

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

DRAFT MINUTES
Wednesday 17th April 2024
Finance Committee Meeting
Village Hall ~ 7.00pm

Attendees: Cllr J. Wallace ~ Chair
Cllr K. Mansell
Cllr S. Back
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk
Cllr P. Dumke ~ Vice Chair
Cllr N. Blown
Cllr S. Hall

Members of the public: Two (2)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace opened the public session at 7.00pm and thanked the Parish Councillors and two (2) members of the public for attending.

Part A. Public Discussions

A member of the public spoke to complain about several points, which included:

- Foliage sticking out into Allhallows Road.
- Pet owners, who were using the Recreation Ground(s), despite signs in place to advise dogs are prohibited.
- The cleanliness of the play equipment at Button Drive.
- Parking issues along Button Drive

The members addressed each point in turn. Firstly, they agreed to put the resident in touch with the landowner concerning the overgrown foliage. They then spoke about the Button Drive Recreation Ground & Playpark and possibly installing additional signage to inform residents that dogs were prohibited. They learnt from the Clerk that the play equipment had been cleaned by their contractor, shortly after she had received the above complaint concerning its cleanliness, which had occurred in between the contractor's site visits. Finally, the Parish Councillors confirmed that the parking issues along Button Drive were sadly out of their control however, they recommended residents living on this road reported any parking infringements to Medway Council's parking warden on 01634 331760 / 07718 130962.

The second member of the public spoke to enquire why Ward Councillor C. Spalding was not present. The members collectively assured the resident that Cllr C. Spalding had been invited however, they had received no apologies for absence from him.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items **None.**

No further questions were raised and the public session closed at 7.23pm.

1. Apologies for absence,

Min 7918:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen confirmed that she had received apologies for absence from Cllr T. Hall, who had prior commitments.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 7919:24 None.

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3. Reserves & Forward Planning

a). To discuss the Parish Council's reserves and associated forwarded planning costs.

Min 7920:24 The Parish Councillors discussed their reserves. It was resolved to continue to ringfence as much of these funds as possible, to carry out the proposed renovations to the Heron Way Playpark.

A brief discussion concerning the anticipated forward planning costs also ensued. As a result of this conversation, it was decided to replace the right-hand lock on the Lower Stoke noticeboard (which was broken), to source a quote to replace the noticeboard in Middle Stoke (which had been repaired several times and was now passed its best) and to organise an online questionnaire for the Upper Stoke Play Park, to establish how frequently this apparatus was used.

The above motions were carried having been proposed by Cllr S. Back, seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and unanimously agreed.

4. Review of income

a). To receive and discuss the status of the income figures at the end of the last financial year / beginning of the new financial year.

Min 7921:24 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's income figures at the end of the financial year, where they concluded that these balances were acceptable.

It was acknowledged that the Parish Council had received more income than they anticipated, owing to the receipt of an unexpected 'one off grant' from the Rural Liaison Committee, for £3,636.00.

The income figures for the beginning of the new financial year were evaluated. It was accepted that Medway Council had not capped the Parish Council's precept request, despite rumours of the Unitary Authority's financial position.

It was agreed that the additional percentage requested would cover the costs to employ an additional member of staff (a Street Cleaner) and to help towards the costs of purchasing and installing a new defibrillator & associated storage cabinet for Middle Stoke.

This motion was carried having been proposed by Cllr S. Back, seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and unanimously agreed.

5. Review of expenditure

a). To receive and discuss the status of the expenditure figures at the end of the last financial year / beginning of the new financial year.

Min 7922:24 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's expenditure figures at the end of the financial year, where they concluded these balances were acceptable.

It was proposed by Cllr S. Back and seconded by Cllr K. Mansell that the Parish Council should use the small surplus balance remaining from 2023/2024, towards the proposed renovations to the Heron Way Playpark. This motion was carried having been unanimously agreed.

Finally, as the Parish Council were only 17 days into only the new financial year, the members agreed to fully evaluate their spendings for 2024 / 2025 (so far), at the next full Parish Council meeting.

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6. Budgets

a). To approve the proposed budgets for this financial year 2024/2025, including any projects etc.

Min 7923:24 The members carefully reviewed the previously agreed budgets for the financial year 2024 / 2025.

They also spoke in finer detail about their previously mooted projects, which included:

- The employment of a new village 'Street Cleaner' & subsequent street cleaning equipment.
- A new defibrillator for Middle Stoke, complete with a heated storage cabinet.
- A new dual purpose Medway Norse bin, to be installed on the outskirts of the Button Drive Recreation Ground.
- Replacement 'no dog' signs in the Recreation Grounds and Playparks.
- A new noticeboard for Middle Stoke.
- A bigger and better Christmas event for December 2024.
- KALC training for all Parish Councillors.

The Clerk discussed the idea of producing an Annual Parish magazine and asked the the Parish Councillors to consider opening another bank account with a separate supplier to safeguard their ringfenced reserves (earmarked for the refurbishment of the Heron Way playpark).

A discussion ensued and the Parish Councillors raised their concerns that an Annual Parish Magazine would incur expensive printing and delivering costs, which they felt would not be economically viable. They however liked the idea of opening an additional account and asked the Clerk to look into Halifax's terms and conditions.

7. Additional costs

a). To discuss additional costs, which were not included in the budget for this year.

Min 7924:24 The members spoke about contacting the Church Warden for St Peter & St Paul's Church in Upper Stoke, to offer to pay for the annual running costs of their new defibrillator, following fundraising events held by the Upper Stoke residents, that had paid for the new device and cabinet.

The Clerk, was instructed to speak to KALC to confirm if the Parish Council were able to gift both churches their annual contribution, after there had been some controversy as to whether the Parish Council were able to do this.

Finally, the Parish Councillors discussed the advertisement of the 'Street Cleaner' vacancy. In response to this, the Clerk suggested that the vacancy could be published in the next edition of the Village Voices publication, where she offered to find out the associated costs in taking out an advert that spanned over a quarter page. A brief discussion ensued, where it was decided to publish the vacancy on the Parish Council's webpage, social media account and in the noticeboards first, to attract local applicants, before publicising it to a wider audience.

8. Audit Preparation

a). To discuss the preparations for the 2023/2024 Audit.

Min 7925:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen referred the members to their meeting packs, where she had included a breakdown of the timeframes involved for the 2023/2024 Audit.

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It was acknowledged that before Monday 1st July 2024, the Parish Council needs to carry out their internal audit, complete the annual governance statement, the accounting statement and these documents should be signed off by the both the Clerk & the Chair.

9. Finance

a). Bank balances

Min 7926:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace referred the members to the bank statements provided in their meeting packs where she talked them through the bank balances shown.

b). To agree the financial performance against the budget for March 2024.

Min 7927:24 The members carefully evaluated the Parish Council's financial performance for March 2024, where they concluded that the balances were acceptable.

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

Min 7928:24 The members evaluated the payments made since the last meeting, where they concluded that these payments were acceptable.

d). Accounts for payment.

Min 7929:24 After careful consideration the below payments were accepted, having been proposed by the Vice-Chair Cllr P. Dumke, seconded by Cllr S. Back and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£646.27	March 2024 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – March 2024
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£26.40	Tax & NI charges (March 2024)
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£41.16	Broadband & Telephone line rental for March 2024
Mr J. Treveil	Min 7703:23	PAID BY BACS	£130.00	Deep Clean of all three (3) play parks INV: 29
Go Cardless	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	DIRECT DEBIT	£11.99	Stoke Parish Council Hugo Fox Website INV: 4907
Tree Ventures	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£440.00	Annual Tree Survey INV: 1830
KALC	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£375.88	KALC Annual Subscription INV: 9108
KPS Office Supplies	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£0.98	Balance due on account (NO INVOICE)
Satswana Limited	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£180.00	Data Projection Officer Services 24/25 INV: M2955
Rialtas	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£332.40	Annual Subscription for Finance Software INV: SM30423
Ebuyer	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£619.97	New Parish Council Clerk's Laptop INV: 29762132

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The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£54.60	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for March 2024
TOTAL			£2,896.45	

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

Min 7930:24 None.

10. Grant applications

a). To discuss making a contribution towards the 'Festival One' Event (organised by former Parish Councillor, Mr J. Van Niekerk, in memory of former Parish Councillor, Mr R. Bridge).

Min 7931:24 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to raise her concerns that, owing to money laundering regulations, the Parish Council could not pay a grant to an individual without a charity, club or society bank account. She recommended however that the Parish Councillors considered making a donation to the charity of Cllr R. Bridge's choosing, independently to the 'Festival One' event.

A brief discussion ensued. Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to clarify which charity the 'Festival One' event was fundraising for, to enable to Parish Council to make their independent donation.

Cllr S. Back also spoke to advise he was donating his time and equipment to the event as a First Aid responder, which the members thanked him for.

11. Action plan

a). To review the actions agreed at the last meeting and their subsequent progress.

Min 7932:24 The members reviewed the progress of the agreed actions from the last meeting. The Clerk was asked to continue chasing Medway Council concerning the broken street lamp in the Lower Stoke Car Park, Cllr C. Spalding concerning a suitable location in Middle Stoke for a defibrillator, MHS Homes to carry out the repairs to the footpath between Heron Way & the High Street in Lower Stoke and the Highways Agency for fixed flooding signs for the whole of Stoke.

Cllr N. Blown also asked the Clerk to supply him with a copy of KALC's information leaflet concerning their recommended 80th Anniversary of D-Day commemorations, so he could speak to St Peter & St Paul's Church in Upper Stoke.

12. Any other business

Min 7933:24 None.

13. Date of next meeting

Min 7934:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to remind everyone that the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council meeting had both been scheduled to take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 1st May, starting from 7.00pm.

14. Section 100A(4)

Min 7935:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace read out loud the statement listed on the agenda in relation to Section 100A(4).

Accordingly, it was proposed by the Chair, Cllr J. Wallace, that the public be excluded from the closed section of the meeting, this proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr P. Dumke and was unanimously agreed.

The two (2) members of the public left at 9.00pm.

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15. **Personnel**

a). **Litter picker**

To receive an update on the litter picker vacancy.

Min 7936:24 The members received an update on the litter picker vacancy. The Clerk was asked to promote the advertisement on the Parish Council's webpage, social media account and in the village noticeboards, with a closing date of Friday 24th May.

16. **Close of meeting**

Min 7937:24 The Chair, Cllr J. Wallace closed the meeting at 9.10 pm and thanked the Parish Councillors for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 1st May 2024 Annual Parish Meeting	7.00pm	The Village Hall
Wednesday 1st May 2024 Annual Parish Council Meeting	7.45pm	The Village Hall

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Tasks agreed:
Clerk to source a quote to replace the righthand side lock on the Lower Stoke Noticeboard.
Clerk to source a quote for a new noticeboard for Middle Stoke.
Clerk to organise a questionnaire to establish how frequently the Upper Stoke Playpark is used.
Clerk to document that the surplus funds from the financial year 2022/2023 have been credited to the Parish Council's earmarked reserves, concerning the refurbishment of the Heron Way Play Park.
Clerk to add a 'Christmas 2024 Event' onto the June Parish Council meeting agenda.
Clerk to source the terms and conditions for the Halifax, concerning the Parish Council possibly opening up an additional bank account (to safeguard their reserves).
Clerk / Chair to speak to the Church Warden at St Peter & St Paul's Church to offer financial assistance with the annual running costs of the new defibrillator.
Clerk to speak to KALC to clarify if the Parish Council can still make an annual donation to the Stoke Methodist Church and St Peter & St Paul's Church.
Clerk to establish the exact charity, former Parish Councillor Richard Bridge's chose, in order to make a donation in his memory.
Clerk to send Cllr N. Blown a copy of KALC's information leaflet, concerning their recommended 80 th Anniversary D-Day commemorations.
Cllr N. Blown to speak to St Peter & St Paul's church concerning their 80 th Anniversary D-Day commemorations.