

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 1st September 2021
Face to Face Parish Council Meeting
Village Hall ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone ~ Chairman Cllr J. Wallace ~ Vice-chair
Cllr K. Copping Cllr R. Bridge
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: 10 (ten)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Part A. Public Discussions

Several questions from the ten members of the public were raised, which included :

- An update on the now derelict primary school building.
- Confirmation if Stoke Parish Council were planning to vote 'no confidence' in Medway Council.
- A request for the fence, located next to the public toilets, to be re erected following its demolition during the flooding management project that took place earlier in the year.
- Concerns regarding the escape of raw sewage into a garden in Mallard Way.
- Concerns regarding the parking of vehicles advertised for sale by the Lower Stoke Garage and the changing of tyres on the main road outside.
- A request to pollard the tree on Allhallows Road, located close to Windmill Cottages.
- A request for the hedge, located outside the allotments on Allhallows Road, to be cut back.
- Concerns were also raised regarding the parking of vehicles along Button Drive, where it was recognised that an ambulance had been unable to drive down the road to attend to a patient, owing to width restrictions caused by the parked cars.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 7.30pm and thanked all the Councillors and the members of the public for present for attending.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 5053:21 An apology for absence was received from Cllr G. Blackman, who was sadly ill.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, also informed the members that Cllr R. Morrad had tendered his resignation.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 5054:21 None.

3. Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature

Min 5055:21 None.

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4. Flood Update

a). **A report by Ms G. Bussley of Medway Council surrounding the flooding in Stoke.**

Min 5056:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to introduce Ms G. Bussley of Medway Council, where she provided the following report:

The Council continue to undertake maintenance within the area and investigations into the best solutions to stop the flooding. The Highways team continue to monitor the gullies and cleanse them as necessary and have created an asset management regime to ensure that the gullies are regularly cleansed. With the assistance of the Medway Internal Drainage Board ditches within the lower catchment to ensure that water can suitably reach the estuary have been cleared and reprofiled.

After making contact with the UK Power networks the pylon in close proximity to the ditch has now been moved which means that a CCTV survey can now be carried out of the system and maintenance carried out as needed. The Highways team will be undertaking this survey.

The Council have instructed JBA Consulting to carry out a Surface Water Management Plan which will assess the area in detail and find the best solution to improve the existing assets and provide evidence for maintenance and new assets. JBA have provided a project timetable and it is proposed to arrange public consultation events with the Parish Council and the wider area to discuss the scope of the proposal and ensure that all concerns are considered and addressed. Gabrielle is leading on this from the Council and is willing to discuss any issues or concerns and raise them with the consultants.

It was understood that the public consultation workshop(s) would take place in October, where Ms G. Bussley confirmed that Medway Council were due to meet with JBA Consulting the week commencing Monday 6th September.

Ms G. Bussley closed her report in advising that she was more than happy for Parishioners to take a note of her email address, in order for them to make contact with her in the event of any flooding queries.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to advise Ms G. Bussley of a blocked pipe located close to Bernie's Cottages.

A query regarding a manhole cover located at Mallard Way was also raised, where it was established that this manhole cover was the responsibility of Southern Water and not Medway Council.

5. Ward Councillor Report

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

Min 5057:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise that Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast was ill and accordingly she read a brief report on his behalf. Please refer to Annex A.

She spoke further of an enquiry she had raised on social media, where following an incident that had occurred between the High Street and Shepherds Way caused by the poor condition of the footpath, that she had appealed to the Parishioners for notification of any additional issues with the footpaths and highways in the village. She confirmed that following her post that she had received a good response, where in turn she had compiled a list of 'problem areas' that she had forwarded onto the local Ward Councillor to address with Medway Council directly.

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Additionally, following the incident Cllr J. Wallace confirmed that she understood that the footpath had now been repaired.

Cllr J. Wallace closed her report in confirming that Ward Cllr M. Pendergast and his legal advisor, Mr C. Spaulding, were in discussions with Mr M. Potter at Medway Council, to obtain an update on the status of the Stoke Primary Academy building, following the academy's decision to close the school at the end of the scholastic year, last term.

6. Vacancies

a). **To discuss the three applications received relating to the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy.**

Min 5058:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to advise that following Cllr R. Morrad's resignation that there were now two vacancies on the Parish Council.

Owing to the number of applications the Parish Council had received he confirmed that he would defer this item until the next meeting. Accordingly, he asked the Clerk to invite all the applicants for a face-to-face interview, and to then arrange for an extraordinary meeting to take place a few minutes ahead of the next Parish Council's next monthly meeting, in order to elect the two new members simultaneously.

7. Minutes from previous Parish Council Meeting

a). **To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 7th July 2021**

Min 5059:21 The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting, held on Wednesday 7th July 2021, as already circulated by the Clerk, were submitted.

It was proposed by Cllr J. Wallace and seconded by Cllr K. Copping, that they be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

8. Information arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Min 5060:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to remind the Clerk to chase the quotes for the work to the trees in the recreation ground, following the members 15 monthly tree inspection. He also enquired if the members were planning on asking Lumberzac again for a quote.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to in response to air his concerns that the trees in the recreation ground might be too high for Lumberzac, following the contractor's decision not to provide a quote for the work to the trees in at Button Drive, owing to their height.

9. Planning

a). **Applications**

Min 5061:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm that there had been two (2) new planning applications submitted since the last meeting, where the members discussed each application in turn.

- **MC/21/2354 – Aston, The Street**
- **MC/21/2189 – Coningsby, 15 Grain Road**

After careful consideration it was unanimously agreed that the members would not submit an objection.

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b). Decisions

Min 5062:21 It was also acknowledged that there had been two new planning decisions made since the last meeting, where it appeared that both applications had been refused by Medway Council.

- **MC/21/2189 – Coningsby, 15 Grain Road**
- **MC/21/1371 - The Chimes, Brook Lane**

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 5063:21 None.

10. Finance

a). To agree financial performance against the budget for the months of July & August 2021.

b). Update of account(s) for 2021/22 including payments received.

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

d). Accounts for payment.

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

Min 5064:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to propose that points a,b,c, d & e be approved en bloc, this proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Copping and unanimously agreed.

Cllr R. Bridge also spoke to enquire if there had been any further news in regards to the progress of the Parish Council's audit, where he spoke of concerns previously addressed by Cllr R. Morrad, that the members were possibly carrying too much in reserves.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to remind the members that they had agreed to replace two items of play equipment this financial year, which had meant that the Parish Council had already spent £20,000 of their reserves.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, also spoke to advise that PKF Littlejohn had raised various questions in regards to the members spending's compared to last year, which she had answered in full. She confirmed that she was now waiting to hear further from the accountants if her responses had been acceptable and if the members' audit had finally been signed off.

August / September 2021

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£491.08	August 2021 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office –August 2021
HMRC	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£1.80	Tax & NI Payment
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£33.92	Broadband & Telephone line rental for June 2021
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£168.00	August 2021 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV: 3282

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Colin Davis	Min 5027:21	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£90.00	To remove bird droppings off of the Upper Stoke Play Park Equip- ment INV: 3271
Stoke Village Hall	Min 5041:21	PAID BY BACS	£1,000.00	Annual Donation to Village Hall
The People's Pen- sion	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£42.43	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for August 2021
TOTAL			£1,862.23	

July / August 2021

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£511.78	July 2021 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office –July 2021
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£1.80	Tax & NI Payment
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£36.22	Broadband & Telephone line rental for June 2021
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	PAID BY BACS	£168.00	July 2021 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV: 3259
Colin Davis	Min 5027:21	PAID BY BACS	£138.08	Re-installation of the removed sec- ond swings and the replacement of the split swing seat with a new seat INV: 3266
NPC Tree Surgery	Min 4080:21	PAID BY BACS	£1,050.00	Pollarding of trees at Button Drive INV: 778
Eastborough Landscapes	(TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY)	PAID BY BACS	£93.60	Treatment of bine weed & hop at rear of 22 Heron Way INV: 263218 (AGREED WITH CLLR B. STONE BEFORE INSTRUCTING CONTRAC- TOR)
KCS	Min 3039:21	PAID BY BACS	£106.56	6 x Litter Pickers INV: I3805846
KCS	Min 3039:21	PAID BY BACS	£117.72	6 x Handihoops INV: I3810748
Lionel Robbins	Min 3032:21	PAID BY BACS	£120.00	Internal Audit INV: 2021/83
Cartridge People	Min 1451:18	PAID BY CARD	£55.89	1 x Black Ink Cartridge INV: GB210805-LA4293767

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Zoom	(TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY)	PAID BY DIRECT DEBIT	£143.88	Renewal of Zoom Licence Fee INV: INV99934834
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£42.43	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for May 2021
TOTAL			£2,620.96	

11. Management of the Council's land and property

a). Playparks

i Allhallows Road Playpark

ii Heron Way Playpark

iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 5065:21 The Play Park inspections from the months of July & August were accepted. The Reports received confirmed that the play equipment at the Heron Way and Upper Stoke play parks appeared to be in good order and that all the touch points were being regularly disinfected.

Concerns were raised however in regards to overgrown grass in the Upper Stoke play park, which was recommended should be cut as soon as possible, owing to its length which varied from knee to hip high.

Min 5066:21 The report for the Button Drive play park also expressed serious concerns over the fixings used by the play park contractors to attach the two new baby swings to the existing chains. It was recognised that the carabiner clips used had not been pinned and accordingly, they were already becoming unscrewed and could potentially be a dangerous health and safety hazard.

A discussion ensued where the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, confirmed that she had already been in touch with the contractor to complain and to ask for the new clips be fixed into place with immediate effect. She also advised that she was unhappy with the fixing of the chains to the seat and that use of these clips had not been relayed to her when she had enquired if it might have been possible to reuse the members' existing chains. She informed the meeting that she had enquired with the contractor about sourcing some new chains, which she understood would be of additional cost. She closed her synopsis in confirming that once she had received the quotes for the new chains that she would forward this information onto the members for consideration in due course.

Min 5067:21 The members then discussed the two complaints raised on social media, where it had been reported that there were several discarded toys within the Heron Way play park and that the grass within the Button Drive recreation ground was considerably overgrown.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to inform the members that Medway Council had recently cut the grass at both the Button Drive and Upper Stoke play parks. He also asked the Clerk to instruct the play park inspector to gather the discarded toys and to dispose of them in the skip located in his yard. Finally, he reminded the Clerk to look into alternative bird deterrents, as it appeared that the cable ties previously used were no longer working.

b). Update on the replacement apparatus in the Button Drive & Heron Way play parks.

Min 5068:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to inform the members that since their last meeting the new play apparatus in both the Button Drive and Heron Way play parks had been installed.

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c). Update on the purchase of the new notice board for Lower Stoke.

Min 5069:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise the Parish Council that the new noticeboard was due to be delivered next week, where she had been informed of a delay with its production.

12. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 5070:21 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 5071:21 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 5072:21 No report.

d). Pot holes

Min 5073:21 No report.

e). Fly tipping

Min 5074:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to inform the members that she had seen a report of fly tipping along Hoppers Lane, where accordingly she confirmed that she would report the discarded sofa to Medway Council.

13. Communication

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

b). Parish Council owned tablets

Min 5075:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the Parish Council that she had no further report on the members' webpage

She confirmed however that she was in discussions with the IT Technician to arrange for the members emails to start working on their Parish Council owned tablets.

14. Village Hall

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

Min 5076:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to inform the members that following an application to Medway Council for relief funding, following the COVID-19 pandemic, that the Village Hall had been successful in obtaining two grants, one for £4,000 and the other £8,000.

He expressed concerns however that following the closure of the doctor's surgery that the Village Hall had no guaranteed income moving forward.

He advised that in order to resurrect the doctors' services he would need the support of the whole village, however there appeared to be no interest presently.

A discussion ensued, where several of the Councillors agreed that the village did need a Doctor's Surgery service. They mooted the idea of posting a poll on social media and arranging for a mail shot to rally for support.

Cllr R. Bridge also spoke to enquire if he was still a member of the Village Hall committee, where he confirmed that he received no invite to attend the members last meeting. Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to advise that the last meeting had taken place whilst Cllr R. Bridge was away and that he would source a list of dates for the committee's next meetings and forward these onto him.

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Min 5076:21 Finally, Cllr R. Bridge stood up and announce that he was leaving the meeting early, owing to an online seminar for a separate charity he volunteered for, which was due to start imminently. Accordingly, he left the meeting at 8.10pm.

15. Lower Stoke Car Park Lease

a). **Update on the new lease for Medway Council's Lower Stoke Car Park.**

Min 5077:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, advised the members that following a discussion at the last meeting ref: **Min 5042:21** that she had now received a copy of the revised lease from Medway Council, which she had organised to be signed and witnessed by both the Chairman and Cllr K. Copping and returned to Medway Council by recorded delivery.

Accordingly, she confirmed that she was now waiting to hear back from Medway Council with a signed copy of the members' lease.

16. External Contractors

a). **J R Brickwork**

Min 5078:21 None.

b). **Eastborough Landscapes**

Min 5079:21 A discussion ensued regarding the tree located outside Windmill Cottages, along Allhallows Road, where it was acknowledged that this tree was the responsibility of Medway Council / the Highway Services.

c). **Colyn Property Services**

Min 5080:21 None.

17. Christmas Celebrations

a). **To receive an update on the installation of a Christmas Tree and Christmas lights in Lower Stoke for the month of December 2021.**

Min 5081:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, confirmed that she had made a poster for the Christmas lights event and forwarded a copy of this document to Cllr J. Wallace.

Cllr J. Wallace spoke in response to confirm that she was liaising further with the Clerk in regards to the wording for the poster and that she too had created a poster, which she would forward onto the Clerk.

She closed her report in confirming that the Christmas tree was being organised and funded by the Nags Head Public House, which was all in hand, having sourced a drum recently for the tree to sit in.

18. Sponsorship for The Big Lunch in Stoke

a). **To receive an update on the 'The Big Lunch in Stoke' event, as hosted by the Methodist Church.**

Min 5082:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to confirm that the 'Big Lunch Event' was due to take place in The Nags Head Public House Garden on Sunday 5th September, where information in the public domain had been amended to invite the Parishioners and the children living in Stoke only to attend.

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19. **Feedback to Public Questions**

a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 7th July.

Min 5083:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise that following the members last meeting held on Wednesday 7th July, that she had been looking further into the questions raised.

She confirmed that in light on the report she read on behalf of Ward Cllr M. Pendergast, that she understood that both he and his legal advisor were speaking further with Medway Council to obtain an update on the status of the 'recently emptied' Stoke Primary Academy building. She also advised that the Chairman Cllr B. Stone, had been looking further into which areas of land in the village were owned by which authority, where in response the Chairman referred to a map he had been provided.

An enquiry surrounding the poor condition of the bank in front of Kitchener's Cottages was also discussed, where consulting his map, the Chairman Cllr B. Stone confirmed that the bank was managed by either Medway Council or the Highways Agency.

Min 5084:21 Cllr B. Stone spoke further to advise that he understood Medway Council had deployed a subcontractor to walk all the footpaths in the village and to compile a report in regards to their condition. Accordingly, he confirmed that he was still waiting for a copy of this report, which he was chasing.

20. **Village Voice Publication**

Min 5085:21 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace asked the Clerk to place notification of the village Christmas light competition in the next Village Voices publication.

21. **Correspondence**

a). To discuss the response received from JMV Cars Ltd/ Lower Stoke Garage.

Min 5086:21 The members spoke of the curt response received from Lawgistics Ltd, the legal advisors acting on behalf of JMV Cars Ltd, where following a letter sent by the members addressing several concerns and asking for a face-to-face meeting, it was recognised that the garage had denied any wrong doings and that they had declined an invitation to meet with the Parish Council.

A discussion ensued, where the members spoke of complying a portfolio of photographic evidence to respond to Lawgistics Ltd with. Accordingly, the Parish Council agreed to place an appeal on social media to ask for photographic evidence to uphold their complaint.

b). To discuss the emails from Hoo Parish Council and High Halstow Parish Council concerning a vote of no confidence in Medway Council.

Min 5087:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to refer the members to the letters of 'no confidence' contained within the meeting packs, from both Hoo Parish Council and High Halstow Parish Council, which he understood had already been sent to Medway Council concerning the HIF Bid and Local Plan.

He asked each member in turn for his or her opinion on voting 'no confidence' in Medway Council where both Councillors J. Wallace and K. Copping spoke in support.

It was understood that whilst the members did not uphold a lot of the complaints raised by the other Parishes that they felt very in the dark in regards to the plans for the Peninsula and that their concerns too should be addressed in writing.

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Owing to the reduced numbers of Councillors at the meeting, the members agreed that the points to be contained in this letter should come from ALL the members, including the two new Councillors, who would hopefully be co-opted at the next meeting.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to readdress this matter at the next meeting, where it was agreed that the members would agree to vote 'no confidence' in Medway Council.

22. **Reports and Circulars**

Min 5088:21 None.

23. **Date of next meeting**

Min 5089:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 6th October.

He also asked the Clerk to organise an extraordinary meeting to take place a few minutes ahead of the members next monthly meeting, in order to co-opt the two new Councillors, once their face-to-face interviews had taken place from 6.30pm onwards that same night.

22. **Close of meeting**

Min 5090:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone closed the meeting at 8.38pm and thanked everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 6th October 2021	6.30pm – Face to Face Interviews followed by Extraordinary Meeting 7.00pm – Main Meeting	Village Hall
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ANNEX A

8. Ward Councillor Report

a). A report by Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast

Min 5057:21

Items relating Cllr J. Wallace's Facebook request for pavement, road, other defects have been brought to the relevant portfolio holder's attention and we are awaiting department communication as to inspection. The urgent one, I understand has been resolve.

Regarding the school, Mr C. Spalding had an informal chat with Mr M. Potter at the recent by election count. Mr C. Spalding will be writing formally to Mr M. Potter shortly in respect of future intentions for the building and site. One can see no reason why said communication cannot be made public.

Regarding the inappropriate parking of vehicles for sale on a commercial basis, the trading standards team has been made aware and requested to action.