum Jubilee trees.

Min 7498:22 Following Cllr B. Stone's report at the last meeting, the members understood that the three new oak trees to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, were still in hand.

d). Defibrillator

Min 7499:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen referred the members to their meeting packs, where she had included an email from a resident expressing concerns that there were no defibrillators in either Middle Stoke or Upper Stoke. Cllr P. Egan spoke in response to advise that he would fully support the installation of defibrillators in all parts of the village and disclosed that he had already looked into this.

He advised that he was investigating the possibility of moving the bus stop at Upper Stoke and installing a defibrillator next to its new location. He also spoke of purchasing a reconditioned glass BT phone box to install a defibrillator on the green in Middle Stoke.

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The members spoke collectively about power supplies and cabinets.

Ward Councillor G. Crozer spoke to inform the members that he would be happy to speak to Medway Council to see if he was able to access any money from the unitary authority's 'Members Priority Fund' to contribute towards the costs of purchasing two new defibrillators and any associated costs relating to their installation and housing.

Cllr K. Mansell also spoke to advise that she would enquire if her daughter was able to source any defibrillators through her workplace, where she understood her employers could get items at cost value +10%.

10. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 7500:22 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 7501:22 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 7502:22 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 7503:22 Cllr G. Blackman spoke to report a large pothole situated on the High Street.

e). Fly tipping

Min 7506:22 Cllr K. Mansell expressed concerns that there might be an increase in fly tipping, following the news that the local recycling centres were going to start charging.

f). Grass cutting

Min 7505:22 No report.

g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road - Annex A

Min 7506:22 The members discussed the response they had received from Matthew Palmer, a Senior Engineer at Medway Council, concerning the leaking manhole cover on the A228/Grain Road, following a complaint sent to local MP Kelly Tolhurst. Please see Annex A for a copy of this response.

The members speculated that the leak was still linked to surface water drainage, as it was identified that the water had receded over the summer month last year.

h). Button Drive recreation ground outer fencing

Min 7507:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen referred the members to their meeting packs where she had organised for a land registry search of the boundary of the adjacent property to the Button Drive recreation ground.

A discussion ensued, where it was agreed that the land registry search had been inconclusive in determining who the boundary belonged to. Accordingly, the Clerk was deployed to get back in touch with resident to notify him of this and to ask him to provide any documentary evidence he might possess to indicate who was responsible for the boundary line.

11. Communication

a). Update on the Parish Council's new webpage and associated email addresses

Min 7508:22 The Vice-chair, Cllr J. Wallace asked the Clerk to ensure the members letter of

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objection was uploaded onto the Parish Council's website, once the document had been finalised.

b). Social Media Page

Min 7509:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to express her concerns that residents were using the Parish Council's social media page as a formal method of communication, where there was also an assumption that this page was constantly monitored for comments and messages.

In light of the above, she asked the members to consider adding a disclaimer to their Facebook page and messenger inbox, to inform the residents that any comments or complaints should still be sent to the Parish Council through their recognised methods of communication and that this page was not checked on a daily basis.

After careful consideration the members agreed that a disclaimer was a sensible idea, where the Clerk was asked to implement this suggestion.

c). Parish Council owned tablets

Min 7510:22 No report.

12. Village Hall

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

Min 7511:22 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to inform the members that she had recently been appointed as the new treasurer for the Village Hall.

She closed her report in advising that there had been a very poor attendance at their Annual General Meeting and there were still delays in the repairing the hole in the roof.

13. External Contractors

Min 7512:22 The members discussed the need for quotes to remove the moss from the matting in the play parks and to repair the back of the noticeboard in Middle Stoke, which was now looking very weather-beaten.

14. Stoke Community Project - Annex B

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

Min 7513:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace read the latest report from the Stoke Community Project. Please see Annex B for a copy of this report.

15. Feedback to Public Questions

a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 25th January 2023.

Min 7514:22 It was accepted that there were no questions raised at the members last meeting held on Wednesday 25th January 2023.

16. Lower Stoke Car Park Layout

a). To receive an update on the new layout of the Lower Stoke Car Park

Min 7515:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to inform the members that he had booked two days annual leave during the month of March to carry out the previously agreed renovations to the car park. He appealed to the members of the public present for additional aid and asked for manpower on either Tuesday 7th March and Wednesday 8th March.

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17. Village Events

a). Kings Coronation May 2023.

Min 7516:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace informed the members that she had applied for the same road closure as the year before, where the High Street would be closed from past the Denison Mews turning down to the junction where the High Street meets Grain Road (on the corner of the Nags Head Public House).

The conversation digressed to leafleting cars to inform residents of the road closure, and to advise them that the car park would be closed the night before event and on the day of.

The members also spoke about organising a commemorative gift to hand out to the children, where they questioned if the platinum tokens handed out at the Queen's Jubilee had been placed on display or if a more practical gift would be better received. They closed their discussion in agreeing to look into supporting local businesses, where possible.

18. Peninsula Ward Development Plan

a). To discuss an idea, raised by Cllr P. Egan, to introduce a Peninsula Ward Development Plan.

Min 7517:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke of a vision he had had of organising a Peninsula Development Plan. He advised that in the absence of a Local Plan, and as a result of the latest boundary review, that this idea would be a great accelerant to assist with the amalgamation of the Parishes of Allhallows, the Isle of Grain and Stoke into one ward and allow these communities to have their say on the future development of the Peninsula.

The members spoke collectively and agreed that Cllr P. Egan's suggestion was a good idea. Concerns were raised however about the lack of time there was left until the next local election, where it was concluded to defer this matter for a formal decision until later in the year.

Ward Councillor G. Crozer also spoke to inform Cllr P. Egan that High Halstow Parish Council had just submitted their Neighbourhood Plan to Medway Council, which was due to be going to the next cabinet meeting on Tuesday 7 March. He advised that this Neighbourhood Plan had been an ongoing project, which had developed over many years. Owing to his experience in this field, he offered to lend Cllr P. Egan any support or assistance he required to assist him with this idea.

19. Coffee Morning Bus Survey

a). To discuss arranging a public survey, to determine if transport is required to assist residents attending the weekly 'Coffee Morning' in the St Peter & St Paul's Church in Upper Stoke, every Thursday.

Min 7518:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to advise that as result of the Community Plan Meeting, held on Saturday 10th December, that it was recognised the weekly coffee morning held in the St Peter & St Paul's Church in Upper Stoke every Thursday, might be a good platform to determine which residents in the village require the most amount of help. He suggested that in order to assist villagers in attending this event that the Parish Council should consider conducting a short survey to establish if anyone transport aid.

Cllr J. Wallace spoke in response to suggest asking the church who ran the event, to confirm if they were able to put any feelers out.

Cllr P. Egan closed his report in suggesting an online survey and flyers.

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20. Policies

To review the following new/ revised policies for formal adoption:

- i). Freedom of Information requests.
- ii). Election Practises.
- iii). Protocol for Complaints, Bullying, Harassment and Whistle-Blowing.

Min 7518:22 Concerns were raised that the Parish Council were going to significantly run over on time for their meeting, where it was agreed to organise a committee meeting to discuss these policies in greater detail.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to circulate some dates and to organise a separate policy committee meeting.

21. Correspondence

Min 7519:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to inform the members that she had received a written response from local MP Kelly Tolhurst, regarding their complaint concerning the leaking manhole cover on the A228 / Grain Road. She advised that this letter confirmed receipt of the members grievances and verified that she was looking into the issue and would get back in touch with them as soon as she had any further updates.

Cllr K. Mansell also spoke to inform the members that local MP Kelly Tolhurst was meant to be looking into the issues with the electricity supply and that she understood a resident had written to her too in regards to some overgrown trees.

22. External Committee Updates

a). KALC

Min 7520:22 Cllr G. Blackman spoke to inform the members that there had been no further meeting.

b). Rural Liaison.

Min 7521:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the Councillors that she understood the next Rural Liaison committee meeting was taking place that evening.

23. Any other business

Min 7522:22 Cllr K. Copping spoke to remind the meeting of the dates for the next local election, where he advised the forum that he could see from social media there was clearly some unrest about the Parish Council's sincerity and commitment.

He advised that having served as a Parish Councillor that there had been 'no brown envelopes passed under the table' as suggested on this page and that the role itself, whilst unpaid, was very community focused.

He urged the residents present and anyone on social media who was unhappy with the current Council, to consider stepping up and applying for the role at the next local elections to form a local democracy and enforce change.

Several of the Parish Councillors supported of Cllr K. Copping's comments and encouraged any interested residents to obtain the relevant election papers from either Medway Council's website, the Clerk or to pick up the packs that had been left by the door on their way out.

24. Date of next meeting

Min 7523:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 5th April.

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25. **Section 100A(4)**

Min 7524:22 The Vice-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. Copping that the public be excluded from the next item, which was seconded by Cllr P. Egan and was unanimously agreed.

The remaining members of the public left at 8.55pm and Cllr J. Wallace spoke again to thank everyone for attending and to personally thank Ward Councillor George Crozer for coming.

26. **Personnel**

Min 7525:22 A personnel matter was discussed in closed session.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to propose the members grant the Clerk a £150 budget to organise a retirement gift for a long-standing Parish Councillor This proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and was unanimously agreed.

27. **Close of meeting**

Min 7526:22 The Vice-Chair, closed the meeting at 9.05pm.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 5th April 2023	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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ANNEXES

ANNEX A

10g). Leaking manhole cover on A228 / Grain Road

Min 7506:22

A228 Stoke – Leaking Manhole (February 2023 Update)

Author: Matthew Palmer – Senior Engineer (Structures, Tunnel and Drainage)

Background: Water has been leaking from a BT manhole on the A228 near Middle Stoke for some time now and has been reported to Medway Council.

Actions from Medway Council to date:

My team have investigated the drainage assets in the area to determine whether our surface water drainage assets were leaking into the BT system. This involved placing environmentally friendly dye into our drainage system so check where surface water drained to. The outcome of this was that is passed through our pipes and ditches but no dye appeared in the BT ducting or leaked from the manhole in questions. The result of our investigations concluded that our surface water drainage assets do not appear to be leaking or contributing to the leak.

Actions from Southern Water to date:

We reported the problem to Southern Water as we believe there is a mains leak around this location which is finding its way into the BT ducting and leaking from the manhole. They carried out various tests on their systems and informed us that their tests did not indicate a leak. It should be noted, that personally I am unsure of the accuracy of these tests, as we have had an example elsewhere in Medway where they carried out similar tests, which indicated there wasn't a leak, however when we excavated the footpath, we discovered a watermain leak as expected.

Actions from BT to date:

It has been reported to BT as essentially, water is leaking from their

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Asset onto the public highway. Their response and their current stance is that as they have no assets that produce or drain water, it is not their responsibility as it is somehow getting into their ducting from another location which cannot be a fault of theirs. They have however, said they will assist us with the matter, without taking the lead.

Next Steps / Moving Forward

I appreciate that this has been going on for quite a while now and it simply can't be left as is. Therefore, my team will take this on and investigate further, so that hopefully we will get this matter resolved.

My opinion is that the most plausible reason for this is a water main leak within the Southern Water System, as this occurs nearly all year round, even in periods of dry weather. It is very unlikely that it would be the cause of the water table or an underground spring. We have attempted to push this further with Southern Water but to no avail.

This week we lifted BT manholes around the area in attempt to narrow down a potential location where water was leaking into. This was in the hope that if we found a dry chamber, that it would be likely that the water was getting in between a dry chamber and the next wet one. Unfortunately, all BT chambers in the area contained water.

Step 1 (Further Investigations) - We will now be requesting permission from BT for us to insert dye around the high point in the area, we hope that this will prove the route of the water and narrow down the location. We will also be requesting permission to potentially pump water out of their system and carry out camera surveys within their ducts if required.

It will be very difficult to pinpoint the exact location from these surveys but I am reluctant to start breaking ground and digging until we have at least a rough location.

Step 2 (Breaking Ground) – Following the investigations, we will likely need to break ground and start digging to locate the problem and discover how its entering the BT system. This will hopefully be aided by the investigations narrowing down the location, however even if we are unable to narrow down the location, we will progress to this stage, it will just add a layer of difficulty. It should be noted, that when we are at this stage, it will require at a minimum two-way light on the A228. We will also likely be unable to utilise machine digging as we will be in close proximity to cables so hand digging will be required. Unfortunately, as I am sure you will appreciate, this will take longer, and it will be extremely difficult to predict how long it will take to locate the problem.

ANNEX B

14a). To receive a report from the Stoke Community Project concerning their latest projects.

Min 7513:22

Stoke Community Project are pleased to have some dates in place for this year.

We have quiz nights on the 18th March, 10th June, 16th September and 2nd December. These will all be in Lower Stoke Village Hall. Bookings can be made with Jo on 07711993997.

There is an Easter disco for the children planned on the 7th April at the Nags Head pub. More details to follow, we are hoping to have an Easter Egg hunt this year.

Along with the Parish Council we are planning a Coronation Street Party, this will be in the village car park, High St and Nags Head car park. So far, we have booked the bouncy castle, soft play and face painter. We are also hoping to have a circus workshop for the children,

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watch this space.

The Grain fete is on the 22nd July this year. We have the large lorry booked again and have a new theme so get in touch if you would like you children to be on the float, they all looked wonderful last year.

For Halloween we have another disco for the children at the Nags Head pub, spooky costumes a must.

The Senior's Afternoon Tea will be on the 26th November, we all enjoy this event.

The Christmas Tree switch on will be on the 3rd December and finally Santa will be delivering around the village on the 17th December, this is another favourite of ours.

DRAFT