

STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



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

MINUTES

Wednesday 2nd February 2022

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 G. Blackman
Cllr P. Egan Cllr R. Bridge
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: Nine (9)

PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Part A. Public Discussions

Two members of the public spoke where the following enquiries were raised:

- Confirmation if the Parish Council was planning on holding an event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- A request for a grant towards the Stoke Safari's 'Big Lunch' event, due to be held during the long bank holiday weekend in June.

Cllr P. Egan spoke in response to the Stoke Safari's request for a grant, where he explained that the Parish Council had a very tight budget for the next financial year, in response to the eradication of two grants by Medway Council. He advised that following a budget and finance meeting held in January, the members had calculated that they only had additional funding of up to £3,000 for the whole year, which also needed cater for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event. He therefore requested the members to considered any grant requests very seriously, raising concerns that the Parish Council could run out of funds and eat into their reserves if they were not stringent with their finances throughout the next year.

Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items

A third member of the public spoke to request an update on the situation with the flooding in the village.

The Chairman Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to explain that a member from the flooding management team from Medway Council was present and that she would be providing a report a bit later in the meeting, where there would an an opportunity to ask questions.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 7.05pm and thanked the Councillors and the members of the public for attending.

1. Apologies for absence

Min 7046:21 An apology for absence was received from Cllr K. Mansell, who had been taken ill on the day of the meeting.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Min 7047:21 None.

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3. Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature

Min 7048:21 None.

4. **Flood Report – ANNEX A**

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

Min 7049:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone invited Ms G. Bussley from Medway Council's Flood Management team to speak.

Ms G. Bussley spoke to confirm that Medway Council were in consultation with a surface water management company who was assisting them in liaising with Southern Water. She confirmed that the use of CCTV throughout the drainage network was underway and that the consultants were also in frequent contact with the Environment Agency.

She referred everyone present in the meeting to a questionnaire that had been compiled to help tackle the issues with the flooding, where she urged all the Parishioners and the Councillors alike to complete the questionnaire and to encourage their friends and neighbours to do the same. She confirmed that the closing date to receive the completed questionnaires back by stood at Monday 28th February 2022, where this date could apparently be moved back if necessary.

She also confirmed that following the receipt of the questionnaire the consultants were aiming to have an in-depth surface water report completed by October, where Medway Council would then be able to determine the best solutions to tackle the issues with the flooding. Please see 'Annex A' for a full transcript of Ms G. Bussley's report.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone adjourned the meeting at 7.10pm to allow a 10-minute question and answer session. where the Clerk made a note of the following enquiries that had been raised:

- Confirmation of what was happening with the sewage in the village? A complaint was raised concerning the escape of raw sewage into a back garden, alongside flooding to the front of the same property.
- An update was requested as to when the local pumping station would be back in full working order.
- A complaint was aired that Southern Water were not maintaining their systems properly, where reports of toilets being unable to flush, unusable showers and no water pressure to operate handbasins and kitchen sinks were raised.
- A complaint was made that there were still possible blocked drains within the village, where it was previously upheld that all the drains in the village had been checked and that they were all free of any blockage.
- A complaint was raised concerning the tanker lorries, where it had been noted that these lorries were operating for long periods of time and 24 hours a day. The complainant confirmed that the lorries were sitting on her and other resident's driveways with their lights repeatedly flashing at all hours of the day and night, making lots of noise and leaving damage to the driveways, which the waterboard was not taking responsibility for.
- Confirmation why other neighbouring villages have tankers on standby in the event of any issues, yet Stoke does not appear to have the same entitlements?
- Confirmation if there would be a public consultation held after the completed questionnaires had been received back.

A discussion ensued where many of the Parishioners and Councillors complained that the flooding issues in the village had been going on many years and that the none of the matters raised were

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new occurrences. The need to direct the surface water away from the village was also discussed, alongside the regular use of a sluice gate.

The meeting resumed at 7.20pm.

5. Ward Councillor Report

a). A report by Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast

Min 7050:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone invited Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast to speak. Cllr M. Pendergast spoke to thank the Parish Council for inviting him and to address the issues with the loss of power to the village.

In accordance with the last power cut, Cllr M. Pendergast confirmed that he had been on the phone for over 60 minutes to UK Power Networks earlier that day, where he disclosed that initially the utility company had denied that there had been any issue with the village's supply. Later in the same conversation however, he confirmed that they had admitted to an issue with the reconnection of power between Hoo and High Halstow which in turn had caused the fault in Stoke.

From his conversation with UK Power Networks, Cllr M. Pendergast advised that he understood a new substation with a lower voltage supply was being sourced for the Peninsula, where the village would need to be eventually re-cabled.

Cllr M. Pendergast spoke of the need to pull together as community and to petition for a greater infrastructure to support the current population on the Peninsula, where it was understood that the funds put forward for the HIF bid were only going to supporting the new build properties planned and not to assist the existing residents.

The Ward Councillor closed his report in reminding the Parishioners to keep claiming compensation for any loss of power. He directed the Parishioners to the Parish Council's website, where he advised that the link to this form was located on the front page.

6. Minutes from the previous Parish Council Meeting

a). To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

Min 7051:21 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting, held on Wednesday 5th January 2022, were submitted.

It was proposed by the Vice Chair, Cllr J. Wallace and seconded by Cllr G. Blackman, that they be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

b). To receive and approve the minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

Min 7052:21 The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting, held on Wednesday 5th January 2022, were submitted.

It was proposed by the Vice Chair, Cllr J. Wallace and seconded by Cllr P. Egan, that they be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

7. Information arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Min 7053:21 None.

8. Planning

a). Applications

Min 7054:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to confirm that there had only been one new

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planning application submitted since the last meeting, where the members discussed the application in finer detail.

- **MC/21/3604 - The Paddocks , Vicarage Lane**

Cllr K. Copping spoke to confirm that he had looked at the application online, where although he had no issues with the application itself, he noted that the new extension would be situated very close to the next-door neighbour's garage.

Cllr P. Egan also spoke to suggest the members could write a criteria to compare future applications against.

A discussion ensued where the members agreed that a criteria was a good suggestion, however as a Parish Council they had no power over any applications where they were only able to make comments in the event of any queries or discrepancies.

b). Decisions

Min 7055:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone acknowledged receipt of one planning decision, where the members recognised that this application was connected to the Isle of Grain and not Stoke.

- **MC/21/3482 – National Grid, Grain LNG**
Discharge of conditions

c). Appeals and Other Matters.

Min 7056:21 None.

9. Finance

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

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 7057:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to enquire why payments to at least two suppliers appeared twice on the members' bank statements, he then in turn questioned the transactions made to Medway Council and the 'Church'.

The Clerk, Mrs J Allen, spoke in response to confirm that the second payment made to Medway Council had been deducted in error by the Borough Council through direct debit, where payment for the rent accrued during the lease renewal had already been paid through BACS. She also confirmed that the payments made to the Church were correct, owing to the Parish Council's annual commitments, she had made a payment of £100 to each of the two churches in Village (that included the Stoke Methodist Church and St Peter & St Paul's Church).

The Clerk, Mrs J Allen, referred Cllr K. Copping to his meeting pack where she had included evidence that she had request a refund for the second payment from Medway Council, which was being processed.

Cllr G. Blackman spoke to propose that points a,b,c, d & e be approved en bloc, this proposal was seconded by Cllr P. Egan and was unanimously agreed.

Min 7058:21 Ward Councillor M. Pendergast thanked the Parish Council again for inviting him, where he apologised for not being able to stay any longer and subsequently left the meeting at 7.30pm.

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Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£495.88	January 2022 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office –January 2022
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£33.92	Broadband & Telephone line rental for January 2022
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£168.00	January 2022 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV:3377
Rialtas	Min 1829:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£206.40	Annual Support & Maintenance INV: SM24964
Screwfix	Min 7024:21	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£17.99	Red & White Barrier Tape INV: A8926578298
Medway Council	Min 5042:21	DIRECT DEBIT	£225.00	Quarterly Car Park Rent
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£42.43	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for January 2022
TOTAL			£1,224.62	

10. Management of the Council's land and property

a). Playparks

i Allhallows Road Playpark

ii Heron Way Playpark

iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 7059:21 The Play Park inspections from the month of January were evaluated. The reports received confirmed that the play equipment in the Button Drive Play Park and the Upper Stoke play park appeared to be in good order and that all the touch points were being regularly disinfected. It also confirmed that following a discussion at the last meeting, the new toddler unit in Button Drive play park had been cordoned off, ref **Min 7024:21**.

The Play Park inspection for the Heron Way Play Park confirmed that, despite the new toddler unit being corded off (see above), there appeared to be two loose curved blue timber barriers on the apparatus and evidence of a fire having been started next to the small skateboard ramp, which had been cleared away by the contractor.

b). To receive an update on the remedial work to the two newly installed toddler units following the post installation inspection reports.

Min 7060:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise that following confirmation in writing from the contractors that the height of the slides had been adjusted, that he had been back to the playparks to check. He advised that having re-measured their heights, that he thought the amendments would now fall within the 'British Standard guidelines' as stipulated on the independent report.

He spoke further however to raise concerns that no amendments had been made to the hard edging within the impact zone that surrounded the toddler unit at the Button Drive playpark, despite this point being raised by the independent inspectors on their report.

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A discussion ensued, where the Clerk spoke of the advice she had sought from other Parish Council Clerks who had recommended that the Parish Council should instruct a further post installation inspection, where the fees for this report should be deducted from the outstanding retention balance the Parish Council still held. The members also referred to their meeting packs, where the Clerk had included a quote for a further post installation inspection at a cost of £200 per play park. Following this quote, they agreed to instruct the independent inspector at a total cost of £400. The Clerk was asked to instruct the inspector to attend in March, to allow the contractor ample time to make any amendments to the impact zone in Button Drive.

The Parish Councillors spoke further of their concerns that amendments were taking too long. They mooted the idea, that if any additional remedial work was required, that they would instruct a separate contractor to carry out the works and deduct the monies paid to correct work the from retention balance held.

Cllr K. Copping also spoke of offer his assistance in tightening the two loose curved blue timber barriers as referred to in the members monthly inspection ref Min 7059:21.

Min 7061:21 Accordingly, Cllr P. Egan, spoke to propose that the Clerk keep hold of the retention balance until the results of the second post installation inspection were received back. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and was unanimously agreed.

Cllr P. Egan also requested the Clerk to address the fortnightly cleaning of the equipment on the next agenda, where in light of the lifting of certain restrictions, he thought the Parish Council might be able to save some money.

11. Highways & Transportation

a). Footpaths

Min 7062:21 No report.

b). Lighting

Min 7063:21 No report.

c). Highways and verges

Min 7064:21 Cllr G. Blackman spoke to raise his concerns that four metal drain covers had been stolen from the village, where he understood from this type of criminal activity was on the rise Nationwide.

He reported that he had heard Medway Council had at least 90 drain covers on order, as Stoke was not the only village that had been targeted, however there were not any drain covers in stock anywhere in the country presently.

d). Pot holes

Min 7065:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to address the various potholes that littered the A228 / Grain Road from Middle spoke to Upper Stoke.

Cllr R. Bridge also spoke to highlight the two leaking manhole covers on the A228 / Grain Road, one of which he noted was now overflowing into a large pothole that was located close by.

e). Fly tipping

Min 7066:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to confirm that he had reported a discarded mattress that had been fly tipped on the outskirts of the village using the 'Country Eye App'.

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Accordingly, he advised the members how impressed he had been with the application, which sent a report directly to Medway Council, including all its grid references etc to confirm its exact location. He confirmed that he had received responses back from both Medway Council and the application host's the same day, where the mattress was promptly collected.

Cllr P. Egan spoke to recommend that the Parish Council should publish a list of useful applications the Parishioners could use to report any issues such as fly tipping, which in turn could then be promoted on the Parish Council's website and on the village noticeboards.

12. Communication

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

b). Parish Council owned tablets

Min 7067:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the members that she had no further report concerning the Parish Council's website.

She confirmed however that she understood there was now an issue with the Stoke Parish Council's email addresses, where she had emailed the hosts to ask them to address the problem.

13. Village Hall

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

Min 7068:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to inform the members that the Village Hall had held their 'Annual General Meeting' (AGM), where a total of 4 Parishioners had attended.

He confirmed that following the resignation of Ms C. Gurr, the Committee were now missing a treasurer, where they were currently recruiting to find a replacement volunteer to take over as soon as possible.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke in response to recommend the Parish Council placed an advertisement in the Village Voices publication to promote the treasurer vacancy on behalf of the Village Hall.

The Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace also spoke to confirm that following an enquiry made by the 'Stoke Community Project' to book the Village Hall for an event, that the team had experienced great difficulty in securing a date owing to the number of bookings the hall already held.

14. External Contractors

a). J R Brickwork

Min 7069:21 None.

b). Eastborough Landscapes

Min 7070:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke of a complaint she had received from a member of the public concerning the moss that was growing on the surfacing of the play parks again.

She referred the members to an invoice she had received from Eastborough Landscapes previously to treat the moss over 18 months ago, that had equated to approximately £400 including VAT.

A discussion ensued, where under the interests of health and safety the Clerk was instructed to arrange for a contractor to treat the moss as soon as possible.

It was proposed by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace to provide the Clerk with a budget of £400 (not including VAT) for the treatment of the moss, which was seconded by Cllr K. Copping and unanimously agreed.

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c). Colyn Property Services

Min 7071:21 None.

15. Feedback to Public Questions – ANNEX B

a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

Min 7072:21 Following the last Parish Council meeting, held on Wednesday 5th January 2022, Cllr K. Copping read out loud the response received from the Maritime Academy, concerning the questions raised by the members of the public, regarding the use of the old 'Stoke Primary Academy' building. Please refer to 'Annex B' for a copy of this response,

A discussion ensued, where the need for a one-way system throughout the village for the buses was voiced, other questions as to why the Leigh Academies Trust did not want to repair the building was also raised, alongside what the future aspirations for this property were once the Maritime Academy had adapted the building to their specifications.

Cllr P. Egan, also spoke to advise that following the upgrade of some of the facilities on the site by the new Academy that he wondered if some of these changes might help the village's drainage issues.

Min 7073:21 With permission from the Chairman, a member of the public also spoke to enquire what was happening with the field located behind her house, which had flooded her back garden on several occasions owing to the lack of drainage. Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to confirm that he owned the land and that he was arranging for a drainage ditch to be dug to help with her flooding concerns.

16. Disabled Parking in Lower Stoke

a). To receive an update on the new layout of the Lower Stoke Car Park, including the repositioning of the disabled parking bay.

Min 7074:21 Cllr P. Egan spoke to advise the members that he was meeting with MHS Homes the following week to discuss what access they need to their land.

He confirmed that once he had met with MHS Homes he was then able to finalise his plan for the temporary lines and his virtual questionnaire to ask the residents for their feedback, once the lines were in place.

Cllr R. Bridge spoke to remind Cllr P. Egan that he still needed to place a temporary sign in the car park for the new disabled bay, where Cllr P. Egan confirmed that he was arrange for this.

17. Flooding to the rear of Kasmira House

a). To discuss possible solutions to prevent flooding to the rear of Kasmira House.

Min 7075:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that as per his last update, that he was still waiting to hear back from Mr W. Hooper with his quote.

18. Flooded Manhole cover on A228 Grain Road

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

Min 7076:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that water was still coming up from the manhole covers on the A228/Grain Road, where there appeared to be a 3rd affected manhole cover now. Accordingly, he asked the Clerk to keep chasing Medway Council for a resolution.

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19. Platinum Jubilee Event

a). To plan and discuss ideas to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

Min 7077:21 The members spoke collectively in regards to their ideas towards marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. They also spoke of the request received from the Stoke Safari's for a grant towards their Big Lunch event, which the members noted had been scheduled to coincide with the bank holiday / Jubilee weekend.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to suggest that the Parish Council should consider hosting an event over the Jubilee weekend using the Village Hall, its car park and possibly involving the Nags Head Public House. Other ideas were put forward in regards to moving the event to the Lower Stoke Car Park in the High Street, where it was agreed that the car park would be a better use of space and would possibly be more central for everyone. Further suggestions to close the High Street and ask the cars to park elsewhere were aired, alongside an idea to host a Street Party in the car park with decorations, bunting and a barbeque, where the Stoke Safari's group offered to organised an entertainer and a bouncy castle, which would be placed within the garden of the Nags Head public house opposite.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, also spoke to suggest that the members could consider installing an engraved bench or two in the village to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, where she also spoke of an idea, she had had of installing a reconditioned 'red telephone box' on the green space in Upper Stoke (located opposite the church and next to noticeboard) to house another defibrillator. The members spoke of the complications involved in installing a new defibrillator, mainly owing to the lack of power, and the cost implications involved in purchasing of an old telephone box. They expressed their interest however in regards to possibly purchasing two new Jubilee benches, where Cllr P. Egan suggested the new benches could be placed on walking routes in the village or next to the footpaths.

With permission from the Chairman, a member of the pubic was invited to speak, where she suggested the Parish Council could also give out seed packets to brighten up the village. She advised that she liked the idea of installing an old 'red telephone box' in Upper Stoke, where she suggested that this new landmark could be to converted into a lending library for the village.

Cllr P. Egan spoke further to suggest that the Parish Council could installing a new village sign, as he noted that the 'Stoke' Village sign only pointed in one direction. He also made comment that benches typically only had a 5-year life span, where he recommended that the members budgeted at least £500 per bench. Finally, as a gesture of goodwill, Cllr P. Egan very generously offered to donate £300 to the Stoke Safari's group from his own pocket, towards their Jubilee celebrations.

The Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace spoke to ask the Parish Council to consider planting some new trees in the village in recognition of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This idea was agreed to be a good one, however the members agreed that they would need to look further into the price of the new trees and the most suitable locations to plant them.

Finally, the Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to suggest that the members considered applying to Medway Council to close the High Street up to the turning for Shepherds Way for the event. He also asked the Clerk to confirm the members were covered for public indemnity under the Parish Council's insurance.

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20. Parish Council's representatives

a). To review the Council's representatives for external bodies, Sub Committee Memberships & Portfolio Holders

Min 7078:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to confirm that he had attended the last virtual 'Police Surgery', which had been held online with two (2) Medway Council representatives and a local Police Constable. He advised that during this meeting he had been allocated a 15-minute time slot in which to speak, where he had been able to address issues of drug and substance abuse in the village, fly tipping and the stolen drain covers. He reported that he felt the meeting had been useful, where he confirmed that had now been provided with the direct contact details of the Peninsula's PCSO.

He advised that he understood the local Sargent would be writing an article for next edition of the Village Voices publication, and every month moving forward thereafter, where Cllr K. Copping also expressed his interest in attending the next surgery on behalf of Stoke Parish Council.

A discussion ensued where the members agreed that it would be a good idea for the Parish Council to have a presence at these surgeries. Accordingly, Cllr K. Copping was given the members consent, where he was also assigned as the Sub Committee Member for the Police Surgery.

21. Village Voice Publication

Min 7079:21 The members spoke collectively in regards to their next article for the February 2022 Village Voices publication. After careful consideration it was unanimously agreed that the Clerk should place an article in the publication asking for ideas as to how the village would like to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and to promote the vacancy for a new 'Treasurer' for the Village Hall.

22. Reports and Circulars

Min 7080:21 None.

23. Any other business

Min 7081:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to request that the Clerk included the re-adoption of the Parish Council's existing policies on to the next agenda.

Min 7082:21 Cllr P. Egan also spoke to confirm that he would like to remodel the Parish Council's risk register, where he presented the members with a list of reformatted risks, including the possible financial implications.

As per Cllr K. Copping's request, he asked the Clerk to ensure this point was listed on the members' agenda for their next meeting, to discuss in matter greater detail.

24. Date of next meeting

Min 7083:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 2nd March 2022.

25. Close of meeting

Min 7084:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone closed the meeting at 8.50pm and thanked everyone for attending.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:

Wednesday 2nd March 2022	7.00pm	The Village Hall
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ANNEX A

4). Flood Report

Min 7049:21

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

Medway Council have instructed JBA Consulting to undertake a Surface Water Management Plan to highlight the best solutions to reduce surface water flooding within the region. The Consultants have set up a questionnaire within the following link <https://forms.office.com/r/7AFjk26qBa> to gather information from the Residents of Stoke regarding flooding. This includes the type of flooding, the location and the effect of flooding. This Questionnaire runs until the 28th of February but information can still be sent to the following email address floodrisk@medway.gov.uk.

JBA Consulting are currently carrying out modelling to obtain a better understanding of the flooding patterns and locations and to provide the best solutions. Over the next few months, they will be carrying out surveys on the existing networks to find out capacity within the drainage system but this will not affect residents.

The Consultants and Medway Council Lead Local Flood Authority will be holding a Public Consultation Event to discuss the findings and potential solutions with residents. As soon as a date is proposed we will be in contact with the Parish Council.

ANNEX B

15). Feedback to Public Questions

Min 7072:21

a). To receive a response/update on the last public questions raised, following the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 5th January 2022.

Dear Mrs J. Allen

Thank you for your letter and for offering us the opportunity to address your concerns.

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is honoured to have been given the opportunity to open a brandnew secondary school, Maritime Academy in Strood. This school is much needed to address the shortages of secondary school spaces in Medway.

As you can understand, having to open the school within a temporary location was nobody's ideal scenario but, unfortunately, due to recent events out of our control, we have seen huge delays and complications across every step of the process; we are doing the best we can to navigate these obstacles, ensuring as minimal disruption as possible, whilst keeping the best interests of our students at the core of all we do.

It was wonderful to read that you are not adverse to the use of the former Stoke Primary Academy. We believe that this is an excellent opportunity to bring a second life to the school building, which is currently in need of large scale investment, refurbishment and care, and also an opportunity to futureproof the building to leave a useable building once we have left. Whilst undertaking the work

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in Stoke, we will endeavour to ensure that everything is carried out to make the process as neighbour-friendly as possible.

Below, I have addressed your concerns to the best of my ability; however, as you can imagine, we are still working very closely with Medway Council and the Department for Education to finalise our plans, so I apologise in advance if I cannot offer full clarity on all matters.

We are planning on offering three double decker buses to pick up students. These buses will collect students from Strood and drop them off at the school site in Stoke. To ease congestion and delays, we are proposing to stagger drop off and pick up times.

Following National Offer Day (1st March), we have a series of communications planned until students start in September. As part of this process, we will be strongly advising parents to use these buses and to minimise the number of 'parental drop offs'. This will, as you say, offer an environmental benefit and reduce the number of people waiting outside of the school where there is limited space.

As there is only a small first year cohort, we are confident that these proposals will be well received by parents and effective in reducing the impact to the residents of Stoke.

The Leigh Trust are fully aware of the proposed plans for Maritime Academy to use the site and we have proposals to share with them to ensure a coordinated pick up and drop off for the primary pupils going to Allhallows.

To reassure you, we are committed to building good relationships with our neighbours during our time in Stoke, which will include an effective communication processes. I would also welcome a face-face event to invite local residents to share this journey with us. My team will look to organise this and I will communicate with you when we have finalised a date, time and location.

Yours sincerely,
Jody Murphy