

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 8.00 PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R Cheesman; A-M Butler; P Fincham; G Newton; D Everett; N Clifford; J Everett; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllr – D Spooner; 13 members of the public

Introductions were made by Councillors to members of the public.

Presentation: Winners of Downswood Parish Council's 2024 Garden Competition.

All winners of the competition were present to receive their prizes and certificates.

The winning gardens, as judged by Notcutts Garden Centre, are: 1st Place – 20 Horton Downs, 2nd Place – 1 Foxden Drive and 3rd Place – 14 Redsells Close.

The following items were not necessarily addressed in the numerical order shown.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Borough Cllr Val Springett – holiday, Cllr Gary Cooke. (Apologies were subsequently received from Cllr Ciaran Oliver – family commitment).
- 2. NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:** One member of the public and the Clerk for the purpose of minuting.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** Cllrs D & J Everett - matters concerning the Community Association.

Receive questions relating to DPI Advice and Guidance – No questions.

- 4. APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL HELD ON 02 JULY 2024:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.
- 5. COUNCILLOR VACANCY – CONSIDER CO-OPTION:** Following the due process of advertising the vacancy, MBC's electoral returning officer confirmed permission for the PC to proceed & fill the vacancy by co-option.

Following an interest by Mrs Jennifer Tournay, an interview took place, followed by co-option. An acceptance of office was duly signed (co-option and DPI forms to follow within 28 days).

- **Appoint Co-opted Councillor to Committees:** Councillor Tournay was appointed to the Social Committee and the Finance Committee.

- 6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:**
Following a query relating to the weedkiller that is being used by contractors on the Public Right of Way (PROW) adjacent to Parsonage Place, the resident was advised that the issue will be addressed at the next meeting with Bellway Homes.
- 7 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
7.1 Kent County Councillor – Not available.
7.2 Maidstone Borough Councillors. A written report was submitted by Cllrs Spooner & Springett – Appendix 1 & 2 respectively
7.3 DCA Representative. Cllr Clifford reported that the Centre’s AGM will be held next Tuesday 10 September at 8 pm.
A quiz night will be held this Saturday (7 Sept) in the centre.
- 8 CRIME REPORT:** No reports available from e-watch.co.
- 9 PLANNING:** New Applications and Existing Applications Update.
To consider and resolve the council’s response to planning applications listed below and any additional applications advised by Maidstone Borough Council and are available on their website between the circulation of the agenda and the meeting to which it pertains.
- New Applications**
24/503518/FULL – 61 Willow Rise
Single storey side & rear extension (remove existing conservatory).
DPC responses received to date indicate no objections.
- Pending Decision by MBC**
24/502178/TPOA- Tress Along River Len Footpath Spot Lane
23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove
- Applications Granted**
24/502051/FULL – 18 Kings Acre
24-502203 – 10 Foxden Drive
24-502297 – 17 Gorham Drive
- 10 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES:** Bollards/Speedwatch.
Bollards – Cllr Wingett has written to Cllr Cooke to ask for an update.
Speedwatch – Awaiting an update from the Police.
Information has been circulated today regarding Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) – to be addressed at October’s meeting
- 11 REPORT RE OLYMPICNIC 13.07.24:**
From the public point of view the event was a good success.
Planning for next year’s event will start after DPC's Christmas event.

12 FINANCE:

Monthly Financial Statement to 3 September 2024

Opening Balance: £ 68,695.48

Payments Comprising:

Unity Bank Account £ 25,000.00

Staffing Costs - July Payroll and Expenses 2,167.84

Aylesford Bulls White Lining - Olympicnic 84.00

P. Waring Maintenance of Roundabout 49.68

R. Cheesman Expenses - Garden Comp/Olympicnic 18.00

Scarbutts Printers Flyer - Olympicnic 147.00

St John Ambulance First Aid - Olympicnic 137.28

Staffing Costs - August Payroll and Expenses 2,141.64

Total Payments: 4,745.44

20,254.56

NatWest Acct: £ 32,998.04

Stageline Bouncy Castle Hire (Olympicnic) 300.00

W. Armstrong Garden Competition x 1st 50.00

M. Klopping x 2nd 30.00

A. Rogers x 3rd 20.00

Total Payments: 400.00

Cheques Rec'd:

West Kent Prisons Medical Centre - Litter Picking Paym't 143.00

Total Rec'd: 143.00

32741.04

N S & I (Investment Acct) 10697.44

10,697.44

Closing Balance:

£
63,693.04

12.1 Approve Statement of Account: (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration).

Acceptance of the report detailed above was proposed by Cllr Butler, seconded by Cllr Fincham and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**

12.2 Conclusion of 2023/24 Annual Governance & Accounting Return. The External Auditor has concluded the report. No issues raised. The Clerk was congratulated on her work.

12.3 Unity Bank Review – The account is open and the online banking facility is functioning well. Investment Account Update – receiving attention by Cllr Butler.

12.4 Consider Internal Auditing Arrangements for 2024/25. Auditing Solutions has advised that they are currently working towards selling the company (completion is expected between July to September

2025.) They will not be visiting Kent in 2024-25, but will be undertaking the IA reviews of a number of their existing clients in Kent remotely.

It was agreed to continue to monitor the long-term situation, before making a decision.

12.5 Other Matters to Report: None.

13 OPEN SPACES: Update to consider: Replacement Lavenders for QE11 Tablet – Various alternatives were suggested, as the previously planted lavenders have not been very successful. Advice to be sought from Kent Wildlife Trust*. **/Purchase of Buddleia** – Deferred - *also KWT/**Coronation Orchard Plaque** – Quotes for an interpretation panel to be obtained, as this could be more suitable.**/Equipment for Litter Picking** – Check to be made with MBC to ask if they can provide equipment for volunteers. **ACTION: Clerk**

14 CONSIDER ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING DRAFT POLICIES: Equality and Diversity, Health & Safety, Volunteers: Subject to a couple of minor amendments, it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to adopt the documents. (Cllr Cheesman to contact the Chairman with suggested modifications) **ACTION: Cllrs Cheesman & Wingett**

15 CHRISTMAS EVENT 07.12.24. Social Committee - Update from previous actions: **Entertainment/Load Testing & Lighting Proposals.** (Suggestions raised at the sub-committee meeting of 13 August 2024 were circulated to all in advance of the meeting.)

Following discussion, the suggestions below were proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED.**

- Coloured lights to be used to decorate the tree adjacent to the Community Centre in Chiltern Close. It has been established that the cost of new lights and installation/removal etc will be £3,000 (Cllr Everett stated that the tree belongs to the DCA & confirmed his agreement for the illuminations to go ahead).
- Subject to agreement by Caxtons, 3 x motifs to be installed at The Spires Shops.

Consideration to be given to storing the lights locally during 2025. Cllr Butler to investigate storage costs – see also Item 16*.

ACTION: Cllr Butler

16 CONSIDER ADDITIONAL STORAGE REQUIREMENTS: The storage facility adjacent to the DCA/DPC shed may require replacing in the near future. *See also Item 15.

17 REAFFIRM PLEDGE TO CIVILITY & RESPECT POLICY: All Councillors confirmed their commitment to the pledge.

18 CLERK'S REPORT: Receive reports & updates on previous actions.

- Councillors confirmed that they will keep an eye out for litter/fly tipping during the litter picker's annual leave. All issues to be reported.
- Highways has confirmed that the gap between the PROW restrictor/leading to the footpath on Church Road, will be added to the list of outstanding works.
- The PC has made contact with Bellway Homes to ask what work is due to be carried out in the field, opposite Parsonage Place? (No official notification has been received for the forthcoming closure of Church Road or the PROW). The response: It was found that during the previous works, the main raised sharply into the field and the cover is too shallow for the road construction. Therefore, work will have to be undertaken to lower it and finish the road to KCC's standards.

19 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED: Not applicable.

20 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED: Various correspondence circulated by email - No issues raised.

- MBC confirmed that they are looking at all play area surfacing borough wide and an evaluation will be carried out of those requiring attention.

21 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs)

Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered.

In accordance with Schedule 12 of LGA 1972 and Standing Orders Clause 3d, the meeting closed to members of the public and press at 9.20 pm

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on Tuesday, 1 October 2024.