

# WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES 215

### Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The meeting started at 7.00 pm.

#### In attendance:

Cllrs Richard George, Gina Mckay, Neil Mckay, Lucy Quinn, Wade Nash and Robert Woods

Also in attendance were Aniko Szocs (ASZ) Clerk, Cllr David Robey (KCC) Aline Hicks (ABC) and 11 Members of the Public

#### 1. Apologies for Absence and Approval

Apologies for absence were noted and approved for Cllrs Catherine Sales and Julian West.

Cllr David Ledger (ABC) also sent their apologies.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

##### 2.1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

##### 2.2. Other Significant Interests

None

##### 2.3. Other Interests

Cllr Quinn (Item 9.2 Trustee - The Village Green Trust) Cllr Nash (Item 9.2 Trustee - The Village Green Trust), Cllr G Mckay (Item 9.2) Cllr N Mckay (Item 9.2) Cllr George (Item 9.2)

#### 3. Acceptance of Minutes:

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Jun 2023 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 were accepted as a true record.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Neil Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:0	In favour:6	Motion: Carried

#### 4. Co-option

The parish council agreed to co-opt a new member to fill in the vacant position. Two candidates put themselves forward for the role. Both candidates gave a short statement supporting their interest to become a member. After a vote, the parish council resolved to co-opt Nicola Job. Cllr Nicola Job signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the council for the rest of the meeting.

Proposer: Cllr Wade Nash	Seconder: Cllr Neil Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:1	In favour: 5	Motion: Carried

#### 5. Electric Charging Points

Cllr Gina Mckay investigated the option of installing electric charging points in the Memorial Hall car park. It has been noted that the current electricity provision would not be sufficient to support charging points and an upgrade to cope with the required capacity would be essential. This will be explored further and included in the village consultation. The parish council agreed a working group at this stage is not necessary.

## 6. Football Club

**6.1.** The football club has requested financial support for their dinner event for elderly residents. The request is to cover the cost of the hall hire and electricity. The parish council considered it but requested further information regarding the estimated cost before making a decision. It has been noted that the proposed event could be funded by one of the Charities, that is more suitable for this purpose.

**6.2.** The football club is keen to carry out improvements to the pavilion as it is in desperate need of repairs. The parish council agreed to allow the football club to make non-structural repairs and improvements to the pavilion at their own cost to allow them to continue use until a decision from the village consultation is made as to future plans for the pavilion. All such repairs and improvements to be notified to the parish council clerk and chair prior to work being carried out.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Gina Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:0	In favour: 7	Motion: Carried

## 7. Membership of Committees and Representatives to outside organisations.

The parish council resolved to appoint the following members to committees and outside organisations. These roles, unless specified have no decision making powers.

Committee and Outside Organisations representatives	Representatives
Youth Matters	Cllr Nicola Job
Police Liaison	Cllr Nicola Job
Kent Association of Local Councils	Cllr Lucy Quinn
Highways and Pavements	Cllrs Lucy Quinn & Wade Nash
Public Rights of Way	Cllrs Lucy Quinn & Wade Nash
Finance and Policy	Cllrs Nicola Job & Robert Woods
Disciplinary and Grievance Committee	Cllrs Gina Mckay & Wade Nash
Appeals Committee	Cllr Nicola Job, Lucy Quinn & Robert Woods
Drainage Matters	Cllr Neil Mckay
School Liaison	Cllr Gina Mckay
All Saints	Cllr Neil Mckay
IT working group	Cllrs Nicola Job, Lucy Quinn and Wade Nash
Planning Lead	Cllrs Neil Mckay & Robert Woods

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Wade Nash	Against:0
Abstain:0	In favour: 7	Motion: Carried

## 8. Consultation Working group

Members of the Village Consultation group reported on their recent meeting and actions agreed. Full report is available to read in Appendix 1. It has been noted that the distribution of the consultation will require additional resources. The HUB has agreed to fund the cost of the printing. The group held its second meeting and currently drafting questions, which will be ready for the next meeting in August.

## **Meeting adjourned for public participation 19.48 pm**

Cllr Robey Kent County Councillor reported that the council is under budget pressure, mainly caused by social care. The demand for this service is increasing and by statute is a service KCC has to provide. The Government is keen to devolve powers to district and county councils. This structure would see the election of a Mayor and the mechanism would allow more funding to the county and it would offer an opportunity to access larger lumps of money. This is under an expression of interest stage currently. Discussions took place with the Energy minister in regard to small modern nuclear reactors in Dungeness to improve the energy supply. Operation BROCK is back. There are two consultations KCC is currently seeking residents' views, these are the Community Warden Service (hard copies are available in the HUB) and the Family Hubs. The latter would involve reducing children's centres. Residents and councillors have been asked to respond to those. It has been noted that since the resurfacing several reports of near accidents were reported on the corner of Shadoxhurst Road. Cllr Robey has asked for evidence of regular access usage on Kirkwood Avenue in order to trigger the relevant legislation. A member of the public reported that road signs are often placed in a way that is confusing or not relevant. It has been asked that departments within the Highways department should liaise prior to placing signages.

Members received a report from the Here to Help project and were informed about their current finances. It has been noted that while the balance may seem healthy it will be reduced due to the cost of the lunch project that will run throughout August. The fresh fruit and vegetables are on hold due to financial constraints. The Here to Help projects provide vital support to individuals in need. It has been requested that a date is set for a Charity meeting to establish ways of financial support.

Cllr Aline Hicks reported that the Planning Department will be shortly reviewing the Local Plan, and calls for sites until the end of September. There are big gaps in the finances and a working group will be set up to find a solution. Some assets have been neglected over the years and concerns were raised that the windmill might not be repaired in the near future.

The Flower and Produce Show will be held on Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> of July. Show organisers have asked if they could borrow the cones to control the traffic. It has been agreed and asked the organiser is liaising directly with the school. Littering and dog fouling is an issue, school children designed a poster to promote responsible dog ownership and draw attention to the litter issue. The winning designs will be displayed across the village. It has been asked whether the parish council would like to work on this with Woodchurch in Bloom. Further information on finances and actual locations to display the posters is required before making a commitment, but in general, the parish council supports the idea.

It has been noted that Shirkoak Park has no mobile signal, which can potentially cause issues when needing to contact the emergency services. Residents have been advised to contact the HUB who might be able to offer further advice. Residents also noted that exiting from the park can be dangerous due to speeding cars. It has been noted that reducing the national speed limit is unlikely but signs to warn drivers can be requested.

Members of the public have expressed concerns over a planning application that is currently under consultation.

## AND RECONVENED at 20.24 pm

### 9. Planning applications

#### 9.1. Planning application numbers PA/2023/1028

130 Front Road, Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent, TN26 3SF

Proposed creation of a new access driveway to serve Spring Place Farm and change of use of land to create a new residential garden and parking area to serve 130 Front Road.

The Parish Council resolved to object to the installation of an additional access onto Front Road, it is a concern that it will add to the existing problem and would create a safety hazard when exiting onto Front Road. The Parish Council requested that a Highways impact report is produced before deciding on the application. The Parish Council also noted the consultation date has been changed a couple of times, and expressed concerns that due to this change previous or new comments may be missed.

Proposer: Cllr Robert Woods	Seconder: Cllr Gina Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:0	In favour:7	Motion: Carried

#### 9.2. Planning application number PA/2023/1048

37 The Green, Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent TN26 3PF, Proposed new chalet bungalow along with associated works in the front garden of 37 The Green

The Parish Council resolved to object to the planning application and accept the recommendation of the report and submit it as final comments. The Parish Council thanked Cllr Woods for his time compiling a comprehensive report. The full report can be found in Appendix 2.

Proposer: Cllr Robert Woods	Seconder: Cllr Neil Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:1	In favour:6	Motion: Carried

#### 9.3. Proposed Diversion of AT204 (Part) and Extinguishment of AT204 (Part)

The Parish Council resolved to support this proposal on the basis that pedestrian access is guaranteed and maintained along Georges Hill to the interface of the diverted AT204 (and of course the Warehorne Road), the Woodchurch.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Wade Nash	Against:0
Abstain:1	In favour:6	Motion: Carried

### 10. Finance

#### 10.1. Items for Payment

The parish council agreed to the items of payment except for the payment to Kent Association of Local Councils Clerk £48, as the event has been cancelled, and acknowledged the bank reconciliation.

Payment Method	Items for Approval July	Description	Total payable	VAT
Bacs	Salaries	Employee salaries July	£ 829.72	
Bacs	HMRC	Employer contribution	£ 371.00	

Bacs	Information Commissioner Office	Annual Data Protection Fee	£ 40.00	
Bacs	National Association of Local Councils	Local Councils Awards Scheme- registration fee Foundation Award	£ 60.00	£ 10.00
Bacs	Kent Association of Local Councils	The Dynamic Councillor	£ 84.00	£ 14.00
Bacs	Lionel Robbins	Internal Audit 2022-23	£ 150.00	
Bacs	Windsock Company Ltd	Flagpole inspection	£ 438.00	£ 73.00
Bacs	Commercial Services	Grass cutting -two cuts	£ 114.53	£ 19.09
		<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 2,087.25</b>	<b>£ 116.09</b>
<b>Payment received</b>				
Bacs	Lloyds	Interest	£ 25.70	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>25.70</b>	

**Bank reconciliation:**

<b>Bank Opening Balance</b>	<b>£22,463.01</b>
Precept	£0.00
Salary	£1,346.56
HMRC	£371.00
Utilities	£108.00
Running Costs	£575.61
Income in Transit	£0.00
Outstanding Cheques	£0.00
Bank Charges	£0.00
Interest Income	£0.00
Income	£0.00
Expenditure	£2,401.17
<b>Cashbook Balance</b>	<b>£20,061.84</b>
<b>Bank Statement Balance</b>	<b>£20,061.84</b>
Income	£0.00
Expenditure	£2,401.17
<b>Bank Closing Balance</b>	<b>£20,061.84</b>
Difference	£0.00

Saver Account	
<b>Bank Opening Balance</b>	<b>£48,091.96</b>
Income	£25.70
Expenditure	£0.00
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>£48,117.66</b>

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Neil Mckay	Against:0
Abstain:1	In favour:6	Motion: Carried

### 10.2. Playground

The Parish Council resolved CMR company to carry out the annual playground inspection.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Rob Woods	Against:0
Abstain:	In favour:7	Motion: Carried

### 10.3. General Reserves

Cllr Wade Nash gave a brief report (See full report Appendix 3) on budgetary information 2023-2024. It has been noted that several planned projects could not be carried out due to changes in the council, this has resulted in the accumulation of large reserves. The councillors have been asked to think about what priorities should be but ensure all projects previously agreed to are completed.

## 11. Correspondence

The Parish Council received several correspondences from residents mainly concerning the following:

- **The Green:** residents reported that the bin at the bottom of the Green is not fit for purpose and requested a new bin that has a lid, so it can be closed. Residents also reported quad bikes using the Green. Such activities must be reported immediately to the Police using the online chat or 101.
- **Woodchurch in Bloom event:** information received on the upcoming Flower and Produce Show.
- **Planning application:** The Parish Council received emails concerning two planning applications currently under consultation, these are 130 Front Road and the Green No. 37.
- **Highways matters:** The Clerk reported that a number of residents contacted the parish council expressing concerns about parking on the bend near the school, concerns were also raised about parking on Susan's Hill and Rectory Close. Residents also raised concerns about the surface on Shadoxhurst Road and reported speeding. The hedge on the bottom of the Green turning on to Shadoxhurst Road needs cutting back as the visibility is restricted. Residents suggested that double yellow lines might be a suitable solution, near the school to help with parking issues. The Parish Council received a 30mph toolkit which consists of different speed limit warning tools to help residents reminding the speed limit.

- **Development:** The Parish council received a request from CALA Homes to present plans to the village.
- **Shirkoak Park:** A resident contacted the parish council to inform a visitor has been a subject to threatening behaviour at Shirkoak Fisheries.

## 12. Items to be included on the next agenda

- Speed Toolkit – to agree locations
- Earmarked Reserves- to review and agree to Earmarked reserves
- Policies- to review and update policies Cllr Woods agreed to draft the Financial Risk assessments
- CALA Homes- to agree to a response

## 13. Date and venue of next meeting

The next scheduled council meeting will be held on **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023** starting at 7.00 pm in the Memorial Hall Annexe

Cllr Quinn has thanked the outgoing Clerk for her hard work.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 21.20 pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

The Parish Council resolved to move the meeting to a closed session to discuss the Clerks appointment.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Wade Nash	Against:0
Abstain:	In favour:7	Motion: Carried

## 14. Clerk

The Parish Council received a report from the Clerk's working group. The Parish Council agreed to accept the recommendations within the report and offer the role on a basis that is reviewed in six months. It also has been recommended that the Clerk will work towards the CiLCA qualification.

Proposer: Cllr Lucy Quinn	Seconder: Cllr Rob Woods	Against:0
Abstain:	In favour:7	Motion: Carried

**Planning Application- 2-Storey detached dwelling - Garden of  
37, The Green, Woodchurch Ref  
PA/2023/1048**

Whilst Woodchurch Parish Council (WPC) acknowledges the applicant's effort to make this application acceptable in planning terms, it continues to object to the development of this land for the following reasons:

- 1) The applicant's justification for compliance with the requirements of Policy HOU3a is questionable and can be challenged.
- 2) The Heritage statement submitted with the application insufficiently explains
  - a. how the development will satisfy EACH of the requirements of Policy ENV14,
  - b. fails to recognise the relevant planning principles forged in the Village Design Statement 2002 (VDS02) and
  - c. ignores the findings of the Conservation Area Review 2016 relating to layout features and the unhealthy increase in parking on front gardens
- 3) WPC disagrees with the applicant's assessment that the benefits of this development outweigh the harm (Policy ENV13 refers )

**Taking each in turn**

**1. Policy HOU3a requirements**

- i. **It is of a layout, design and appearance that is appropriate to, and is compatible with, the character and density of the surrounding area**

**WPC response:** The erection of a 2-storey dwelling on land used as a garden for No. 37, The Green (but which is actually in front of No. 37a) would result in a development that bears the hallmarks and the associated concerns of tandem development. It will create a block of 4 buildings with little space between them at some points. The 2 buildings at the rear would overlook the 2 at the front. This is atypical of the current, more open form in that part of the Conservation area. The application site currently provides an open outlook for the existing 3 properties and offers largely unfettered views of the listed, Place Farm from The Green.

Whilst this may not be tandem development in its more traditional, backland sense, the proposal raises typical concerns about overdevelopment that impacts negatively on the nature of the Conservation Area, the amenity of neighbouring properties and on access/landlocking issues.

In the latter case, WPC would point out that the proposed access is actually over land that was registered as a Town and Village Green in 1968 (Registration number VG 55). Land that is registered as a Town and Village Green (TVG) are subject to different rules than Common or Private land with regards to the claiming of rights of way across them. The TVG register shown that, whilst other properties around The Green registered rights for pedestrian



and vehicle easements across the land, 37 The Green was not one of these properties. Once land has been registered as a TVG subsequent vehicular right of access across it cannot be asserted.

All of these concerns will be picked up in more detail.

**II. It would not create a significant adverse impact on the amenity of existing residents**

**WPC response:** It is clear that the erection of a 2-storey dwelling directly in front of 37a The Green will impact greatly on the amenity of that property in terms of privacy, the overbearing effect and on natural light and outlook. No 35 would be similarly affected.

Also, WPC believes that potential legal issues relating to the current easement could mean that the potential buyers of 37, The Green would be left without pedestrian access to the Green from the street frontage and would have to rely solely on the vehicle easement on the Place Farm service lane to avoid landlocking.

**III. It would not result in significant harm to, or the loss of, public or private land that contributes positively to the local character of the area.**

**WPC response:** The rules governing easements over TVGs are different to other easements in that

no-one has an automatic right to drive their vehicles over a TVG. The proposed development would, in the view of the Parish Council, involve the creation of an illegal vehicle access across the Village Green (Land registration title TT89210) which would be used by the new development (Land

registration title K164347) as its sole entrance and exit to the property, even though it has an existing registered easement over the adjoining, Place Farm lane. This would result in harm to the registered TVG land.

**IV. It would not result in significant harm to the landscape, heritage assets or biodiversity interests**

**WPC response:** This application is in the Woodchurch Conservation Area. It was noted in the Conservation Area Review 2016 that “The purpose of designation of a Conservation Area is to preserve or enhance an area of special architectural or historic interest”. WPC considers that its previously expressed view (dated 28/1/23) that the development of this plot will negatively impact on the attractive Wealden rural nature of Woodchurch village, its open (green heart) character and adjacent heritage sites has not changed as a result of the design revision. The proposal will neither preserve nor enhance the visual amenity within the Conservation area. It will obstruct the views of numbers 37 and 37a across The Green and the open view of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, listed, Place Farm building from the Green itself.

**V. It is able to be safely accessed from the local road network and the traffic generated can be accommodated on the local and wider road network.**

**WPC response:** Whilst the number of traffic movements are unlikely to create

safety issues, the fundamental point remains that the proposed vehicle access to the property would pass across TVG land. Currently the unauthorised vehicle access being used by 37 The Green across the TVG is only used occasionally by a single vehicle for entry on to the property - the exit being via a registered easement through the adjoining lane. The proposed development changes this substantially as it proposes that this unofficial access is used for multiple vehicles as their sole entry/egress to the property causing disproportionate damage to the Village Green and would therefore be illegal.

WPC is concerned that if the decision is taken to permit this development it would effectively condone an illegal action.

VI. **It does not need substantial infrastructure or other facilities to support if, or otherwise proposes measures to improve or upgrade such infrastructure.**

**WPC response:** Foul water flooding is a constant problem in Woodchurch. The foul water from this property would feed into an already inadequate system that Southern Water acknowledges is overloaded at peak times, and where downstream properties have recently suffered substantial damage from sewage contamination as a result of flooding. Southern Water made a commitment to the village several years ago that it would take measures to mitigate the problem but has not yet overcome the regular flooding issues experienced in this area.

VII. **It is capable of having safe lighting and pedestrian access provided without significant impact on neighbours or on the integrity of the street scene**

**WPC response:** Woodchurch is in a Dark skies area. There is no street lighting in this area nor off road pedestrian access to this property. Policy ENV 4 requires that the applicant is able to demonstrate clear regard to the guidance and requirements set out in the Dark Skies SPD (2014)

VIII. **It would not displace an active use such as employment, leisure or community facility.**

**WPC response:** The development does not displace an active use but will obstruct the view of an historic village building from the Village Green.

2. **Policy ENV14 and other Conservation Area and Heritage issues**

**WPC response:**

- I. Since the VDS02 was published, WPC has supported the principles it founded, notably in this case that **“new developments should respect the sense of openness in the village and seek to protect important views. The green heart of the village in the area around the Green is crucial to the open character of Woodchurch**

**in its Wealden setting. The views towards and from The Green should be preserved for future generations”** A review of the Conservation Area in 2016 warned that the significance (of heritage assets) can be harmed through **“development within in its setting”**.

WPC considers that despite the obvious significance to the village of retaining open vistas and the rural sense of space, no concession has been made to address these points. Indeed the Heritage Statement bears no reference to the VDS02 or the Conservation Area Review. The proposal involves the erection of a 2 storey building that will result in a form of tandem development that will not only harm the setting of the neighbouring heritage assets and the open character of the Village Green by obstructing views but also fundamentally change the relationship between the neighbouring properties and the spaces between them as well as a loss of amenity for those properties

- II. In terms of design and plot layout, the proposal does not reflect the findings of the Conservation Area review 2016 which describes this area as **“Fronting the Green on the northern edge, a number of 2-storey houses are set behind a wide grass verge, hedged boundary and front garden”**  
The report’s authors, who were also asked by Ashford Borough Council to highlight the key negatives spotlighted that **“vehicle parking has encroached into some front gardens, resulting in the loss of front gardens and traditional boundaries”**
- III. Notwithstanding the issues already raised about illegal access to the property across registered TVG land, WPC considers that the proposed layout, which gives the entire front and side garden over to hard landscaping to accommodate a car parking area, is out of keeping with the desired and traditional form and can only add to the negative perception of car parking taking primacy over front gardens in this part of the Conservation Area.
- IV. WPC notes that for development in Conservation Areas, Policy ENV14 says applications will be acceptable if they satisfy **EACH** of 6 requirements.

Given the issues and omissions identified above, WPC feels the applicant has given insufficient focus to the broader conservation and heritage issues that remain important to the village and to the expertise that identified the key features and negatives of the Conservation Area. Consequently, WPC considers that 3 of the 6 requirements in ENV14 have not been met. These are:

**a) That the scale and detailed design of all new development and alterations should respect the historical and architectural character, proportion and massing including roofs capes, the relationship between buildings, the spaces between them and within their setting.**

**e) The use should be appropriate and compatible with the character, appearance and historic function of the area.**

**f) The development would not prejudice important views in or out of the Conservation Area.**

### 3. The Tilted Balance

**WPC response:** Compared to the benefit of a relatively small contribution to the current housing supply deficit and possibly (although not defined) the benefit to the local economy of using local materials and labour, the harm this development will

create for Woodchurch will significantly outweigh the benefit. The harm includes:

- a) Physical harm to the registered Village Green if vehicles are allowed to drive over it illegally,
- b) The loss of important views over and to the Village Green,
- c) The obstructed view of one of the villages oldest heritage assets (Place Farm) from the village's key leisure area,
- d) The erosion of the principle of maintaining openness in the heart of the village which is a key element of VDS02 and which contributes significantly to Woodchurch's rural sense of place,
- e) The creation of a tight development of 4 dwellings is out of keeping with the current form in that part of the Conservation Area,
- f) The impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties and the quality of life for the residents in them,
- g) The harm of allowing car parking to take primacy over a front garden in that part of the Conservation Area will add to the negative features identified by Conservation experts and to further erosion of the rural sense of place,
- h) The potential for further misery for residents affected by foul water flooding in the village

### **Final comments**

- 1) WPC is aware that the applicant only validated the application on 20th July 2023 by serving the requisite notice on the legal owners of the Village Green ie the Woodchurch Village Green Charity. WPC understands the Charity has until 11th August 2023 to make representations. The WPC and Village Green Charity are separate legal entities such that this response should not be taken as the response of the landowner.
- 2) Despite that fact that signage exists around the Green to alert people about the ownership, the physical extent of the Green and the bylaws that govern it, it is unclear from the correspondence received if the applicant and his agent are aware that the land they have identified as part of the application site is actually part of the Village Green that was registered as a TVG in 1968, and not simply a regular grass verge. As WPC has pointed out throughout this response, the law that governs access and easements over registered TVGs differs from that of other forms of easement. Consequently WPC feels that it is in the interests of all parties to emphasise this point.

## Appendix 3

At the last meeting there were requests made for expenses that are not currently in the budget for 2023/4 and so would need to be taken from reserves. There were also questions regarding earmarked/allocated funds within the Parish Council budget. The concept of earmarked/allocated funds within the council budget was removed as part of the 2021 budget review and it was replaced by annual “bottom up” budgeting. It was felt at the time that the reasoning behind specific pots that had been “earmarked/allocated” by previous councils was unclear and that more flexibility was needed to adapt to changing requirements within the village. It was therefore agreed to move to an annual bottom-up approach where the council would be able to discuss and agree each expense item within the perspective of prevailing wider budget requirements.

Whilst there will be unanticipated expenses needed after the council's annual budget has been set, these need to be considered and prioritised against existing demands on our budget reserves. Wherever possible, if these additional expenses are not critical, then the preference should be to formally move them for consideration as part of the following years budget.

Since Covid, the council has seen a lot of internal turbulence, much as a result of external influences, which has led to several changes in the Chair and Clerk. This has made it difficult for projects to be costed, agreed and implemented, resulting in a backlog of demands on our reserves and questions asked as to why they needed to be at the level they currently are. All new unbudgeted expense requests should therefore be considered against the demand on exiting reserves of the council.

Current identified demands on the council's reserves are listed below. They need to be prioritised based upon the urgency of their implementation and most remain uncoded and are awaiting a council member to take ownership. Some may need to wait until after the councils village consultation has been completed before they can be prioritised.

1. The public toilet
2. The car park surface
3. The Village Pump
4. Power to The HUB/Parish Office building
5. EV charging points
6. Power to The Green
7. Cc:TV in the car park and pavilion
8. Pavilion
9. War Memorial
10. Plantain

spraying on The

Green Project

details on

subsequent pages.

### **The public toilet.**

The public toilet is one of the few public toilets available in the area and is used regularly by hundreds of village residents and visiting tradesmen each week. Whilst ongoing critical maintenance has been undertaken by the HUB on behalf of the Parish Council, it has now reached a point where it has become unfit for purpose, especially by the disabled. Work on the toilet has been discussed before within the Parish Council, however it was not perused due to a combination of budget restraints and pending discussions regarding future options for both the Pavilion and the HUB building. This toilet was originally installed at the time the Parish Council took ownership of the building from ABC over 20 years ago and, as far as I am aware, has not been updated since.



- As a disabled toilet it is currently unfit for purpose as one of the support arms is no longer present.
- There is currently no warm or cold water available in the toilet for hand washing. The obsolete hand wash hot water heater has broken and spares for it are no longer available. A replacement unit is not readily identifiable and it probably needs the sink to be replaced. This may require the engagement of a specialist plumber.
- The hand dryer is old and is now relatively ineffective.
- Handles and other accessories in the toilet have their plastic coatings peeling off or are rusting.
- The urinal plumbing is degraded and regularly leaks.
- The door lock, whilst still operational, is broken. This has been replaced several times over the past few years.
- The door does not automatically close and so is subject to regular wind damage.
- The tiles are broken in places and the ceiling is badly marked.

So many people rely on this village facility and whilst issues could be addressed individually it may be more cost effective for the council to consider a complete refurbishment.

### **The Car Park Surface**

The surface of the car park is in need of repair and possible complete resurfacing. Over that past few winters the surface has continued to degrade (much like many of the roads in Kent) to the point where it is dangerous for pedestrians – especially at night.

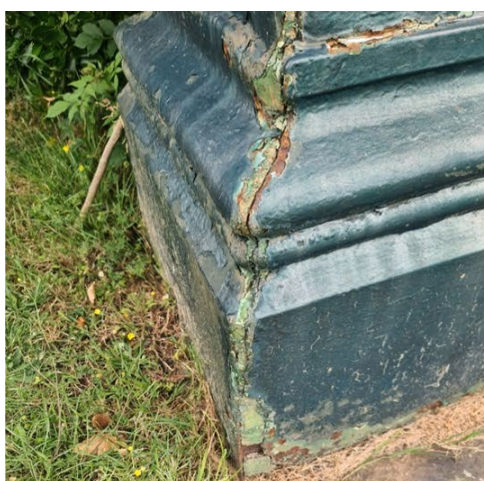




Although we have had several complaints regarding its condition, there have so far not been any recorded accidents or personal injuries. It is unsure as to our position regarding insurance should there be a claim made against the Parish Council.

### **The Village Pump**

The village pump is recorded as an asset of the Parish Council and is Grade II listed. As such, the Parish Council has a legal obligation to maintain it. Whilst it has had various repair “patch” jobs over the years, more recently the intense sun has caused parts of the cast metal body to distort and one part to fall off. It is clear that some repairs have been attempted in the past using filler/cement, and when options for repair were initially investigated the council was advised that parts of the pump would need to be dismantled, cleaned and then re-leaded together. Whilst this is being undertaken it was advised that the condition of the internal pump mechanism be examined to see if this could also be repaired.



### **Power to The HUB/Parish Council building**

When the Parish Council originally took over the ownership of the public toilet block from ABC, although the old toilets were converted in office space, the greater requirement for power into the building was overlooked. Just prior to Covid, UK Power were undertaking emergency work on the power pole at the entrance to the car park and they informed us that the 4mm power cable that currently supplies the building is



insufficient now that it is also being used as an office. The existing supply was originally specified to support internal lighting within the toilet and the streetlight outside. To avoid the risk of fire they advised us that the existing supply (which is buried underneath the car park) will need to be upgraded. Since being advised, the users of the building have been careful to minimise the use of electrical equipment and therefore minimise the peak draw of power through the cable.

Options for upgrading the supply have been investigated but are now several years old. Recent investigations in 2022 regarding implementation of EV charging points identified that 3 phase power to the building would need to be upgraded to support the project. This would also provide sufficient power for the building itself. Whilst the power is being upgraded it would be a good opportunity to provide power onto the bottom of the Village Green to support future village events (e.g. the village Christmas tree and the Carnival). These currently take their power from G&R Motors at the entrance to the car park.

### **EV Charging Points**

The provision of EV charging points in the car park was originally investigated in 2022 by Eleanor when the Council was made aware of the availability of grants specifically for this purpose. Unfortunately, the Council was unsuccessful at that time due to over-subscription of applications. This project has recently been revived by the council and would require upgraded power to be provided into the car park.

### **Power to The Green**

Since the start of the “Picnic On The Green” events and more recently the Christmas Tree and Woodchurch Carnival, we have had requests to provide power for events to the bottom end of The Green. For the past 3 years power for the village Christmas Tree lights has been taken through a trailing cable from G&R Motors. This has been at his own expense and with the increasing cost of energy this situation is becoming more unsustainable. Previous considerations for getting power to this area have included extending power down from the pavilion (which already has a 3 phase power supply), however the cost of trenching across the green made this route uneconomic. The most practical and cost-effective option was deemed to be including this as part of a combined project to implement the required power upgrade to The HUB/Parish Office building and the preparation for the provision of EV charging in the car park.

### **Cc:TV in the village car park and pavilion**

Following the vandalism that occurred in the car park (car catalytic converters stolen and defibrillator destroyed), the drug dealing that was identified in the car park and also the graffiti and damage that has been experienced at Pavilion, the Council was advised by the police to have cc:TV installed that covered both the car park and also pavilion. Quotes were received at that time however a lack of council resources resulted in the project not being completed.

### **Pavilion**

- Although the Pavilion is currently being used by the Football team, it is not fit for

purpose as a village amenity.

- The showers are inadequate and the drainage from them floods the changing rooms.
- The whole building is not accessible for the disabled.
- It is currently not suitable for use for changing by females.
- The kitchen area is unsanitary and the water heater is unsafe.
- The flooring covering is unstable.

#### **War Memorial**

It has been reported that the War Memorial may need cleaning.

#### **Plantain on the Village Green**

It has been reported that the Plantain weeds on the Village Green need spraying as it could be inhibiting the growth of the grass. Regular mowing of the Green is helping to reduce the impact of this broad leaf weed. Professional advice has been that this is primarily a cosmetic issue although periodic spraying can be undertaken. This particular plants seeds can lay dormant in the ground for many years and so would be very difficult to eradicate completely from the Village Green