

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 1st June 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 P. Egan
Cllr K. Copping Cllr K. Mansell
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Five (5)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Part A. Public Discussions

A member from the Stoke Community Project spoke to air concerns regarding the weather forecast for Platinum Jubilee event. Accordingly, she asked the Parish Council for permission to use the Village Hall as a contingency plan, if the weather should take a turn for the worst.

A discussion ensued where the Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm that he would liaise with the Booking Clerk to ensure that the hall was placed on standby for the event. The members also collectively discussed the time they would start setting up for the 'Platinum Jubilee Big Lunch Celebration' where a time of 9.00am was mutually agreed.

Finally, a member of the public spoke to express their disappointment that the Martime Academy had decided against using the old 'Stoke Primary Academy' building as their temporary base for September. Ideas were shared in regards to the possible use of the building by the Stoke Community Project, where the organisation were encouraged to approach Medway Council directly to discuss their visions finer detail.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

None.

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

1. Apologies for absence

Min 7208:22 None.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 7209:22 None.

3. Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature

Min 7210:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise the members that despite advertising the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy, she had not received any applications to date.

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4. Ward Councillor Report

a). A report by Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast

Min 7211:22 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise the members that Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast had sent his apologies for the evening.

In his absence however she read out loud a quick memo from him concerning the use of the old 'Stoke Primary Academy' building by the Maritime Academy Trust, where it was established that the school had now officially withdrawn their interest in using the premises as a temporary base, owing to the works identified in the various surveys that had been conducted.

Instead, it was understood that the school would be using an alternative building based in Twydall in Gillingham.

5. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting

a). To receive and approve the minutes from the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 4th May 2022.

Min 7212:22 The minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting, held on Wednesday 4th May 2022, were submitted.

It was proposed by Cllr P. Egan 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 7213:22 None.

7. Planning

a). Applications

Min 7214:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm receipt of three (3) new planning applications, where he read each out loud in turn.

- **MC/22/1215 - Sturch Field, Grain Road**

A discussion ensued in relation to the associated council tax rates in placing two additional mobile homes and two touring caravans on the site.

- **MC/22/1170 - The Paddocks, Vicarage Lane**

The members made no comments in regards to this application, apart from that they had no objections.

- **MC/22/1117 - National Grid Grain LNG Terminal, Grain Road**

The members asked the Clerk to exclude any further applications or decisions relating to the Grain LNG Terminal from their correspondence, as it was agreed that this property was situated in Grain and not in Stoke.

b). Decisions

Min 7215:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to acknowledge that there had been one new planning decision made since the last meeting, where he confirmed the following details.

- **MC/22/0267 – Heathrow, Burrows Lane**

Agreed subject to conditions.

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7216:22 None.

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8. Finance

a). To agree financial performance against the budget for the month of May 2022.

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 7217:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to raise concerns that the members had already overspent their 2022/2023 budget for new play equipment, where he asked for this point to be addressed at the Parish Council's next finance meeting.

Min 7218:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke further to propose that points a,b,c, 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	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£523.32	May 2022 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office – May 2022
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£36.61	Broadband & Telephone line rental for May 2022
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£128.00	May 2022 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV:3496
Julie Wallace	Min 7194:22	PAID BY BACS	£191.00	domainnameshop.co.uk Domain renewal and hosting pack- age INV:69135
Kent Lazercraft	Min 7199:22	PAID BY BACS	£187.50	150 Jubilee Coins INV: 0062
Celebrity Cutouts	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY CARD	£56.42	Lifesize cut out of the Queen for Jubilee celebrations. INV: cc0000128183
Hiscox Insurance Company Limited	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£1,080.14	Insurance renewal 2022/2023 INV: 503440520
Memorial Benches	Min 7184:22	PAID BY BACS	£934.95	2 x Platinum Jubilee Benches with engraved plaques INV: 000000799
RBL Poppy Appeal	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	PAID BY BACS	£50.00	Annual Donation 2021
HMRC	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£3.20	Payment of Tax & NI for May 2022 Payroll
KALC	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£379.75	2022 / 2023 Membership

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Mr M Fielder-White	TO BE AGREED RETROSPECTIVELY	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£80.00	Internal Audit Inspection 2021/2022 INV: 006
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£43.16	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for June 2022
TOTAL			£3,735.45	

9. Internal Audit 2021/2022

a). To review the internal auditors report for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Min 7218:22 The members spoke to confirm receipt of the internal auditor's report for the year ended March 2022, where it was acknowledged that the Parish Council should have asked for an amended invoice to indicate the 20% retention held, following the purchase of the two new items of play equipment and their dispute following the contractor's installation which did not comply with the British Standards policy.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to contact Safeplay Playground Services Ltd to ask for receipt for the two payments made, where it was identified that these payments spanned over two financial years.

b). To approve the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Min 7219:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to recommend the members approve the accounts for the year ending March 2022, subject to the agreement that they would be updating all their standard operating procedures.

A short discussion ensued where this recommendation was unanimously agreed.

c). To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2021-22, Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2022.

Min 7220:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, read in turn each of the points from the Annual Governance Statement as per shown below.

1.	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
2.	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.
3.	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.
4.	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
5.	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.
6.	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.
7.	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.

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| 8. | We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements. |
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After various discussions and careful consideration, the members answered 'Yes' to each section.

Cllr P. Egan spoke to propose that the Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, sign Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2022. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and was unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Chairman Cllr B. Stone and the Clerk signed Section 1, in front of both the members of the Parish Council and the Parishioners sat in the public gallery.

d). To approve the Accounting Statements for 2021-22, Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2022 and the supporting Bank Reconciliation as at 31 March 2022 plus the explanation of the significant variations from last year (2020-21) to this year (2021-22) and the explanation of any differences to be sent to the External Auditor.

Min 7221:22 The members carefully evaluated the figures provided in Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending March 2022, where they deemed the Accounting Statement as acceptable.

Cllr P. Egan spoke to propose the Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, sign Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2022. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and was unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Chairman Cllr B. Stone signed Section 2 in front of the members of the Parish Council, the Clerk/RFO and the Parishioners sat in the public gallery.

Min 7222:22 The Councillors also carefully studied the supporting documents for the external audit that included the bank reconciliation documents and the explanations of the significant variances from the year before, where these documents were deemed as acceptable.

10. Management of the Council's land and property

a). Playparks

i Allhallows Road Playpark

ii Heron Way Playpark

iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 7223:22 The bi-fortnightly play park inspections from the month of May 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.

Additional comments were noted that bird droppings were starting to build up at the top of the slide in Upper Stoke, where the members discussed arranging for the droppings to be removed on a regular basis.

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

Min 7224:22 The members discussed the annual inspections carried out by the Play Park Inspection company, where it was noted that lots of low-risk points and maintenance issues had been identified.

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Concerns that none of these points had been previously documented by the paid contractor during his fortnightly inspections were aired, where the need to draw up a 5-year maintenance schedule to preserve the existing apparatus was raised by Cllr P. Egan.

The Councillors spoke in finer detail about the condition of some of the equipment, where the need to upgrade a lot of the apparatus was agreed. Ideas to obtain grant funding from EDF Energy (who were installing new equipment locally) was suggested, alongside contacting local businesses for sponsorship and applying for funding by the National Lottery.

Cllr P. Egan spoke further to offer his assistance in inspecting the play equipment free of charge, on a monthly basis, where he spoke of his professional experience and his qualification as a certified structural engineer.

The member discussed asking the contractor to clean the equipment only, to remove all bird droppings and to empty the bins on a bi-fortnightly basis, where a vote took place.

Cllr P. Egan spoke to propose that the member's existing contractor be stood down from carrying out his bi-fortnightly inspections and instead be instructed to continue in cleaning the play equipment, including the removal of bird droppings, and to empty the bins. This proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Mansell and was unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to write to the contractor to confirm of the members decision, to provide notice to him to stop inspecting the equipment and to ask him to carry out cleaning duties only, including the emptying of the bins.

Min 7224:22 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to address a complaint that had been raised with her surrounding the recreation grounds, that she understood were meant to be 'dog free' zones. The grievance aired concerns that residents were frequently exercising their dogs in the parks and often were not picking up after them.

The members collectively spoke about the concerns raised and they suggested installing some new 'no dog' signs, which could be mounted at the entrances to the park. They also spoke of promoting these areas as dog free zones on the Parish Council's website and on their social media page.

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

Min 7225:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to inform the members that she was still battling with the insurance providers Ecclesiastical, over the repairs to the fencing at Button Drive, following the loss adjustor's visit a couple of weeks prior.

She advised that she understood from the loss adjuster's, Crawfords, that the Parish Council might not be covered for the damages, however shortly after receiving confirmation of this in writing, she was in receipt of a further phone call from Came and Co (the insurance brokers the Parish Council original purchased the cover through) to confirm that they disagreed with Crawfords decision and that they were making an appeal on behalf of the Parish Council to Ecclesiastical.

Having chased the insurance providers for an update prior to the meeting, she confirmed that the claim had now been referred back to the underwriters for further assessment, where she hoped to inform the Councillors of their final decision in due course.

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11. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 7226:22 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 7227:22 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 7228:22 Cllr K. Mansell spoke to inform the members that the alleyway that led to Heron Way from the High Street was very overgrown with weeds. A discussion ensued where it was identified this alleyway was the responsibility of Medway Housing and not the Parish Council.

d). Pot holes

Min 7229:22 The members discussed the many potholes that littered the A228 / Grain Road and spoke of the potholes along Button Drive.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to remind the Parish Council, and the members of the public present, that they could download the 'Country Eye' application on their mobile phones and report potholes directly to the authority, including their exact location(s). He spoke of his experience in using this tool, which he had found to be very positive.

e). Fly tipping

Min 7230:22 No report.

f). Grass cutting

Min 7231:22 Cllr K. Copping spoke to confirm receipt of the response from Medway Norse, surrounding the Parish Council's request for a copy of their grass cutting schedule. He referred the members to the map that the contractors had enclosed, which showed the areas they were responsible for upkeeping.

He spoke further to advise that now the Parish Council were aware of the areas Medway Norse maintained that it would be a good idea for them to have a contact name and telephone number for an associate at Medway Norse in case of a discrepancy.

Accordingly, the Clerk was instructed to go back to Medway Norse to thank them for their response and to request additional contact details.

12. Communication

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

Min 7232:22 Cllr J. Wallace spoke inform the members that she had no further report.

b). Parish Council owned tablets

Min 7233:22 Cllr P. Egan asked the Clerk not to print him a hard copy of the meeting correspondence for the Parish Council's next meeting, where he advised that he wanted to use his Parish Council owned tablet instead.

Additionally following the renewal of the members domain name, including their Parish Council email addresses, the members discussed re-accessing their emails to use in place of their personal email addresses.

13. Village Hall

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

Min 7234:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone advised that he had no further update on the Village Hall.

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The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, also spoke to enquire if there was any further news on the email, she had forwarded onto him from wHoo Cares, who were enquiring in regards to the possible use of the old Doctors Surgery premises.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke in return to confirm that there was no progress on this matter as he was still waiting to hear from the GP surgery if they required the premises.

14. External Contractors

a). J R Brickwork

Min 7235:22 None.

b). Eastborough Landscapes

Min 7236:22 None.

c). Colyn Property Services

Min 7237:22 None.

Min 7238:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, referred the members to an email she had circulated prior to the meeting, that contained a quote from 4Seasons for £240.00 to clean, tidy and remove the weeds from the Lower Stoke Car Park ahead of the Jubilee Event, due to take place on Sunday 5th June.

A discussion ensued, where after careful consideration, the members gave their consent for the Clerk to instruct the contractor to carry out the works.

Additional comments were made if the contractor could pay particular attention to the weeds growing out of the wall next to the Indian takeaway and to clear the soil around the edge of the car park. Cllr B. Stone also commented that the contractor should avoid clearing and mowing the grass to the right-hand side of the car park by the entrance, as it was understood that this land belonged to MHS Homes.

15. Feedback to Public Questions

a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 4th May 2022.

Min 7239:22 In response to the last Parish Council meeting, the members discussed the situation with cars being consistently inconsiderately parked in Middle Stoke, where it was noted that the Clerk was yet to write to the property owners in question.

A discussion ensued, where following a majority vote, the Clerk was asked to circulate Medway Council's traffic warden details on the village notice boards and on social media instead of writing to the residents.

The members also collectively discussed the installation of the two new Platinum Jubilee benches, their proposed sites for double yellow lines in the village and the manhole cover on the A228 / Grain Road that appeared to keep sinking into the tarmac.

16. Disabled Parking in Lower Stoke

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

Min 7240:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to inform the members that following his questionnaire he had received 86 replies in total, where 67 residents were in favour of the proposed new layout and 14 residents were against.

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He also confirmed the following statistics from his survey, where he had asked specific questions.

30 residents	Liked the one-way system.
66 residents	Liked the different size bays.
22 residents	Liked the new positioning of the disabled bay.
30 residents	Liked the positioning of the parking bays around the edge of the car park.
76 residents	Agreed that the new layout increased the parking facilities in the car park.
53 residents	Agreed that the new layout may improve parking in the car park.

Cllr P. Egan closed his report in advising that further feedback received from his questionnaire requested the middle three (3) spaces to be reduced to two (2), for two (2) disabled parking bays to be installed instead of one and for signs be to installed to indicate bigger spaces for larger cars.

He confirmed that following these results that he intended to re-measure the car park in order to check the dimensions for the proposed parking bays, before contacting Medway Council for a quote to paint the permanent lines.

17. **Flooded Manhole cover on A228 Grain Road**

a). To receive an update on the flooded manhole cover located on the A228 Grain Road.

Min 7241:22 The members discussed the flooded manhole covers on the A228 / Grain Road,. They agreed that as water was not escaping from them presently that the Clerk should remove this item from the next agenda.

Suspensions were raised that owing to the warmer weather, that the escape of water was linked to the rain water running off of the fields in the colder and wetter months.

18. **Platinum Jubilee Event**

a). To receive an update on the event to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on Sunday 5th June 2022.

Min 7242:22 The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke to report that following the Parish Council's successful application for a road closure, that she was now in receipt of the road closure signs and the various equipment to cordon the High Street off.

Cllr J. Wallace also reported that she had noticed Medway Council had now placed advanced warning notices, mounted to the lampposts along the road, with the details of the pending closure.

The members agreed to meet at the Village Hall at 9.00am to transport the tables and chairs to the Lower Stoke Car Park in advance of the 1.00pm start time of the event.

b). To discuss ideas to celebrate Christmas 2022.

Min 7243:22 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to make a recommendation that the Parish Council considered hosting another Christmas Competition for the year 2022, however owing to the recent increase in energy prices, she suggested that the competition could be made into an advert calendar scene instead, where the participants would be encouraged to decorate their front windows with 'homemade decorations'.

A brief discussion ensued, where the Clerk was asked to keep the Christmas 2022 event on the agenda for further consultation later in the year.

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19. Policies

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

- **The All-Risks Management Policy**
- **The Audit Regime**

Min 7244:22 Cllr P. Egan spoke to refer the members to the new risk management policy he had created and had circulated prior to the meeting.

A discussion ensued in regards to the new policy's contents, where Cllr K. Copping spoke to ask if this policy could be brought back to the next meeting, once the members had had a chance to read through all the correspondence in finer detail and to digest its contents.

This recommendation was unanimously agreed where the Clerk was asked to ensure that both items remained on the agenda.

20. Village Voice Publication

Min 7245:22 The members discussed their article for the next Village Voices publication, where the Clerk was asked to send some feedback and photos from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event held on Sunday 5th June.

21. Correspondence

Min 7246:22 None.

22. Reports and Circulars

Min 7247:22 None.

22. Any other business

Min 7248:22 Cllr G. Blackman spoke to ask the Clerk if she could obtain a copy of the key to open the interconnecting door from the main hall to the boiler cupboard, to enable the members to set up the Village Hall for meetings quicker and to save carrying chairs through the kitchen entrance.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke in response to confirm that Cllr K. Copping had already collected the key. Cllr K. Copping replied to confirm that he returned the key to the Bookings Clerk, as he had not been made aware that the members needed a duplicate made.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke further to confirm that she would ask the Bookings Clerk, Mrs J. Turner if she could borrow the key again and arrange an exact copy to be cut.

Min 7249:22 Cllr K. Copping also spoke to address the condition of the noticeboard in Upper Stoke, following its vandalism the month before.

The Clerk Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that under the interests to her health and safety she had now completely removed the plastic Perspex cover to the front, for fear of the splintered plastic landing on her head.

A brief discussion ensued, where Cllr K. Mansell spoke to recommend the services of her Partner, who was very skilled in the woodwork profession.

The members collectively agreed that Cllr K. Mansell should ask her partner to provide a quote for the relevant repairs, where it was left that the Clerk and Cllr K. Mansell would liaise independently concerning the access to the locked noticeboard.

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23. Date of next meeting

Min 7250:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 6th July 2022.

24. Close of meeting

Min 7251:22 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone closed the meeting at 10.00pm and thanked everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 6th July 2022	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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