

WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES 200

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 28th July 2022

The Chair welcomed guests and then thanked Judith Batt, Woodchurch Parish Clerk for her twenty years of dedicated service on the occasion of her retirement. The Chair presented Mrs Batt with flowers and gifts on behalf of the Council and Woodchurch residents.

The meeting started at 7.03pm

In attendance:

Cllr Lucy Bramley (LB) (Chair), Cllr Alastair Hukins (AH) (Co-Vice Chair), Cllr Wade Nash (WN) (Co-Vice Chair) Cllr Lucy Quinn (LQ), Cllr Nicola Job (NJ), Cllr Richard Job (RJ) Cllr Ciaran Molloy (CM) and Cllr Paul Glasgow (PG)
Also in attendance Cllr David Robey (KCC) (DR) and Cllr David Ledger (ABC) (DL)
Judith Batt (JB) (Clerk), Rob Woods (RW) Locum Clerk and 6 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE and APPROVAL

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. TO CONSIDER A REVISION TO THE STANDING ORDERS TO PERMIT THE CHAIR TO USE DISCRETION TO EXTEND MEETINGS TO 9.30PM IF THE BUSINESS DEMANDS IT

Following a short discussion, it was **Resolved by unanimous agreement**

- a) **To guillotine future meetings at 9pm in line with current Standing Orders**
- b) **To permit the Chair to use discretion to extend meetings to 9.30pm**
- c) **To formally amend the relevant Standing Order at the next full meeting**
- d) **To agree the circumstances in which the Chair is permitted to extend meetings (Action RW)**

4. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

a) KCC WARD MEMBER

DR invited members to comment on his report circulated in advance of the meeting.

There were no comments. DR confirmed he would use his member grant to fund 2 of 3 traffic (speeding) surveys with Lower Road being of prime concern. The Parish Council would pay for one survey.

He commented on the dangerous state of Coldblow due to damage by HGV's and other large vehicles and will be speaking to Highways staff to confirm the way forward on Highways Improvement Plan interventions

PG asked about timing of interventions which was "later this year"

Noted that KCC Children's services had been rated outstanding by Ofsted

DR left the meeting at 7.17pm

b) ABC WARD MEMBER

DL advised that ABC had agreed grants would be made available initially for pensioners in Tax Band A-D premises to mitigate the impact of cost of living rises. Recipients to be contacted by ABC. Also that ABC's new Planning Portal did not meet its introduction deadline such that it is currently unavailable for search or consultee/public responses.

c) KALC Representative

LB reported on key matters discussed at the Ashford Area KALC Committee – including the disappointment that no local Councils were involved in the pilot phase for ABC's new Planning Portal, the unclear position on ABC's plans to devolve street lighting to local councils and planning issues where developers could potentially claim to satisfy new biodiversity regulations by replacing already removed flora on development sites.

Following a short discussion, it was resolved by unanimous agreement that a repository of images of existing hedging/trees etc on known or potential development land is created.

5. TO RECEIVE REPRESENTATIONS FROM REV'D SUE ROSE ON CHURCH PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Rev'd Rose described the Church's fundraising activities and the value to the community of its social outreach programmes which included an emerging youth strategy. She also explained the current parlous state of the Church finances by way of pie charts and estimated that the Church would find it difficult to survive financially beyond 12 months without significant additional funding. A leaking septic tank on land adjacent to the Church was also discussed as was ownership of the War Memorial. CM advised that Section 106 funding and the local Windmill Trust might be a source of funding and that the Environment Agency were aware of the leaking tank. The Chair thanked Rev'd Rose for her presentation.

Following a short discussion, it was resolved by unanimous agreement to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the Church, establish ownership of the War Memorial if possible (Action RW) and await advice of the Environment Agency on the leaking tank

6. ACCEPTANCE OF COUNCIL MINUTES

a) ORDINARY MEETING 23RD JUNE 2022 REF 198

Proposed AH Seconded WN and unanimously agreed that LB could sign them a true record of the meeting.

b) ADDITIONAL ORDINARY MEETING 7th JULY 2022 REF 199 (attached)

c) Proposed NJ Seconded LQ and unanimously agreed that LB could sign them a true record of the meeting.

7. MATTERS ARISING

a) EDF Direct Debit progress – AH reported action is now complete

b) Policies – To receive report of the Interim Clerk with recommendations and agree
The Interim Clerk presented a report circulated in advance. Following a discussion, it was resolved by unanimous agreement to endorse the following recommendations en bloc

- i. That responsibility for the production and accuracy of Council policies and the policy review process is more equitably shared between the Clerk and members in the future**
- ii. Given it will help the new Clerk to gain a better understand the Council in his or her first few months in post, a thorough examination of the status of Council's policies is deferred and undertaken in conjunction with members as soon as possible after the Clerk's appointment.**
- iii. The Council notes that conflicting copies of the Financial Regulations are in circulation which could have led to inaccurate advice being given to Council on procurement procedures.**
- iv. That documents such as the Councils Financial Risk Assessment and approved Code of Conduct which are not currently published on the Council's website are only released**

for publication following review by the new Clerk and agreement by members at a future meeting.

Additionally, members resolved by unanimous agreement to review the conflicting clauses in the Financial Regulations at the next meeting and agree the correct version. (Action RW)

- c) **Village sign repair specification progress**
Agreed - retain Wildflower board and Notice board as incomplete actions
- d) **Clappers Mead Finger post stability**
Agreed – retain Finger post as incomplete action
- e) **HSBC Account closure progress AH reports complete. Remove from Actions listing**
- f) **Siting of additional trees – Queens Green Canopy progress (Cllrs Molloy/Bramley)**
Trees arriving in November 2022. Agreed - Include item on August agenda. Regard outstanding request from resident for a commemorative tree on the Village Green extension as part of the Canopy project.
- g) **Toilet door repair– WN -Completed as a temporary measure. Remove from Action list. Noted that it will require a professional job if the damage re-occurs.**
- h) **Document archiving. JB/WN advised that most of last 6 years’ documents now scanned. Older items to be scanned over time. Noted that scanned documents still require labelling.**
- i) **Agreement on cones with Woodchurch school. Agreed RW to buy cones and sign the agreement on behalf of Council**
- j) **Agreement with WYT on dog bin emptying – Agreed completed. RW to sign agreement on behalf of Council**
- k) **Risk Assessment/PLI for pop up shop. PLI Received RW to chase Risk Assessment and report back**
- l) **Play area repairs.**
LB reported that the Council had already agreed its actions and budget (Minutes 199 refer) which included the temporary repair by Councillors subject to Insurance company approval. RW reported that the Insurance company needed independent opinion on the safety aspects and that the Playground Inspection Company had been approached for that opinion but had not yet responded. **Action RW to urge response from specialist advisor.**

8. ITEMS REQUESTED BY MEMBERS FOR INCLUSION ON THIS AGENDA

Tree debris removal – The Green (Cllr Nash)

Following a brief discussion, it was resolved that WN be asked to instruct James Kirk to remove the debris and, given the urgency of the work and the de minimis cost involved, to delegate the authority to the Interim Clerk to agree the service procurement following liaison with WN.

9. MEETING ADJOURNED FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND RECONVENED

The meeting adjourned at 8.25pm. A member of the public offered advice on how the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust could help with biodiversity/planning issues. The Chair thanked her for the information.

Meeting reconvened 8.29pm

10. TO CONSIDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND RESPOND

a) 22/00881/AS Spring Field House, 16 Lower Road,

Proposed erection of a timber workshop and timber summerhouse in the rear garden.

Noted this is in the Woodchurch Conservation Area. Agreed unanimously to support the application subject to the Planning Officer being requested to add the following conditions

1) To define the buildings as temporary structures 2) To order they are not extended in any way 3) To order that no further building be allowed in the area to the west of the proposed summerhouse (Action RW to respond to ABC)

2) 22/01019/AS Honeysuckle Cottage, Bethersden Road

Certificate of lawful development - Proposed change of use of agricultural building to residential development C3 dwelling house

Agreed unanimously – No comments and no action required

3) 21/02226/AS Little Tiffenden, Redbrook Street,

Replacement dwelling with detached garage and landscaping including change of use of land to residential.

Members were unable to view this application on ABC's new Planning Portal which was unavailable

Agreed RW to contact ABC to ask for an extension of time and express the Parish Council's disappointment that the portal transition deadlines were not met

**4) Applications received following publication of agenda (deemed non-contentious)
None received**

CM requested that it be recorded that the Council had received no further updates from the Planning Inspectorate on dates for the appeal hearing on the Front Road housing site. (Gladman Developments – land between 80-120 Front Road)

11. COUNCIL FINANCES AND OTHER GENERAL MATTERS

a) TO ENDORSE THE BANK RECONCILIATION STATEMENT

Agreed – to produce a bank reconciliation statement for the next meeting

b) TO RECEIVE LISTING OF ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT AND AGREE

Clerk – Salary & Expenses	£625.00	Chq 162
Handyperson - Salary/Expenses	£973.26	Chq 163
Woodchurch Memorial Hall room fees	£116.00	Chq 164
HMRC – Employer NI Contributions	£24.13	Chq 165

Proposed AH Seconded PG and agreed unanimously

EDF invoice received for electricity supply requires further examination.

Agreed unanimously - RW to query with EDF, agree by e-mail with Councillors and instruct WN to complete bank transfer if necessary with retrospective report to Council

c) TO CONSIDER A REPORT OF THE INTERIM CLERK ON BUDGET RELATED ISSUES AND AGREE

The Interim Clerk presented a report, circulated in advance of the meeting.

Following a discussion, which included a clarification on the budget described as discretionary grants to other organisations, the following recommendations were agreed unanimously

- 1) **Proposed PG Seconded CM That the attached budget (App 1) should be adopted as a temporary expediency by Council**
- 2) **Agreement that, in the worst-case scenario, an estimated £14068 of Council reserve would have to be used to prop up the Council's management plan in 2022-23**
- 3) **That members will need to assess the sustainability of using reserves to support the Council's plans in future years**
- 4) **That the Clerk and the portfolio holder for finance agree the Council's future budget monitoring requirements prior to the August meeting (Action PG/RW)**
- 5) **That members undertake a mid term financial review in October 2022 as a first stage in the 2023-24 budget preparation process.**
Additionally, Council agreed unanimously
- 6) **That a budget of £2500 allocated as "Discretionary Grants to Other Organisations" was not the Council's intention and should be removed and reallocated - £1500 to Beacon Costs and £1000 to Asset Maintenance Contingency**
- 7) **That the budget should be monitored at the detailed level in future**

9,00pm The Council agreed to allow the Chair to extend the length of the meeting given the volume and sensitivity of business still to be transacted

d) TO CONSIDER A REPORT OF THE INTERIM CLERK ON OUTSTANDING GRANT AWARDS AND AGREE

The Interim Clerk presented a report, circulated in advance of the meeting. Following a brief discussion it was resolved that **in the best interests of all parties and the village, and subject to Internal Auditor written confirmation, the Council uses its reserve to pay the outstanding awards and overdue invoices immediately on behalf of its associated charities and recovers the cost from the charities as soon as the barriers to payment are removed. Unanimous agreement**

e) TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR ON ADJUSTMENTS TO THE CLERK'S PAY AND AGREE

The Chair presented a verbal report highlighting concern that the outgoing Clerk (JB) had not received the nationally approved salary increases for the period 1st April 2021 – July 2022

Following a discussion, **the Council resolved, by unanimous agreement, to award JB a back dated pay entitlement of £429.73 (RW to arrange payment as soon as possible)**

12. TO RECEIVE NOTES OF THE CLERK APPOINTMENT WORKING GROUP OF 14th JULY 2022, A VERBAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR, CONSIDER THE GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND AGREE

NJ presented a report with recommendations on behalf of the Clerk Appointment Working Group.

Following a discussion, **the Council resolved to agree unanimously with the group's recommendations (below) subject to the inclusion of IT skills in the Job Advert**

- a) **To agree the Job Advert as presented**
- b) **To agree the Job Description and Personal Specification as presented**

- c) A Job Information Pack should not be provided in order to encourage applicants to research the Parish and Parish Council themselves
- d) To ensure the Council Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are posted on the Council website as agreed at the Annual meeting prior to the start of the selection process
- e) To endorse a summary budget at the 28/7/22 Council meeting for inclusion on the Council website prior to the start of the selection process
- f) A presumption in favour of a formal delegation of powers to the Clerk/RFO under S101/151 LGA 1972) and to an Ad Hoc Staffing Committee (and associated Appeals Committee) (under S101 LGA 1972) with responsibility, inter alia, for Staff Wellbeing, Grievance issues, Performance management and salary/contract adjustments.
- g) If Council agrees with the Working Group's presumption, a draft Delegation Scheme be included as an Agenda item for the August Council meeting for consideration and resolution to adopt
- h) The Council agrees in principle with the concept and production of a Staff Handbook for submission to Council at the August meeting if possible
- i) To nominate 3 from a group of 4 elected members (LB, NJ, PG, WN) as a Recruitment Panel to oversee the shortlisting and interview process.
- j) RW attends the interviews in the role of non-voting advisor to the Recruitment Panel

In addition, it was agreed that NJ amends the job advert as discussed and distributes to WN for inclusion the following day on the Council's social media, website and newsletter platforms and to RW for publication by KALC
CM commended the Working group on its report

13. TO AGREE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING AS 25th AUGUST AND ANY ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA

25th August 2022 agreed – Items other than those defined in these minutes were requested for inclusion included Newsletter, Code of Conduct and reallocation of former Cllr Jones responsibilities.

14. CORRESPONDENCE

- a) Request from resident to erect gazebo on The Green. **Resolved by majority decision (7:1) to agree in principle subject to consideration of draft Terms and Conditions at the August meeting. (Action RW)**
- b) Lloyds Bank Authority for RW to access online banking **Resolved-unanimous agreement**
- c) Letter from resident requesting Chair to sign legal document – **Resolved: no further action required**
- d) Various e-mails from householder 35, The Green on planning matters relating to 37 The Green. **Resolved: unanimous agreement to advise them to comment in person at an appropriate future meeting or via the ABC search portal if an application is submitted. (Action RW/Chair)**
- e) Communication from Insurance company requesting accuracy of an Endorsement Schedule. **Resolved: PG to check and advise RW**
- f) Letter from M&G Investments – **Resolved: Request RW to probe further**
- g) Email from local resident commenting on the Play area and possibility of its extension – **Resolved: Response updating on the repairs and extension to be assessed against other Council priorities (Action RW/Chair)**
- h) All other items – **Resolved - No actions required**

15. TO AGREE UNDER SECTION 12a OF THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE FOLLOWING PART OF THE MEETING

Agreed unanimously

16. TO RECEIVE A REPORT OF THE INTERIM CLERK AND DISCUSS MATTERS OF A CONFIDENTIAL NATURE

WN felt that members should defer discussion of the report's content until a new Clerk is appointed. **Resolved: Unanimous agreement to defer the item**

17. FORUM FOR DEBATE BETWEEN COUNCILLORS

WN – Smartmeter installation 8h August 2022

WN - Friends of Woodchurch Windmill meeting with ABC.7th September. WN/PG to attend. (Note Council is not invited or formally represented)

AH/WN Repairs to Dog bin lids required

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9.45pm

Signed _____

Chair

Dated _____

APPENDIX 1

	Budget 2021-22 (Ex VAT)	Outturn 2021-22 (Ex VAT)	Budget 22-23 (Ex VAT)
Employee costs			
Clerks Salary and Income Tax and Employers NI	8,458	7,114	10,000
Clerks Expenses	100	131	100
SLCC Subscription	35	35	35
Litter Picker's Salary, Tax and Employers NI	3,791	3,707	3,952
Additional services Green Keeper	711	717	3,420
Additional Services Pavilion Cleaner	474	174	988
Additional services HUB Cleaner		410	988
Total Employee Costs	13,568	12,286	19,483
Councillor Costs			
Chairman's Expenses	50		100
Councillor Training	200	50	0
Annual Wreath	20	20	20
	270	70	120
Legal/Financing Costs			
Bank Charges	25		
Audit Fees	300	290	320
Data Protection	150	150	190
Registration with Information Commissioner	40	35	
Legal Input on Contracts	500		
Total Legal/Financing	1,015	475	510
Running Costs			
HUB consumables	1,700	1,700	1,500
General Admin	200	293	0
Insurance	1,290	1,950	2,500
Maintenance of Laptop Computer and Data	300		300
Website	500	545	500
KALC Subscription	680	669	700
Hire of Hall and Heating Tokens	250	28	220
Total Running Costs	4,920	5,185	5,720
Village Assets/Amenities			
Toilet/Car Park Facilities	1,300	451	1,300
Pavilion Maintenance Upgrading Electrics			2,000
Pavilion Utilities Electric/Rates/Water	150	559	300
Maintenance/Vandalism/Cleaning Materials - GLASS	100	151	
Green Maintenance	935	1,836	800
Disposal of Green Waste	300	40	100
Green Extension		410	500
Grass Cutting - War Memorial	500	210	350
Play Area Repairs and Maintenance	150	215	500
Play Area Inspection	100	70	100
Maintenance of Benches	182	146	
Refuse Management	300		
Purchase of/Repairs to Ground Maintenance Equip			250
Bus Shelter Maintenance	109		
Costs to Maintain Assets in Useable Condition	100	19	500
Defibrillator Batteries and Pads			150

Contingency (maintenance)			1000
Total Cost Maintaining Village Assets	4,227	4,106	7,850
Projects			
Purchase/Installation of New Benches	425		
New Flags		93	200
Flag/Flagpole Replacement	300	1,235	
Notice Board Repairs/Replacement	500		1,750
Christmas Tree Lights/Ground Anchors		1,142	
Equipment Purchase	500		
Purchase of 3 Defibrillators		3,800	
Beacon Costs		100	1500
Total Projects	1,725	6,370	3,450
Grants and Donations			
Christmas Tree Donation	100		
Donation to Woodchurch in Bloom	500	325	
Discretionary Grants to Other Organisations	200	300	0
Total Grants/Donations	800	625	0
Total Payments (Ex VAT)	26,525	29,118	37,133
VAT on Payments estimate		1,463	2,355
Total Payments (inc VAT)	26,525	30,581	39,488
Funded By:			
Precept	25,420	25,420	25,420
VAT recovery	1,045	1,463	0
Interest	20	3	0
Grants and Other Income	400	5,827	0
Total	26,885	32,713	25,420
Impact on reserve		2,132	-14,068