

# STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

## MINUTES

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Face to Face Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone ~ Chairman Cllr K. Copping  
Cllr G. Blackman Cllr K. Mansell  
Cllr P. Egan Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Four (4)

### **PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

#### **Part A. Public Discussions**

Three members of the public spoke.

The first enquired if dogs were allowed to be exercised in the recreation grounds, where she also alerted the Parish Council to trespassers using the disused Stoke Primary Academy field to exercise their pets.

The second Parishioner spoke to enquire if a ditch behind her boundary, to stop flood water from the field running into her garden, had been dug by Cllr B. Stone yet.

A third Parishioner spoke to complain about the lack of Police presence in the village, where several complaints of unsocial behaviour were aired.

#### **Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items**

None.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 7.20pm and thanked the Parish Councillors and the members of the public for attending.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Min 7291:22 An apology for absence was received from Cllr J. Wallace, who was on annual leave.

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

Min 7292:22 None.

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

Min 7293:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to request that the 'Risk Management Policy' be discussed in further detail, where he raised concerns that 'SOPs' (Standard Operating Procedures) had been breached on at least three (3) occasions.

#### **4. Ward Councillor Report**

##### **a). A report by Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast**

Min 7294:22 Owing to the absence of both Cllr J. Wallace and Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast, it was accepted that there was no Ward Councillor report for the month of September 2022.

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## 5. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting

a). **To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**

Min 7295:22 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022, were circulated.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to enquire if the contact telephone number for Medway Norse, as discussed under item 10F Min 7273:22 had been circulated, to which the Clerk responded it had.

It was proposed by Cllr K. Mansell and seconded by Cllr G. Blackman, that the minutes be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

## 6. Information arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Min 7296:22 None.

## 7. Planning

### a). Applications

Min 7297:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm receipt of two (2) new planning applications that had been submitted since the last meeting, where he addressed each in turn.

- **MC/22/1840 – 1 Elm Tree Cottages, The Street, Upper Stoke**

He spoke to advise that he had recognised this application had been submitted before, whereas per previous conversations, he had no objections to the proposed planning application to build a two-storey side extension.

Cllr K. Copping also spoke to confirm that whilst he had not had a chance look at the full plans and application documents online, he had no objections.

- **MC/22/1825 – Land Adjacent to 1 Parsonage Cottages, The Street, Upper Stoke**

Cllr B. Stone spoke to advise that this application appeared to have already been approved subject to conditions by Medway Council and as such he had no comments.

### b). Decisions

Min 7298:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to acknowledge that there had been three (3) new planning decision made since the last meeting, where he confirmed that all three (3) (which included the planning application listed above) had been agreed subject to conditions:

#### Agreed subject to conditions

- **MC/22/1825 – Land Adjacent to 1 Parsonage Cottages, The Street, Upper Stoke**
- **MC/22/1488 – Court Lodge Farm, The Street, Upper Stoke**
- **MC/22/1254 – Medway Microlites, Burrows Lane, Middle Stoke**

### c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7299:22 None.

## 8. Finance

a). **To agree financial performance against the budget for the month of July & August 2022.**

b). **Update of account(s) for 2022/23 including payments received.**

Min 7300:22 The members reviewed the budget reports provided in their meeting packs in finer details, where after a short discussion the documents were deemed acceptable.

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

Min 7301:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to suggest that the Clerk still included her Excel spreadsheet into the members meeting packs, where he advised that he still wanted to see a breakdown of the Parish Council's budgets and spendings on a monthly basis, side by side for comparison.

**d). Accounts for payment.**

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

Min 7302:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke further to propose that points a, b,d & e be approved en bloc, this proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and was unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£535.92	August 2022 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – August 2022
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£1.80	Payment of Tax & NI for August 2022 Payroll
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£36.61	Broadband & Telephone line rental for August 2022
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£128.00	August 2022 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV:3569
Screwfix	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£19.99	Sticky stuff remover (for noticeboards) INV: A9856488372
Screwfix	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£16.98	2 x replacement traffic cones for Universal Stores INV: A9834039830
Medway Council	Min 5077:21	DIRECT DEBIT	£212.50	Rent for Lower Stoke Car Park INV: TO FOLLOW
Mr G. Blackman	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY BACS	£1.50	Reimbursement for postage costs
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£43.16	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for August 2022
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£1,031.46</b>	

**f). To discuss the email received from the SAAA (Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointment) concerning options to possibly opt out of the SAAA central external auditor appointment arrangements.**

Min 7303:22 The members spoke collectively about an email the Clerk had received from the SAAA, concerning the Parish Council's choice to opt out of the automatic external auditor appointment scheme.

A brief discussion took place.

After careful consideration Cllr P. Egan spoke to propose the members stayed put and did not opt out, this proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and was unanimously agreed.

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## 9. Management of the Council's land and property

### a). Playparks

- i Allhallows Road Playpark
- ii Heron Way Playpark
- iii Upper Stoke Playpark

### b). To discuss the monthly inspection process.

Min 7304:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to their meeting packs, where copies of the bi fortnightly play park inspections from the months of July and August had been included.

Cllr P. Egan spoke immediately to air his concerns that the contractor had stated the play equipment in the three (3) play parks appeared to be in good order, when the Parish Councillors knew otherwise from their annual play inspection audit, which had taken place earlier that year.

He stated that the decision made at the July Parish Council meeting, to not stand down the contractor (reference: Min 7264:22), was in contravention of the Parish Council's standing orders and that he understood the members were not able to re-vote on any decisions made for a period of 6 months.

He complained that the reports received did not contain enough information and that in continuing to accept them the members were invalidating their insurance cover.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to in response to Cllr P. Egan, to raise his concerns that despite verbal reports confirming independent inspections of the playparks had been undertaken, the members were yet to receive any written evidence of his findings.

A further discussion took place where the members spoke about the general condition of the play equipment, a rolling plan for the play equipment's maintenance and the possible suspension of their standing orders to address the play inspection requirements in finer detail.

The Clerk, Mrs J Allen also spoke to ask the members to consider having more than one Parish Councillor responsible for carrying out the proposed new play inspections, where she raised her concerns as to what would happen if Cllr P. Egan was on annual leave, sick or away on business.

Following the Clerks suggestion both Councillors K. Copping and K. Mansell spoke to offer their assistance.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to write to the contractor to ask him to continue to clean the play equipment, to litter pick the parks and to empty the bins but **NOT** to carry out any play inspections.

### c). To discuss an action plan for the long-term upkeep of the Button Drive, Heron Way & Upper Stoke Playparks, including the possible use of up-cycled materials.

### f). To discuss possible engagement with the Parish youths.

Min 7305:22 Cllr P. Egan referred the members to an email he had sent, circulated through the Clerk, where he had included photos of upcycled materials that had been turned into play equipment.

A discussion ensued, where the members agreed to meet with the youth of the village to establish exactly what they would like to see in the play parks, including more equipment targeted towards the older children in the community.

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Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to make contact with the booking secretary of the Village Hall to establish the availability of the hall on a Saturday morning during the month of October.

**d). To receive an update on the repairs to the fencing of the Button Drive Playpark, following the storm damage.**

**Min 7306:22** Prior to the meeting it was acknowledged that the Clerk had circulated an email from Handar Paving Ltd, to confirm that the repairs to the fencing at the Button Drive Play Park would take place on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

**e). To receive an update in making the recreation parks 'dog free' zones.**

**Min 7307:22** Cllr P. Egan spoke to inform the members that he understood Medway Council's recreation parks were not dog free zones, where Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to advise that that their legislation had recently changed, where the playparks were dog free zones but the recreation grounds were not.

The members discussed this point in further detail, where following feedback from members of the public, the Councillors decided to proceed with their ideal to make all three of the recreation parks in Stoke dog free zones.

Accordingly, they discussed the erection of new signage and the promotion that the recreation grounds were dog free zones by placing posters in the public domain and on social media.

The Clerk was also asked to record that the members had no legal powers to enforce these new regulations and that should dogs still be seen being exercised in the parks, they could be asked to leave the premises but could not be physically removed.

**g). To determine an action plan for the purchase and installation of three Platinum Jubilee trees.**

**Min 7308:22** Cllr B. Stone spoke to inform the members that the three (3) Platinum Jubilee trees were now on order, where he understood that the suppliers were coinciding their delivery with an order for another customer located close by.

He confirmed that the trees he had ordered were 4-foot-high saplings oak trees and that they had been pot grown to give them the best chance of survival. Their estimated date for delivery was yet to be confirmed.

**10. Highways & Transportation**

**a). Footpaths**

**Min 7309:22** No report.

**b). Lighting**

**Min 7310:22** No report.

**c). Highways and verges**

**Min 7311:22** Cllr K. Copping spoke to praise the members of the public who had been maintaining the newly installed Platinum Jubilee bench in Middle Stoke.

He advised that the area surrounding the bench had been cut back and that the bench looked very well cared for, where bunting had even been hung on its back rest.

**d). Pot holes**

**Min 7312:22** The Clerk was asked to report the many potholes that littered A228, Grain Road.

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**f). Grass cutting**

**Min 7313:22** No report.

**11. Communication**

**a). Update on the Parish Council's new webpage and associated email addresses**

**b). Parish Council owned tablets**

**Min 7314:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to air her concerns that the Parish Council email addresses were not being used.

She informed the members that she would make a concerted effort to try to use her formal Government email address, where she felt everyone needed to get into the habit of using theirs too.

The members also collectively spoke of arranging for a coaching session on how to use their tablets properly and how to log onto their emails using the Parish Council owned equipment.

**12. Village Hall**

**a). To receive an update on the status of the Village Hall**

**Min 7315:22** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to inform the members that since his last update the doctors surgery had now decided to keep their premises, despite informing the Village Hall previously that they would not be returning, ref **Min 7275:22**.

To help aid the Village Hall with their general upkeep in the interim, it was proposed by Cllr P. Egan to pay the Village Hall their annual £1,000 grant, this proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and was unanimously agreed.

**13. External Contractors**

**a). J R Brickwork**

**Min 7316:22** None.

**b). Eastborough Landscapes**

**Min 7317:22** None.

**c). Colyn Property Services**

**Min 7318:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, was reminded to write to Colyn Property Services to ask the contractor to stand down from carrying out any further playpark inspections but to carry on in cleaning the play equipment on a monthly basis, to proceed with the bi-fortnightly litter picking and to carry on in emptying the bins.

She was also asked to instruct the contractor to remove any new bird droppings on the play equipment whilst he was cleaning it on a monthly basis.

**14. Feedback to Public Questions**

**a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**

**Min 7319:22** Following the public feedback from the last meeting, Cllr K. Mansell spoke to confirm that she had not heard any further from the energy providers, as to when their proposed new upgrades were due to take place.

The members also collectively spoke about the recent road closure of Cuckolds Green Road, where they wondered if these road works were related to the aforementioned upgrades.

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## 15. Lower Stoke Car Park Layout

**a). To receive an update on the new layout of the Lower Stoke Car Park and to discuss an email sent by Cllr P. Egan concerning his visions for its long-term presentation.**

**Min 7320:22** Cllr P. Egan referred the members to their meeting packs, where he spoke of an email he had sent prior to the meeting with his proposed upgrades to the Lower Stoke Car Park including its presentation.

A discussion concerning his recommendations to removal and infill of an old flower bed wall with aggregate ensued.

In order to agree a budget for the proposed works, Cllr P. Egan asked to source a quote to have the flower bed removed, the lines properly painted on the car park floor and a quote for the proposed new signs.

**\* At 8.30pm Cllr K. Mansell left the meeting, owing to work commitments.**

## 16. Village Events

**a). Stoke Community Project's Harvest Moon Festival.**

**Min 7320:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to an email she had received from the Stoke Community Project to confirm that their proposed Harvest Moon Festival, planned to take place at the beginning of September, had been postponed until next year owing to the lack of time they left themselves to arrange the event.

**b). To discuss ideas to celebrate Christmas 2022.**

**Min 7321:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to an email she had included in their meeting packs, where she had source a quote to hire miniature, solar powered, lamp post mounted half Christmas trees. This quote equated to £105 per half tree and £400 (in total) for their erection and removal at the beginning and the end of their hire.

A discussion concerning the above quote ensued where the members agreed that the price provided was too expensive.

Owing to the lack of interest generated by the competition last year, the members discussed alternative ideas to celebrate Christmas, where they mooted an idea to erect a real Christmas Tree in the Lower Stoke Car Park.

A debate concerning if the aforementioned Christmas tree would be a live tree or a cut tree was aired, where it was eventually agreed that the members would purchase a cut tree and fix it into a heavy, stationary red barrel, as supplied by Cllr B. Stone.

To add to the festive cheer, the members agreed to illuminate this Christmas tree by purchasing solar powered Christmas tree lights.

## 17. Policies

**a). To discuss Cllr P. Egan's suggestion to introduce a new policy named: 'Risk Management Policy'**

**Min 7322:22** The members discussed the introduction of a new 'Risk Management Policy', as endorsed by Cllr P. Egan.

They acknowledged that a lot of their policies and Standing Order were out of date and that some regulations had changed since their publication.

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They spoke of the merger of some of Medway Council's code of conduct practices into this Policy, where it was agreed that the revised documentation should be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.

**b). To review the following existing policy for re-adoption:**

- \* **The Equal Opportunities Policy**

**c). To review and approve the following two revised policies for adoption:**

- \* **The All-Risks Management Policy**
- \* **The Accounts and Finance Regime**

Min 7322:22 Based on the conversation above, ref: Min 7321:22, the members agreed to review 'The Equal Opportunities Policy', 'The All-Risk Management Policy' and 'The Accounts and Finance Regime' after Cllr P. Egan's proposed new policy had been brought back to the Parish Council for further discussion.

**18. Village Voice Publication**

Min 7323:22 The members discussed their article for the next edition of the Village Voices publication, where the Clerk was asked to send the details of their next Parish Council meeting for publication, including the presence of Medway Council, to discuss the situation with the ongoing flooding preventions.

**19. Correspondence**

Min 7324:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, made reference to a letter she had received in the post concerning the re-registration of employees into the Parish Council's pension scheme, which she understood was a mandatory request every couple of years.

**20. Reports and Circulars**

Min 7325:22 None.

**21. Any other business**

Min 7326:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to discuss the need for an 'Emergency Plan', where he asked the members to consider arranging for a meeting to discuss how the Parish Council could help serve the community best moving forward.

**22. Date of next meeting**

Min 7327:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

**23. Close of meeting**

Min 7228:22 The Chairman, closed the meeting at 9.05pm and thanked everyone for attending.

**The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:**

<b>Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022</b>	<b>7.00pm</b>	<b>The Village Hall</b>
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