

# WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES 220

### Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023

The meeting started at 7.00 pm.

#### **In attendance:**

Cllrs Lucy Quinn (Chair), Wade Nash, Robert Woods, Julian West, Neil McKay and Gina McKay.

Also in attendance were Ian Philo Clerk and 7 members of the public.

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Catherine Sales sent her apologies, and the absence was approved.  
County Councillor David Robey had sent his apologies.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

##### **2.1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None.

##### **2.2. Other Significant Interests**

Councillor Nash declared an interest in Item 7 (The Hub Lease) as a director of "The Hub" and sent a written request for dispensation to discuss but not vote.

##### **2.3. Other Interests**

Councillor Gina McKay declared an interest in Item 7 (The Hub Lease) as secretary to "The Hub".

Councillor Rob Woods declared an interest in Item 4.1 (Planning Application NOT/2023/2160), and Item 5 Local Green Open Space at Kirkwood Avenue.

#### **3. Acceptance of Minutes:**

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 were agreed as a true record.

Proposed by Councillor Wade Nash, seconded by Councillor Rob Woods. Motion carried 6-0

#### **Meeting adjourned for public participation 7.08 pm**

Borough Councillor David Ledger, waiting for a missive from Ashford Borough Council regarding the call for sites.

Ashford Borough Councillor Aline Hicks, mentioned availability of Community Amenities Grants, for improvements to infrastructure and outside play areas.

Councillor Hicks also mentioned KCC only requiring the windmills they own to be watertight and safe. Ashford Borough Council expected to be circulating a survey on the windmills they own, and to get feedback from the parish councils concerned.

A member of the public, shared concerns that the design of the street scene of the proposed development by CALA Homes is not aligned to the planning inspectors report in 2013, with the designs being out of keeping with Woodchurch village. Concerns were also raised with the developer requesting the development not being conditional on the sewerage system getting resolved first. Another member of the public expressed concerns at the mix of housing and lack of smaller sized homes.

A member of Kirkwood Avenue Residents Association made a small presentation, that following the appeal was dismissed for planning of 3 new homes, that the parish council would consider requesting Ashford Borough Council to designate that land as Local Green Space.

A member of the public was invited to highlight a proposed event to be held on the village green on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March, the anniversary of an air crash just outside the village. The details have been forwarded to the Village Green Charity, and once approved, the parish council would then be approached to consider funding a commemorative plaque, and for advice on possible attendees.

#### **Meeting reconvened at 7:40 pm**

### **4. Planning applications**

#### **4.1. NOT/2023/2160**

The council resolved to object to the reserved matters application. **See Appendix 1** for the reasons and comment sent to Ashford Borough Council Planning.

Proposed Councillor Lucy Quinn and seconded by Gina McKay.

The council voted 5-0 to object to the application.

#### **4.2. PA/2023/2174**

Clappers Mead, Bethersden Road, Woodchurch, TN26 3QL. Proposed new garage following the demolition of an existing garage. The council resolved to support the application pending clarification that the replacement garage will remain as a home gym, and will not be for commercial use, without an application for change of use.

Proposed Councillor Rob Wood and seconded by Wade Nash.

The council voted 5-0 (1 abstention) to support the application.

#### **4.3. PA/2023/2068**

12 Roker Park, Rectory Close, Woodchurch, TN26 3QD. Insertion of two new balcony windows on the side elevation to replace existing.

The council voted to support this application.

Proposed Councillor Neil McKay and seconded by Councillor Rob Woods.

The council voted 6-0 to support the application.

#### **4.4. PA/2023/2237**

Church Elms Farm, Redbrook Street, Woodchurch, TN26 3QR. Demolition of existing out building, and erection of replacement dwelling. There is some

confusion as to which planning policy this should fall under, as it does not comply with either HOU7 or HOU5.

The council resolved to object to this application, subject to clarification which planning policy this complies with.

Proposed Councillor Neil McKay and seconded by Councillor Wade Nash.

The Council voted 6-0 to object to the application.

**4.5. PA/2023/1503**

Shirkoak Lodge, Bethersden Road, Woodchurch, TN26 3QW. The council voted to support the amended application for the removal of a summer house originally shown in the plans, and removal of two skylights on the front elevation, along with a change to the door size.

Proposed Councillor Lucy Quinn and seconded by Councillor Neil McKay.

The council voted 6-0 to support the application.

**4.6. PA/2023/1935**

Newlands, Redbrook Street, Woodchurch, TN26 3QR. Replacement dwelling including alteration and enlargement to the residential curtilage. Installation of ground mounted solar panels. The council resolved to support the application. Proposed Councillor Wade Nash and seconded Rob Woods.

The council voted 6-0 in support.

**4.7. PA/2023/2173**

Grove Farm, Redbrook Street, Woodchurch, TH26 3QS. Change of use from an ancillary accommodation to a rural workers accommodation. The council agreed to support the application.

Proposed Councillor Gina McKay and seconded by Neil McKay.

The council voted 6-0 to support the application.

**5. Local Green Open Space – Kirkwood Avenue.**

After a long discussion the council proposed that more information is required pending size and scope of the land concerned, and to review this at the January meeting.

**6. Membership of The Clerk Society (SLCC)**

The council agreed to fund the £158 cost of membership for the clerk, as required under LGA 1972 S.143(1)(b).

Proposed Councillor Lucy Quinn and seconded by Councillor Rob Woods.

The council voted 6-0 to approve this.

**7. The Hub Lease.**

After some lengthy discussion, the council resolved to continue to rent the Hub building to The Hub CIC.

Proposed Lucy Quinn and seconded Neil McKay.

The council voted 3-1 to support this proposal.

(Councillors Wade Nash and Gina McKay did not vote due to their declared interest)

The following proposals were also agreed:

- 7.1.** The rent remains at a nominal rate (£1 per annum) but reviewed after 5 years without reference to the at market rate, however, it may increase or remain the same.

The council voted 3-1 to support this proposal.

(Councillors Wade Nash and Gina McKay did not vote due to their declared interest)

- 7.2.** An amendment was proposed and agreed that the lease is for the whole building to The Hub CIC, but the building maintenance and repair including the toilet is the parish council responsibility. The Hub CIC to continue to pay for the consumables.  
Proposed Lucy Quinn and seconded by Neil McKay.

The council voted 3-1 to support this proposal.

(Councillors Wade Nash and Gina McKay did not vote due to their declared interest)

- 7.3.** The parish council agreed to take legal advice over the lease and request that the Hub CIC consider a contribution towards the legal fees.  
Proposed Lucy Quinn and seconded Neil McKay.

The council voted 3-1 to support this proposal.

(Councillors Wade Nash and Gina McKay did not vote due to their declared interest)

## **8. Initial Review of Survey Response.**

Councillor Wade Nash highlighted the results of the recent survey, which included: There was approximately a 30% response from the village, which was seen as a good turnout, with a good distribution across the village.

Just over 50% of the responses were from households of aged 60 and above, which was felt a good demographic representation of the village.

There was 20% of the replies that showed they had family members wanting to move back to the village should their housing need be met, which coincided with a wider request for more affordable smaller properties.

Around 50% said that their work had not been affected by COVID.

Only 17% of households own electric or hybrid cars.

Connectivity showed that 92% of households now have internet access, however 5% have no access, and 95% of households use mobile phones.

An awareness campaign is something that the parish council may wish to consider when the BT landlines are switched off later this year.

Only 50% of the survey used Facebook regularly, whereas most of the village get their information from the Newsletter. WhatsApp was the most widely used social media tool.

Residents do appear to be supporting local businesses.

A lot of respondents felt that there to be a lack of facilities for the youth in the village.

33% of those surveyed were in favour of expanding the pavilion.

Village maintenance was said to be in a good state of repair. That said, the main problems with the village were found to be, potholes, speeding and parking on pavements.

## 9. Finances

The clerk pointed out that there was likely to be a shortfall in the spending versus the budget for the current year (2023-2024) of around £16,000, and that the excess reserves relative to the precept were a concern as these should be allocated to projects. Gross reserves at the current year end are likely to be around £70,000 (which includes (£22,000 for unforeseen requirements and £2,000 for an unexpected election). The clerk requested this to be noted, and recorded on the minutes, for audit purposes.

### 9.1. First Draft of 2024-2025 Budget.

The clerk presented the first look at the budget for 2024-2025.

There are some items that can still be added to this basic budget.

The initial precept indication is around £38,000.

The projects for next year's budget need to be finalised at the January meeting, and the precept request must be submitted to Ashford Borough Council on the 26<sup>th</sup> January.

### 9.2. Items For Payment and Bank Reconciliation.

#### Items For Payment (TBC)

Salaries	£1356.93
Pavillion Utilities	£66.00
Petrol (Clerk)	£32.40
P. Shaw (18 war memorial cuts)	£270.00
KCC (Traffic Monitoring)	£475.00
Total	£2200.33

#### Bank Reconciliation

**Nov-23**

Bank Opening Balance	£33,154.78
Salary	£1,071.12
HMRC	£72.20
Pavillion Utilities	£66.00
Running Costs	£1,104.22
Transfer to Saver A/C	£22,000.00
Income	£0.00
Expenditure	£24,313.54

Cashbook Balance	£8,841.24
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Bank Statement Balance	£33,154.78
Income	£0.00
Expenditure	£24,313.54
Bank Closing Balance	£8,841.24
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Difference	£0.00

#### **Saver Account**

Bank Opening Balance	£48,230.99
Income	£22,053.30
Expenditure	£0.00
Closing Balance	£70,284.29

The council agreed to the bank reconciliation and to authorise the items for payment.

The council accepted the draft running costs of around £38,000 for the budget 2024-2025.

Proposed Councillor Lucy Quinn and seconded by Councillor Wade Nash.

The council voted 6-0 in favour.

## **10. Correspondence and Information**

Correspondence.

A signed petition was received from residents along Redbrook Street mainly regarding the high speed of vehicles along their road.

## **11. Items for information and items to be included on the next agenda**

**Information** – none.

### **Items for the next meeting agenda**

Final Budget for 2024-2025 and precept must be agreed.

War Memorial maintenance.

New poster board for the two posts on the village green.

Agree on material and design for new parish council noticeboards.

To review further information on Local Green Space at Kirkwood Avenue.

Currently the Memorial Hall is fully booked on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of May 2024, therefore the hall has been booked for 30<sup>th</sup> May. The clerk will investigate to see if the Jean Mealham Centre has availability for 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

## **12. Date and venue of next meeting**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 starting at 7.00 pm in the Memorial Hall Annexe

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 10:06pm.

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

## **Appendix 1.**

Woodchurch Parish Council objects to the Reserved Matters application by CALA Homes for 42 dwellings with associated landscaping, roads layout and other facilities and infrastructure off Front Road, Woodchurch (ref NOT/2023/2160)

The objections are as follows

Scale and Layout

i) Scale

The Parish Council considers that the height, width and length of buildings proposed within the development, principally those immediately facing Front Road. is not relative to its surroundings. At the northern end of the site (adjacent to 82, Front Road) the field is

already 2m above Front Road such that the proposal to build tall and substantial market homes not only results in an unsightly block that is out of keeping with the street scene in that part of Front Road, but also blocks the vistas from Front Road to the rear of the site which, for the Parish Council and Woodchurch residents, helps to maintain the rural sense of place in the gateway to the Woodchurch Conservation Area

#### ii) Layout

The Parish Council considers that whilst the proposed buildings, routes and open spaces within the development are generally in relation to each other, they fail to adequately reflect the space outside the development. We understand that Planning Orders require developers to consider the external impact as much as the internal layout. The proposed buildings are of bland design and atypical of the individuality of the buildings, both old and modern, situated closest to the site. It would appear the developer has concentrated on the internal layout but given little thought to its external impact.

#### b) Housing Need in Woodchurch

With an elderly population double that of the three other parishes in the Weald South Ward and a relatively low 30-40 year old demographic, the demand in Woodchurch is primarily for 2-3 bed homes and, as pointed out to the developers by visitors to the pre application consultation, demand also exists for single storey accommodation\*\*

\*\* A recent village survey conducted by the Parish Council in December 2023 has confirmed the demand for smaller accommodation whilst 9% of Woodchurch's elderly population have said they would want to downsize in to smaller and/or single storey accommodation if dwellings were available.

The Parish Council is disappointed that the developer did not listen and has not only produced a plan that does not reflect the need in the village, but has argued that single storey car ports satisfy the requirements for a mix of two and single storey buildings on this site.

The Parish Council is not questioning the housing mix per se, but would argue that a more appropriate mix could have been achieved if a higher number of smaller/single storey dwellings which reflect the true need in the village from both younger and elderly residents had been incorporated in the plans. More 4/5 bedroom homes which can only add to the existing tenure imbalance in the village are not a priority for Woodchurch according to our residents.

#### c) Ongoing Issues with Flooding in the village

Also a key feature of the pre application consultation, the developer was made aware of the strength of feeling about the constant flooding which affects Appledore Road, Lower Road and parts of Front Road and the fact that Southern Water has not acted on plans it proposed over 10 years ago to replace 560 metres of the sewer in Front Road with one double its circumference.

Residents in Appledore Road now regularly need to pump waste away at their own expense in to the nearby freshwater stream to prevent flooding in their homes and gardens.

The Parish Council notes that CALA Homes has discussed this issue with Southern Water but no firm commitment has been made to improve the flooding situation by either party. Consequently, the Parish Council supports the view proposed by some residents that since a deadlock exists, a Grampian Clause is introduced in any conditions requiring that the sewer is replaced as promised and improvements made to the sewerage infrastructure if necessary, before any building works are commenced.



d) Loss of Residential Amenity

It is noted that several of the proposed properties on the northernmost border overlook the garden and property at 82, Front Road. This is simply unacceptable. The design should be reviewed to ensure the privacy of the residents of 82, Front Road and to avoid the loss of the residential amenity which they have enjoyed since moving to the village.

e) Other matters

i) The entrance to the development

The Parish Council is aware that the positioning of the access to the development has been described as the “least worst” option on what is a difficult bend in the road. With potential for an additional three hundred traffic movements a day from that point it is not ideal, especially given the speed that some vehicles travel. In the recent Village survey residents cited speeding as a key highways issue for the village which is at odds with the speeding survey undertaken by consultants for the developer. The Parish Council is averse to any form of urbanisation but feels that in the interests of safety, especially for parents negotiating Front Road en route to and from school with their children, it would suggest that the developer is required to introduce a form of traffic calming that is acceptable to residents of the Parish.

ii) The Path and Cycle Access Point adjacent to 82 Front Road

The call for traffic calming is made greater by the proposed location of the path/cycle entry point to Front Road close to the boundary of 82 Front Road. As already explained the land there sits well above the level of Front Road. Unless that is amended, it would form a potentially dangerous 2 metre slope down from the development onto Front Road for children on cycles or for those walking in slippery conditions. It is unclear if Planning Officers have visited the site and are aware of the difference in levels and the potential dangers that creates.

iii) The potential loss of the ancient Hedge

It is unclear how much of the ancient hedge that sits alongside Front Road, will be removed by the developer to achieve their plan. The hedge is as much a feature of the street scene as it is a natural habitat for wildlife. Its part removal will not only impact on the natural environment but also open up views of up to six, imposing, 4/5 bedroom homes which the Parish Council considers are superfluous, out of keeping with the symmetry and rhythm of the current street scene and the layout of the space outside the development. It would also constitute an erosion of the rural sense of place.