

# STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

## DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Face to Face Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone ~ Chairman Cllr J. Wallace ~ Vice-chair  
Cllr G. Blackman Cllr K. Copping  
Cllr K. Mansell Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Six (6)

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

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

Several complaints were aired regarding the recent power cuts, where a member of the public spoke to enquire who she should complain to concerning broken electrical equipment that appeared to have shorted out during the power surges. Both Cllrs J. Wallace and K. Mansell spoke in response to refer the Parishioners to speak to her home insurance provider.

Cllr K. Mansell spoke further to provide an update she had received directly from the energy providers, where she advised that she understood the whole electricity system had been booked in for an upgrade on Thursday 21st July. Owing to the extraordinary hot weather that week however, she had been informed that the upgrades had been postponed and that a new date for the rescheduled work was yet to be disclosed.

A member of the Stoke Community Project also spoke to report that the committee had won first place for their 'Bee Kind' float at the Grain Carnival. She closed her report in asking permission to use the Lower Stoke Car Park' on Saturday 10th September, to host a 'Harvest Moon Festival'. A discussion ensued, where although this item was not listed on the agenda, the members agreed to discuss it under 'any other business', as it was recognised that the Parish Council would not be meeting in August.

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

None.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 7.13pm and thanked the Councillors and the members of the public for attending.

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

Min 7252:22 Cllr P. Egan, who was recognised to be on annual leave.

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

Min 7253:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to declare a declaration of interest surrounding the newly submitted planning application:

- **MC/22/1639 - Land To The North Of The Bridge At Grain Road**

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

**Min 7254:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke of an email she had received from Ms J. Ringham, Head of election services at Medway Council, who had advised that as 2023 was an election year the members did not need to hold a by election for the vacancy on the Council from November 2022 onwards and that subsequently the vacancy could be filled by co-option.

## 4. Ward Councillor Report

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

**Min 7255:22** Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise that Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast had no further news to provide this month.

## 5. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting

### a). To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022.

**Min 7256:22** The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022, were submitted.

It was proposed by Cllr K. Mansell and seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace, 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 7257:22** Cllr K. Copping asked the Clerk for an update in obtaining a telephone number for a contact at Medway Norse, concerning the cutting of the grass.

Mrs J. Allen, spoke in response to advise that she had not long been provided with a name and telephone number for a connection at Medway Norse, which she would circulate after the meeting.

**Min 7258:22** He also asked the Clerk to ensure the 'Risk Management Policy' was included in the September agenda, where he hoped Cllr P. Egan would be in attendance to speak to the members concerning his proposed amendments.

## 7. Planning

### a). Applications

**Min 7259:22** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm receipt of four (4) new planning applications, where Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise the members of his recommendations, having read thoroughly each application online.

- **MC/22/1254 - Medway Microlites, Burrows Lane**

Cllr K. Copping advised the members that he felt this planning application was pretty straight forward and as such, he recommended the members not to submit an objection.

- **TPA/22/1449 – Copperfields, 4 Dickensian Close,**

Cllr K. Copping informed the members that he was very surprised by this application to fell 12 trees to ground level, which he felt would ultimately kill the trees off.

Subsequently a discussion ensued surrounding the height of the trees and their destructive roots, where the members eventually agreed not to submit an objection.

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- **MC/22/1488 – Court Lodge Farm, The Street**

Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise, that having looked at the property's existing site plan, he felt the proposal to install 2 new caravans for agricultural workers and to replace the existing portable building with a new portable/modular building for use as a farm office, was replacing the buildings like for like and he felt the members had no grounds on which to object.

- **MC/22/1639 - Land To The North Of The Bridge At Grain Road**

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to declare an interest in this application, following his statement at the start of the meeting ref: Min 7253:22.

The members spoke about the proposed 'Castle Stone Habitat enhancements' in greater detail, where Cllr B. Stone advised that he had also involved the RSPB.

Following this discussion (where Cllr B. Stone was excluded from voting) the members unanimously agreed not to submit an objection.

## **b). Decisions**

Min 7260:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to acknowledge that there had been two new planning decision made since the last meeting, where he confirmed the following details.

- **MC/22/1215 – Sturch Field, Grain Road**  
Agreed subject to conditions.
- **MC/22/1170 – The Paddocks, Vicarage Lane**  
Agreed subject to conditions.

## **c). Appeals and Other Matters.**

Min 7261:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to air her concerns that a large bonfire had been lit within the grounds of Sturch Field during the Grain Carnival weekend, where she understood 'wildfires' in agricultural fields were rife, owing to the lack of rain and recent hot weather.

The members discussed this matter further, where Cllr B. Stone also spoke to raise his concerns that the whole of the crop in the adjoining field could have caught light.

With permission from the Chairman, a member of the public spoke to advise that the fire brigade (who had been in attendance at the carnival) had been notified of this concern and that they had put the fire out upon speaking to the property owner, however later that evening it was understood the property owner had reignited the fire.

## **8. Finance**

### **a). To agree financial performance against the budget for the month of June 2022.**

Min 7262:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to thank the Clerk for including two different reports from the Rialtas accounting software package, which she felt was much easier for the members to read.

The members also agreed and asked the Clerk to continue with these reports, as opposed to the excel spreadsheet she had provided previously.

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b). Update of account(s) for 2022/23 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 7263:22 Cllr G. Blackman spoke further to propose that points b,c, d & e be approved en bloc, this proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Copping and was unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£536.12	July 2022 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – July 2022
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£36.61	Broadband & Telephone line rental for July 2022
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£1.60	Payment of Tax & NI for July 2022 Payroll
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£535.92	June 2022 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – June 2022
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£36.61	Broadband & Telephone line rental for June 2022
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	PAID BY BACS	£128.00	June 2022 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV:3554
HMRC	Min 1436:18	PAID BY BACS	£1.80	Payment of Tax & NI for June 2022 Payroll
Webb Flint	Min 7159:22	PAID BY BACS	£800.00	Installation of 2 x Jubilee Benches (Ward Grant)
4 Season Gardening Ltd	Min 7238:22	PAID BY BACS	£240.00	Clearance of Lower Stoke Car Park for Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event
The Play Inspection Company	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY BACS	£282.60	Annual Play Inspections x 3 Parks INV: 54380
Wel Medical	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£18.36	2 x starter kits for defibrillator
AED Donate	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£55.18	1 x new adult pads for defibrillator
PDQ Property Maintenance	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY BACS	£300.00	Repairs to Upper Stoke Notice Board
Cartridge People	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£324.90	4 x Ink Toner Cartridges INV:GB220606-LA854157-1

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Cartridge People	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY CARD	£649.80	8 x Ink Toner Cartridges INV: GB220601-LA4849127
KPS Office Supplies	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY BACS	£20.97	50% costs towards stationery laminator pouches & coloured pa- per INV: 26781
KPS Office Supplies	<b>TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY</b>	PAID BY BACS	£11.76	50% costs towards stationery A4 white paper INV: 27055
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£43.16	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for July 2022
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£43.16	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for June 2022
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£4,136.55</b>	

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

### a). Playparks

#### i Allhallows Road Playpark

#### ii Heron Way Playpark

#### iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 7263:22 The bi-fortnightly play park inspections from the month of June were evaluated.

The reports received confirmed that the play equipment in the Button Drive Play Park, the Heron Way Play Park and the Upper Stoke Park appeared to be in good order and that all the touch points were now only being disinfected on a monthly basis, as requested.

The Clerk, drew the members attention to the comments surrounding the bird droppings in Upper Stoke, where she informed the Parish Council that she had already asked the contractor to remove these from the play equipment and to invoice the Parish Council accordingly.

Min 7264:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke further to advise the members, that following a discussion held with the Chairman after the last meeting, she had **NOT** stood down the contractor to carry out the inspections to the equipment ref: Min 7224:22. Instead, she aired her concerns in overloading Cllr P. Egan with voluntary parish work, especially over the school holidays, where it was recognised that he was already holding down a full-time job that he also had a young family to care for at home. Instead, she made recommendations of creating a check-list for the contractor to tick off, to ensure all areas of the play equipment were being properly inspected and that would enable the members get a detailed bi-monthly report.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke in support the Clerk's idea, where he too aired his concerns regarding the Parish Council's liability if the inspections were accidentally missed, especially over the school holidays (where it was suspected the play equipment would be used the most). He recommended the members continued using a contractor to carry out the inspections, so that the Parish Council had the peace of mind that the inspections were being carried out come what may.

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Cllr K. Copping spoke too to remind the members that as 2023 was an election year it was not guaranteed that Cllr P. Egan would re-stand. He therefore felt it was in the Parish's best interests that the members continued to pay for inspections and for these to be carried out by a private contractor.

Cllr K. Mansell, also spoke to make recommendations that the Clerk should speak to 'The Play Inspection Company, who carry out the annual inspections, to ask if they had a checklist they could share with the Parish Council, to save time in recreating another one.

**b). To discuss an action plan for the upkeep of the Button Drive, Heron Way & Upper Stoke Playparks.**

**Min 7265:22** The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the members that she had written to the Grain Power Station to apply for funding for some new play equipment. She also confirmed that she had applied to the National Lottery, where she understood there was a further application form she needed to complete?

A discussion ensued surrounding funding, where Cllr G. Blackman made a recommendation to apply to the Grain terminals of Thamesport, National Grid and LNG too.

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

**Min 7266:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to their meeting packs, where she advised that following a long complaint process through the insurance company, Ecclesiastical had finally admitted liability and had subsequently paid the Parish Council, minus their excess, a balance of £3,875.00.

The members spoke in great detail concerning the two written quotes they had received.

It was proposed by Cllr K. Copping and seconded by the Vice Chairman Cllr J. Wallace, that upon receipt of the contractor's insurance cover (with public liability cover for at least five million pounds), a copy of their risk assessment and a copy of their health & safety standards policy, **before** they commence work, that the Clerk should instruct Handar Paving Ltd to carry out the repairs to the fence, for a total balance of £2,690.40. This proposal was unanimously agreed.

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

**Min 7267:22** The members discussed the installation of the three previously agreed new trees, to be planted in recognition of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, where it was recognised by the Chairman that the trees should be planted in the Autumn once the worst of the hot weather had passed over.

**e). To determine an action plan to help make the recreation parks 'dog free' zones, following complaints from members of the public.**

**Min 7268:22** The members discussed ideas to enforce making the recreation parks 'dog free' zones, where Cllr K. Mansell identified there were no signs at eye level. Suggestions of placing notices in the parks, on the village notice boards and on social media were suggested.

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Accordingly, the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, was instructed to order several 'no dog' signs and to ask Colyn Property Services to install them in the playparks, at eye level.

She also advised, once the new were in place that she would place a poster on the notice boards and on social media, to remind members of the public that the recreation grounds are 'dog free' zones.

## 10. Highways & Transportation

### a). Footpaths

**Min 7269:22** Cllr K. Mansell spoke to report to the members that she had discovered a new alleyway that led away from Heron Way, where this footpath was very overgrown. A discussion ensued in regards to the ownership of this footpath, where it was felt this alleyway was owned by MHS Homes.

Accordingly, the Clerk was instructed to write to MHS Homes to notify them of the above and to ask for the housing association for the path to be cleared.

### b). Lighting

**Min 7270:22** No report.

### c). Highways and verges

**Min 7271:22** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to air his concerns that the metal fence, located outside the now closed Stoke Primary Academy, was being pushed into the road by the overgrown hedge.

As this building had been handed back to Medway Council by the Leigh Academies Trust, he asked the Clerk to write to them to notify them of this hazard and to request the school hedge be cut back, as the metal fence was protruding into the road.

### d). Pot holes

**Min 7272:22** The members discussed the many potholes that littered Allhallows Road and Stoke Road in Lower Stoke.

Cllr G. Blackman also spoke to complain about the deep potholes that were located in the High Street in Lower Stoke.

### f). Grass cutting

**Min 7273:22** Cllr K. Copping spoke to confirm that following complaints about the length of the grass in the recreation grounds last year that he was happy to monitor this situation and report back to the Clerk to speak to Medway Norse, if he felt the grass was growing too long.

The members unanimously agreed with this recommendation and thanked Cllr K. Copping for his assistance.

## 11. Communication

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

### b). Parish Council owned tablets

**Min 7274:22** Cllr J. Wallace spoke inform the members that she had no further report.

She commented however the Village's Facebook page 'The Stoke Village – Stoke, Upper, Middle & Lower Appreciation group 😊' needed updating, as the previous notice to confirm that the Parish Council meeting due to be held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July had been cancelled, was still pinned to the top of the page.

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## 12. Village Hall

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

**Min 7275:22** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone advised the members he had now received official notification that the doctors practice, would not be returning to their premises at the Village Hall.

He aired concerns for its future, where without this income, he advised that the village hall would struggle.

The members spoke collectively in regards to leads for leasing the old doctor's surgery, where Cllr B. Stone disclosed that he was waiting to hear further from wHoo Cares, following an email they had sent earlier this year, expressing an interest in renting the premises.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to ensure this item appeared on the agenda for September.

## 13. External Contractors

### a). J R Brickwork

**Min 7276:22** None.

### b). Eastborough Landscapes

**Min 7277:22** None.

### c). Colyn Property Services

**Min 7278:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, was reminded by the members to instruct Colyn Property Services to remove the bird droppings from the play equipment in Upper Stoke and to install the 'no dogs' signs in the playparks.

## 14. Feedback to Public Questions

### a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022.

**Min 7279:22** Following the public feedback at the last meeting, the members recognised that there had been no further questions raised which they needed to respond to.

## 15. Lower Stoke Car Park Layout

### a). To receive an update on the new layout of the Lower Stoke Car Park, following a questionnaire created by Cllr P. Egan.

**Min 7280:22** Owing to Cllr P. Egan's absence, the Clerk was asked to defer this item until the next meeting.

## 16. Power Cuts

### a). To discuss the situation with the recent power cuts and to determine if the Parish Council are able assist in anyway.

**Min 7281:22** Cllr K. Mansell and Cllr J. Wallace both spoke to advise that they understood the issues with the power supply were owing to the substation at Grain, where there were reports of uncovered cables flagging in the heat, which were then in turn rubbing together and igniting.

Until the repairs, as discussed in the public session go ahead, the members agreed that there wasn't much they could do to assist with the power cuts, apart from encouraging Parishioners to keep complaining and to claim for any losses through the providers' website.



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## 17. Village Events

### a). To discuss ideas to celebrate Christmas 2022.

**Min 7282:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke enquire if the members had thought any further about ideas to celebrate Christmas in Stoke, in December 2022.

A discussion ensued, where the Clerk was asked to place an advertisement on the member's social media page to ask for feedback from the residents.

## 18. Policies

### To review the following two Parish Council's policies for re-adoption

#### a). The All-Risks Management Policy

**Min 7283:22** Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise the members, that after reading thoroughly through 'The All-Risks Management Policy', he had never seen a copy of the members 'play park risk assessments' as referred to in point 1. A discussion concerning this matter ensued, where the Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, was asked to revisit historic items on the previous Clerk's computer to confirm if risk assessment had ever been carried out.

In the interim Cllr K. Copping spoke of various other points he had identified, where he wanted to change wording and amend the 'Management of Health and Safety Regulations' to 1999 from 1992, as listed.

Finally, he made recommendations for the Clerk to remove the last sentence from the policy, which he felt was not required.

Providing the above amendments were made and the members either found their play park risk assessments or carried new ones out, Cllr K. Copping proposed the policy be adopted by the members and subsequently signed off by the Chairman. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and was unanimously agreed.

#### b). The Audit Regime

**Min 7284:22** Cllr K. Copping spoke again to advise that, whilst he had no formal legal or financial training, he felt the members could not approve 'The Audit Regime' at this meeting as the whole policy needed updating, to bring it back in line with 'The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015'.

He spoke in finer detail of his findings, where he assumed that the Parish Council would be classed as a 'Category 2' authority. He made suggestions that based on the 'Category 2 Regulations' there were no requirements for the Parish Council to instruct an internal auditor each year however, he could see many positives in doing this, not least mentioning that it could be classed as good practice.

Cllr K. Copping handed the Clerk the notes he had made and provided her a list of suggested amendments to the Parish Council's existing policy wording.

He closed his report in recommending that the members considered changing the name of this policy to 'The Accounts and Finance Regime'.

Following this synopsis, the members collectively spoke about Cllr K. Copping's suggested amendments. They unanimously agreed to bring this policy back for further review, once these changes had been made, at their next meeting.

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## 19. Village Voice Publication

**Min 7285:22** The members discussed their article for the next Village Voices publication, where the Clerk was asked forward on some photos from the Stoke Community Project's Grain Carnival float, which won first place!

She was also asked to advise the residents that the Doctors Surgery would NOT be returning to the village and to ask for feedback / ideas to celebrate Christmas 2022 in Stoke.

## 20. Correspondence

**Min 7286:22** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, made reference again to the email she had received from Jane Ringham at Medway Council, and as referred to in point 3, ref: **Min 7254:22**.

## 21. Reports and Circulars

**Min 7287:22** The Clerk Mrs J. Allen reminded the members that Cllr G. Blackman had attended the last KALC meeting.

Cllr G. Blackman spoke in response to provide a brief report, where he advised that the majority of the meeting had centred around a report from the KALC's legal aide.

## 22. Any other business

**Min 7288:22** Cllr K. Copping spoke to address the Stoke Community Project's request to hold a Harvest Moon festival in the Lower Stoke Car Park, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September.

A discussion ensued where various questions were raised, that included but were not limited to:

- Would the Stoke Community Project require tables from the Village Hall?
- Does the Stoke Community Project have the relevant indemnity insurance and safeguarding policies in place?
- Would the Stoke Community Project be able to control noise levels, operate official opening and closing times and be able to notify residents in advance of this event?
- Would the Stoke Community Project be prepared to do all the 'leg work' for the event, including the clearing of the car park and its cordoning off the night before, and any decorating of the Lower Stoke Car Park (if required)?
- Finally, under the interests of health and safety, would the Stoke Community Project consider controlling the flow of human traffic crossing the road by only using the side entrance to the car park, located next to the Indian take away.

As the members were not meeting during the month of August, it was unanimously decided to grant the Stoke Community Project permission to use their car park ahead of their next meeting, in order to provide the committee ample time to plan the event and to provide the Parish Council with the relevant documentation.

The members also accepted that this matter would need to be formally raised as a point of order on the agenda for their next meeting and by a show of hands, it would need to be agreed retrospectively.

## 23. Date of next meeting

**Min 7289:22** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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24. **Close of meeting**

Min 7290:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone closed the meeting at 8.35pm and thanked everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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