

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

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R Cheesman; A-M Butler; P Fincham; N Clifford; G Newton; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; Cllr Val Springett – MB Cllr; 3 members of the public.

Cllr Wingett gave a fire safety address.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr J Tournay – Unable to attend due to injury; MB Cllr Denis Spooner – Unwell.
- 2. NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:** The Clerk for the purpose of minuting.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** Cllr Butler – Item 10.
- 4. APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2024:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.
- 5. PARISH COUNCILLOR RESIGNATIONS: DIANE & JOHN EVERETT:** In accordance with protocol, MBC has been informed & the resignations have been advertised.
- 6. ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

7. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:

7.1 Kent County Councillor – Not available. It was noted that Cllr Cooke is currently unwell.

7.2 Maidstone Borough Councillors. A report was submitted by Cllr Springett – see Appendix 1.

7.3 DCA Representative – Nothing to report.

8. CRIME REPORT: The following reports were obtained from e-watch.co.

- Cheviot Gardens. Between 23.00 hrs on Monday 25/11/24 and 14.11 on Tuesday 26/11/24, somebody stole a blue Mercedes, GM65****, from a driveway.
- Deringwood Drive. Between 18.30 on Monday 18/11/24 and 07.00 on Tuesday 19/11/24, a Skoda Rapid window was smashed.
- Chiltern Close. Between 18.00 hrs on Monday 11/11/24 and Tuesday 12/11/24, a wired fence by the external entrance of the building was damaged. The perpetrator did not gain access.

- 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: None received

Applications Granted - Not applicable

Pending Decision by MBC

23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove

24/504348/TPOA - 15 Bournemouth Close

- Maidstone Borough Council Consultation: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Plan Preferred Approaches Consultation (Regulation 18b).
The preferred approach is to build on existing sites, of which Downswood is not one.

DPC has submitted the following comments to KALC.

- The council agrees with responses on the Section 18b submission.
- There appears to be a lack of clarity on dealing with unlawful sites and those individuals that no longer meet the PPTS definition.
- On a recent FOI request, MBC were asked the following - in relation to the cleared encampments listed in question one, how many pitches were in each cleared encampment. (If you do not know, please state whether, to the best of your knowledge, there were any individuals or families living in the cleared encampments.) MBC answered - We do not record information on the numbers of pitches within encampments. The only information we are able to provide is the numbers of vehicles, including caravans, within encampments in 2018; please see Appendix 1. So how do they know that they need 187 permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches to be provided in the borough during the period October 2011 and March 2031.
- A query was raised asking if the author, Steve Jarman, is related to the head of MBC Planning, Rob Jarman?

Councillor Springett clarified that the call for sites in 2022/23 are still shown on the Borough's website. When the preferred approach is decided, the sites will be reviewed to see if the sites fit within the preferred approaches. The sites will then go out to consultation.

- 10 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES:** Combined Parishes Traffic Group (CPTG) Update:

No new meetings have been held.

Cllr Cheesman confirmed that the Willington St/Deringwood Drive traffic light issues were mentioned at KCCs Parish Seminar and the situation is being monitored

11 FINANCE:

FINANCIAL REPORT 03.12.24

	UNITY BANK	NATWEST	NS & I
	Current Acct	Current Acct	Saving Acct
Balance b/f	14,784.17	34,827.38*	10,697.44
		Acct Closed	
<u>Expenses: Name</u>			
R. Cheesman	Expenses for Christmas Event	19.50	
Royal British Legion	Wreath & Donation	50.00	
CPRE	AGM (R. Wingett)	10.00	
DCA	Hall Hire (Finance Meeting)	19.29	
Unity Bank	Service Charge	6.00	
Staffing Costs - Nov	Payroll and Expenses	<u>2,676.82</u>	
Total expenditure:		2,781.61	
Receipts:			
KCC Grant - Cllr Gary Cooke		750.00	
Nat West - Closure of Current Account		*34,656.49	
		<u>(-£170.89)</u>	
Balance c/f		47,409.05	10,697.44

- 11.1 Approve Statement of Account:** (Report previously circulated to Cllrs for consideration). Acceptance of the report detailed above was proposed by Cllr Fincham, seconded by Cllr Butler & unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.** Clerk to investigate the discrepancy of £170.89 between the minutes and the bank statement. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 11.2 Investment Account Update:** It was proposed, seconded & **RESOLVED** that a Unity Saving Account is opened, with a transfer of £30k from the current account. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 11.3 Consider Donation Requests.** In accordance with LGA S137 the following donations were proposed, seconded and unanimously **RESOLVED:**
Maidstone Churches Winter Shelter: A donation of £100.
Heart of Kent Hospice: A donation of £100.
Willow Rise Pre-School: A donation of £50.
- 11.4 Community Warden Service:** Bearsted PC Request to join forces to pay for & keep the scheme. Clerk to request further information and report back accordingly. **ACTION: Clerk**
 Matthew Scott to be asked if it would be possible for Special Constables to combine Community Warden activities within their role? **ACTION: Clerk**

- 11.5 2025/26 Budget:** Consider the Finance Committee Draft Proposal. Cllr Butler explained that in order to balance the budget for the forthcoming year, it will be necessary to increase the precept by £1,000 – an increase of 2.6% - to £40,000. Following consideration, the increase was proposed, seconded and duly **RESOLVED**.
- 11.6 Other Matters to Report:** No further matters.
- 12 RESIGNATION OF LITTER PICKER/REVIEW OF THE ROLE:** The item was deferred to the end of the meeting for discussion in closed session.
- 13 OPEN SPACES: Interpretation Board Update:** Cllr Wingett volunteered to take photos of the King's Orchard when the weather improves, in the hope that it can be ready for the Spring.
ACTION: Cllr Wingett
- 14 CHRISTMAS EVENT 07.12.24.** Confirmation of Arrangements: Boxley Hand Bells will perform, followed with a 'have a go' session. Greenfields Choir will include festive songs. The face painter and balloon modeller will be available throughout the event.
- Consider Storage of Lights for 2025/26. Councillors were reminded that alternative arrangements have not been agreed. Arrangements to be reviewed during 2025.
- 15 CONSIDER POLICIES FOR ADOPTION/REVIEW: Grievance Policy Adoption.** Adoption of the policy was proposed, seconded & **RESOLVED**.
Review – Complaints Policy/Standing Orders/Financial Regulations – Items deferred.
- 16 COMMUNITY CPR TRAINING EVENT UPDATE:** Cllr Fincham confirmed that HM Prison Maidstone has kindly agreed to loan the necessary equipment to the PC. Eight people will be invited to take part in the training. Councillor Fincham to advise dates/times for the training.
ACTION: Cllr Fincham
- 17 CONSIDER EVENTS FOR 2025: Family Fun Day –** Following consideration of various dates, it was agreed that all will consider activities/dates for the event and a decision made at January's meeting. **/Beating the Bounds –** No action required.**/Spring Clean –** Deferred to January's meeting.
- 18 REVIEW OF OPEN SPACES & SOCIAL COMMITTEES:** Cllr Wingett suggested that both committees return to full council and operate under the one umbrella. Further discussion to take place during the new year.
- 19 CLERK'S REPORT:** Receive reports & updates on previous actions: No additional reports/actions.
- 20 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:**
Advanced Planning Part 2 – Attended by Cllr Wingett.

KALC AGM – Attended by Cllr Wingett. The Leader of Medway Council provided a brief regarding proposals for councils in 2025. This included disbanding existing Borough Councils/KCC and replacing them with a ‘Super Council’ and an elected ‘Metro Mayor’.

Kent Highways Seminar – Cllr Cheesman provided a report from the seminar.

Clerks Conference – Attended by the Clerk on 12/11/24 (slides circulated to all).

CPRE AGM – Cllr Wingett attended and found the meeting very interesting.

Bearsted CAN – Cllr Wingett attended an informal meeting & hopes that DPC might be able to work with the group. Representatives from RSPB were present at the meeting and have agreed to meet with DPC in the future to offer advice and guidance.

- 21 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:** Various correspondence circulated by email - no questions raised.
- 22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** 20 January or 11 February 2025 were originally suggested. However, the hall was not available and it was subsequently agreed that the next meeting will be held at 8 pm on **Wednesday 22 January 2025**.
- 23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:** Review of Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Community Warden, Community Resilience Plan – Cllr Wingett has drafted a copy which will be circulated. Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered.

The following item was held in closed session.

- 12 RESIGNATION OF LITTER PICKER/REVIEW OF THE ROLE:** Mr Noyce regrets that he will have to resign from his role for personal reasons. It was mutually agreed that his employment will cease on 31 December '24.

Clerk to request Mr Noyce to attend the next PC meeting to allow councillors to formally thank him for his long & dependable service.

It was agreed to advertise the vacancy on the parish website and notice boards. In the meantime, existing and previous councillors + various volunteers agreed to monitor litter/carry out litter picking in the parish.

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm

Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 22 January 2025 at 8 pm.