

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 6th January 2021

Virtual Meeting ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone (Chairman) Cllr G. Blackman ~ Vice-chair
Cllr G. Barron Cllr J. Wallace
Cllr R. Morrad Cllr R. Bridge
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Three (3)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Part A. Public Discussions

Priscilla Haslehurst from Medway Council's flood risk department spoke to introduce herself and to inform the meeting that she had been made aware of the severe flooding issues in Stoke, following the recent deluge of rainwater. She advised that she had seen the damage first hand and that she had personally spoken to several villagers alongside a few business owners when she visited the Parish.

Cllr R. Bridge spoke to inform Ms Haslehurst where the rainwater was coming from, mentioning large amounts of surface water gushing down from Cuckolds Green Road and up from the drainage system situated outside the corner shop in Lower Stoke. He raised concerns about the poor condition of Polly Addams Corner and the large amount of surface water on the A228/Grain Road in Middle Stoke, alongside complaints of raw sewage.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, also spoke to advise that he did not think the drainage pipes that ran under the village were large enough to keep up with the capacity required that the drainage ditches were already full and overflowing. He commented that the Environmental Agency were not being responsible for their ditches as they were not regularly cleaned, unlike his.

Ms Haslehurst responded to advise that Medway Council were already engaging in conversations with both Southern Water and the Environment Agency. She commended Cllr B. Stone for keeping his ditches clear and commented that the culverts in the village were very small. She suggested that the culverts would need to be checked regularly for blockages and advised that she was in the process of collating a report with her findings, which she hoped to be able to update the members on further at their next meeting in February.

The Vice-Chair, Cllr G. Blackman, also spoke to inform Ms Haslehurst of an issue with a property at Burrows Lane, where it was understood that the resident's garden regularly flooded with raw sewage. Ms Haslehurst confirmed that she would also look into this problem.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

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Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 07.27pm and thanked all the members for attending.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Min 2050:21 None.

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

Min 2051:21 None.

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

Min 2052:21 It was acknowledged that with the Parish Council's consent the Clerk had written to UK Power Networks to raise an official complaint concerning the recent spate of power cuts, but that she had received no response.

Cllr R. Bridge spoke to raise his concerns that the suppliers were not responding to the Parish Council, where the Chairman spoke in response to advise that the members needed to support Ward Cllr Mick Pendergast, who was also working in unison with Medway MP Kelly Tolhurst and Alan Jarratt of Medway Council, concerning this matter.

Cllr R. Bridge asked for update on the proposed meeting with UK Power Networks, where Cllr J. Wallace asked him to refer to an email that was circulated prior to the meeting – please see Index A.

4. **Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting - Appendix A**

Min 2053:21 The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on Wednesdays 2nd December 2020, as already circulated by the Clerk, were submitted.

It was proposed by Cllr J. Wallace and seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr G. Blackman, that they be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

5. **Information arising from the minutes not on the agenda**

Min 2054:21 None.

6. **Planning- Appendix B**

a). Applications

Min 2055:21 The members acknowledged receipt of one (1) new planning application since the last meeting, where they discussed the application in greater detail, after a discussion it was decided not to submit an objection.

- **MC/20/3072 - Clematis Cottage, Vicarage Lane**
Construction of a two-storey extension to the side together with a single storey extension with dormer window to the side and associated alterations.

b). Decisions

Min 2056:21 The members also acknowledged receipt of the one (1) new planning decision, made by Medway Council, since the last meeting:

- **MC/20/2771 - Sycamore House, Allhallows Road**
Construction of a two-storey side extension; porch to the front and a detached outbuilding to form garage to side/rear

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c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 2057:21 None.

7. Finance – Appendix C

a). To agree financial performance against the budget for November 2020

Min 2058:21 Cllr R. Morrad spoke to raise concerns that the Excel budget planner, included in the members meeting packs, did not show a roll forward figures and as such he was not able to reconcile it with either the cash book or the bank statements. He also raised additional concerns that the bank statements showed a higher figure to the costs indicated on the Excel paperwork.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to refer Cllr R. Morrad to the Rialtas paperwork she had also included in the meeting, where these budget planners had been printed from the Accounting software the Parish Council had agreed to use and where the cashbook and bank statements did balance. It was agreed that Cllr R. Morrad, the Chairman and the Clerk would liaise independently to discuss the issues identified.

b). Update of account(s) for 2020/21 including payments received.

Min 2059:21 The Councillors carefully reviewed the bank balances provided in Appendix C where they deemed the figures as acceptable.

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 2060:21 It was proposed by Cllr R. Morrad and seconded by the Vice-Chair, Cllr G. Blackman, that the tables below, as previously circulated, be noted and the payments confirmed. This motion was unanimously agreed.

Min 2061:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, also spoke to request that an extraordinary finance meeting be arranged, where the Precept balance would be discussed, once received from Medway Council amongst other items.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	-	BACS	£383.81	December 2020 wages
Mrs J. Allen	-	BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – November 2020
HMRC	-	BACS	£90.60	Payment of Tax & NI
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	-	DIRECT DEBIT	£43.15	Broadband & Phone line rental for December 2020
Colin Davis	-	BACS	£168.00	December 2020 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV 3119
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£41.63	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for December 2020
Bucknall's Landscaping Management (BLM)	-	BACS	£360.00	Removal of moss from all 3 play areas INV 9721
Safeplay Playground Services Ltd	Min 2027:20	BACS	£1,776.00	Removal of toddler tunnels at Heron Way & Button Drive INV 17069

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Wel Medical	Min 1974:20	BACS	£278.22	Defibrillator pads & battery pack INV I238567
Stoke Methodist Church	-	BACS	£100.00	Annual Donation
St Peter & St Paul's Church	-	BACS	£100.00	Annual Donation
Hotel Chocolat	-	BACS	£26.90	Thank you present for Cllr J. Wallace ORDER NO: 56741656
Hotel Chocolat	-	BACS	£26.90	Christmas thank you for Cllr B. Stone ORDER NO: 56741713
TOTAL			£3,430.21	

Natwest	-	Interest	£0.48	Interest from Natwest reserves account
Hotel Chocolat	-	Credit – BACS	£26.90	Refund for low stock
High Halstow Parish Council	-	Credit - BACS	£18.53	50% contribution from High Hal- stow PC towards the Vodafone Communications package
TOTAL			£45.91	

8. Management of the Council's land and property – Appendix D

a). Playparks

i Allhallows Road Playpark

ii Heron Way Playpark

iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 2062:21 The Play Park inspection from the month of December was accepted. The report received confirmed that the play equipment appeared to be in good order, that all the touch points were being regularly disinfected and that the relevant COVID-19 advice signs remained in place.

The Clerk also mentioned a post that she had seen on social media, regarding a large volume of discarded gas canisters that had been found within the Heron Way playpark. She advised that she would highlight this matter to the contractor's attention and request that these canisters be disposed of as soon as possible. The members also requested that the Clerk report the discarded canisters to Kent Police, where the violators might have been in breach of the present lockdown regulations.

Min 2063:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the two irreparable toddler tunnels had now been removed from the Heron Way playpark & the Button Drive playpark. He advised that replacement apparatus would need to be sought, where the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, confirmed that she would check the measurements of the gap left behind and provide the members with some options of suitable replacement equipment.

Cllr R. Morrad spoke in response to ask that the new play equipment be tailored towards the younger children, following the feedback he had received.

Min 2064:21 Cllr J. Wallace also spoke to advise that Ward Cllr M. Pendergast had offered to put forward a grant of £2,000 towards any new equipment, from his Ward fund.

A further discussion ensued in relation to the material the new play equipment should be made from.

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b). Notice board in Lower Stoke

Min 2065:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that she was still in discussions with the suppliers, following their Christmas shut down. She assured the members that she would report back to them as soon as she had some more news in regards to the costings.

9. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 2066:21 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 2067:21 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 2068:21 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 2069:21 The Parish Councillors collectively complained about the amount of potholes there were on the main roads, heading towards the village of Hoo and back.

The Vice-Chair, Cllr G. Blackman, also spoke to address his concerns in connection to the rickety manhole covers that moved when driven over along the same stretch of road.

e). Fly tipping

Min 2070:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the Clerk that there had been a large amount of fly tipping on the corner of New Hall Farm Road and along Hoppers Lane.

f). School Warning Signs

Min 2071:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to confirm that she was still chasing Medway Council regarding the repairs of the third school warning sign via Solagen.

10. Communication

a). Update on the construction of the Parish Council's new webpage

b). Update on the creation of new Clerk and Parish Councillor email addresses

Min 2072:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise the members that she had had her first training session with the University lead mentor, where he had been very impressed with her knowledge. She advised that sadly this mentor had decided to move on, where she had been allocated another advisor in his place, who appeared equally if not more knowledgeable. She advised that whilst speaking to her new mentor that she had been asked to look into the website's security, where Cllr J. Wallace reported that she had already gained the details of another local IT specialist, known to her through the Clerk to assist with this.

Min 2073:21 Cllr J. Wallace reported that alongside her website training that she had spent a large proportion of her time updating the documents on the website by uploading agendas, meeting notices and an accessibility statement from the website provider, Hugo Fox.

She commented that her mentor had advised her that the Councillors new email addresses were top spec and that the webmail provider was well known. It was therefore thought that the initial issues with the email system had been unfortunate.

Min 2074:21 Finally, following on from a discussion at the last meeting, ref **Min 2041:20** Cllr J. Wallace thanked the Parish Council for the Chocolates she had received.

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Cllr R. Morrad spoke in response to thank Cllr J. Wallace again for all her hard work. He also made further recommendations for the website to show the correct number of vacancies, for the home page to be updated and for the minutes to be backed dated as far back at 2015.

c). Purchase of Parish Council owned tablets

Min 2075:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to inform the members that she had placed an order for the Parish Council owned tablets, however owing to the Christmas shut down, she was unaware how long the devices would take to arrive.

i). Data Protection Officer

Min 2076:21 Cllr R. Morrad spoke to advise that when he was in post as the Clerk, the position of Data Protection Officer and Data Protection Controller were two separate roles. He recalled that previously Satswana were managing the post of Data Protection Officer, however upon checking the bank statements he could not identify any payments made to this company.

Accordingly, he asked the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen to look further into this matter, as he doubted their services were free of charge. It was agreed that the Clerk would carry out investigations and report back to the members with her findings at the next meeting.

ii). Accessibility Statement

Min 2077:21 Cllr R. Morrad spoke to advise that this matter had already been dealt with by Cllr J. Wallace, where he commended her on the excellent statement that she had uploaded to the members webpage.

10. Lower Stoke Car Park Lease – Appendix E

a). To discuss the proposed conditions for the new Medway Council Lower Stoke Car Park lease

Min 2078:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that since she had sent Medway Council a letter addressing the members concerns regarding the new proposed lease, that she had received no response.

She reassured the Parish Council that she would chase Medway Council for an answer, where Cllr R. Bridge also spoke to strongly recommend the Parish Council sought legal advice.

The members instructed the Clerk to cancel the existing car park direct debit and to pay Medway Council's charges manually, until such point as a new contract had been agreed,

11. External Contractors

a). J R Brickwork

Min 2079:21 No further requests for works were discussed.

b). Eastborough Landscapes

Min 2080:21 No further requests for works were discussed.

c). Colyn Property Services

Min 2081:21 The Clerk Mrs J. Allen, was reminded to speak to Mr Davis in connection to the discarded gas canisters at the Heron Way playpark Ref: **Min 2062:21**.

12. Village Voice Publication

Min 2082:21 It was recommended that the Clerk should place an article in the Village Voices Publication surrounding the flooding in the Village in order to reassure the Parishioners that Medway Council were looking into a suitable solution.

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13. Correspondence - Appendix E

a). **To keep up to date with the latest developments at Stoke Primary Academy.**

Min 2083:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to a letter that had been circulated on social media. This letter advised Stoke Primary Academy would be shut for the remainder of the academic year, where the students would transferred to Allhallows Primary Academy instead.

14. Reports and Circulars

Min 2084:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise that she had not been able to attend the last virtual Rural Liaison meeting owing to a power cut that had taken place minutes before hand and that had lasted the duration of that evening.

15. Date of next meeting

Min 2085:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would be held via a virtual forum on Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 7.00pm. He also confirmed that there would be an extraordinary finance meeting in the interim, the date of which would be confirmed once the paperwork from Medway Council had been received.

He thanked the members for attending and closed the meeting at 09.02pm

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 3rd February	7.00pm	Virtual Forum
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Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature **Min 2052:21**

Hello Jenny

Thank you for your email.

Following the recent events, I asked Chris Spalding to look into what options were possible.

The Parish Council will be aware from his work on the Primary School merger proposal.

When it comes to problems like these his legal training and research skills make him one the best people, I can think to go to and indeed he was already researching the Electricity Supply Act before I contacted him.

An initial email was sent to Kelly Tolhurst MP, and Alan Jarrett the Leader of Medway Council.

Contrary to a certain view, this was not to get them to do something about resolving the situation, because quite frankly they cannot. It was to put them on notice it is likely their support will be required in the future.

Current legislation has provisions involving the relevant Secretary of State and a Government Minister, which our local

Member of Parliament is, is better placed to intercede than a local councillor, should this become appropriate.

Similarly, Medway Council cooperation will almost certainly be required at some stage.

An initial site meeting in person with UK Power was sought but proved impossible due to COVID-19 regulations.

The preliminary research suggests that while Stoke is the predominant affected area, the issues do arise in other rural locations within Medway. Consequently, a wider approach may prove necessary.

A freedom of Information request is currently in preparation as is initial approach correspondence.

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I take the view that to avoid confusion at UK Power Networks there should really only be one active point of action.

However, it has come to my attention there is a dissenting voice within the parish council.

To say this is unhelpful is an understatement!

Nor is it helpful that said person, in my opinion, tries to show off or suggest vain superiority with use of obscure words within emails.

If Richard Bridge as an individual, or, the Parish Council as a whole, wish to take this matter forward on behalf of the community and run with it, then I have no problem with standing aside.

Regards

Councillor Mick Pendergast.