

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 8.00 PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Present: Cllrs R. Cheesman - Chairman; J Tournay; J Cottis; R. Wingett; B Cottis; G. Newton; K Alden-Morris; P Fincham; Mrs T. Irving – Clerk/RFO; 2 Members of the Public

Prior to commencing the meeting, Councillor Roz Cheesman advised where the emergency exits can be found.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Butler– personal commitment, Cllr Cooke, PC James Phillips.
The apologies for absence were noted and accepted.

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: No declarations received.

4 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 05.12.23:
The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Cheesman.
(For information, it was noted that Councillor Butler was, in fact, present at the above meeting but had been omitted from the attendance list.)

5 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: No questions were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

6 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:

6.1 County Councillor – Not available.

6.2 Borough Councillor: Cllr Newton reported that there had been an issue with a false bottom being fitted to a dog bin, giving the illusion that it was full.

6.3 DCA Representative – Not available.

7. CRIME REPORT: No new reports.
PC Mitch Hunt was wished well in his move to the Rural Task Force.
Unfortunately, PC Phillips is not available to attend this evening's meeting due to his shift pattern.

8 PLANNING:
New Applications:
23/505211 - 69 Longham Copse
Erection of a first-floor side extension
DPC has no objections

Maidstone Borough Council - Local Plan Review. No comments required/not applicable to Downswood.

Applications Awaiting a Decision.

23/504382/TPOA The Glebe, Otham.

23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove

For information purposes, it was noted that a PROW application for The Glebe has been submitted to KCC by Otham Parish Council.

9 ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT FOR THE RIVER LEN UPDATE:

Cllr Wingett attended a meeting with Helen Whately MP, where it became apparent that there is a great deal of enthusiasm for environment projects.

Helen confirmed that she will be happy to support the River Len project.

Clerk to chase MBC for a meeting.

ACTION: Clerk

10 FINANCE:

10.1 Approve Statement of Account:

Downswood Parish Council

Monthly Financial Statement - February 2024

Opening Balance

	£
Balance of Current Account:	39,061.81
Balance of Investment	£
Account:	10,615.31

Less cheques sent:	Details	Amount £
Royal British Legion	Donation - Wreath	50.00
Mrs K Lander	Donation - Mum Hub Kent	100.00
Mazars	External Audit	252.00
Ms L Bass	The Dulcetts (Deposit)	50.00
DCA	Hall Hire	357.21
Staffing Costs (December)	Payroll & Expenses	2,743.58
KALC	Online Training (R. Wingett/Clerk)	88.80
EDF	Electricity - Christmas Lighting	190.73
Staffing Costs (January)	Payroll & Expenses	2,128.52
	Total:	£5,960.84

Cheques Rec'd:

HMRC	VAT Refund	£1,767.03
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Closing Balances:

	£
Balance of Current Account:	34,868.00
Balance of Investment	£
Account:	10,615.31

Acceptance of the previously circulated account was proposed by Cllr J. Cottis, seconded by Cllr P. Fincham and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**

10.2 Review of Financial Regulations: No amendments are required.

10.3 Review of Bank Accounts/Banking Arrangements. Following discussion of various bank current accounts and charges, it was agreed to delay a decision until the March meeting when investment account information can be shared by Cllr Butler.

10.4 Consider a Donation Policy: Two sample policies were discussed. Clerk to forward policies to all for consideration.

10.5 Other Matters to Report: None.

11 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES:

Cllr Cheesman attended an inaugural meeting of the Co-ordinated Parishes Traffic Group on 02.02.24 (notes circulated by Cllr Cheesman).

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE:

The draft plan was discussed and approved. Summary as follows:

Highways has provided the results from the speed surveys that were carried out on 25 November '23 over a period of 7 days.

'In terms of what the Police would consider a speeding issue, they would look at any roads where average speeds are above the enforcement limit, which in this case would be 35mph. This is not the case here and the 85th percentile speeds (the speeds at which 85% of drivers are travelling at or below) are also at or below the enforcement limit at each of the four sites.

Bollards on grass verge, opposite The Spires Shops, will not be required due to the high cost involved. Planting scheme to be considered as an alternative.

Additional parking sign for both sides of the road to be considered (indicating parking at rear of The Spires Shops). Highways may have available funding for this.

Restricted visibility concerns when exiting from Parsonage Place onto Church Road. Clerk to report via KCC online reporting service.

Kissing gate to Public Right of Way KM88 has now been completed & debris has been removed from the site.

Parking problems were discussed.

Corner protection for the junctions of Gorham/Murrain Drive and Grampian Way to be investigated further as this may help with visibility/parking issues. In addition, the Fire Service could be contacted to ask them to assess if the on-street parking would pose a problem?

Issues with the Orchard Spot roundabout to be continued to be monitored.

Consideration to be given how it can be made safer for pedestrians when crossing at the Church Road/Deringwood Drive junction?

12 GARDEN COMPETITION: It was proposed, seconded that prizes for 2024 will be: 1st x £50 x 2nd x £30 & 3rd x £20 **RESOLVED.**

Cllr Cheesman to request Nottcutts to judge during June/July. **ACTION: Cllr Cheesman**

13 OLYMPICNIC: To be held between noon and 3 pm on Saturday, 13 July '24.

Quotations to be sought for: bouncy castles x 2, portable toilets x 2 (delivered and collected on the day of the event), white lining and first aiders. Ice cream van to be requested.

Medals to be ordered closer to the time.

Flyer/newsletter will be prepared and delivered approx. 2 weeks prior to the event i.e. last weekend of June.

14 TREE UPDATE: Fruit Trees. The Community Orchard to mark the King's coronation has now been planted. Cllr Alden-Morris to source a company to supply a commemorative plaque.

ACTION: K A-M

Planting by Highways. KCC confirmed that the trees they have planted will be watered by their contractor for the first two years but additional help from residents is welcome, particularly during dry spells. Clerk to inquire with Highways about possibility of adoption of trees by residents.

ACTION: Clerk

Fir tree request. Highways has advised: *'The nursery only has 1m tall fir trees at present, I will be visiting there in the summer to see if they then have anything a bit more impressive with a view to planting in the next season.'*

The site that has been suggested is close to the wild flower bed, by the Downswood stone.

15 CCTV: Information Awaited from DCA/Agree Method of Removal:

A box containing the hard drive, power leads and connecting cables was received today from the DCA. The DCA also confirmed today that the wiring will need to be removed from the centre grounds at a mutually convenient time (daily children's groups to be taken into consideration).

ACTION: Clerk

16 CHRISTMAS CAROLS & LIGHTS 07.12.24. Agree Format:

Clerk to check availability with Maidstone Rock Choir.

Cllr Cheesman to make enquiries with a local school(s).

Sub-committee meeting to be held at 7 pm on 21 February to provide ideas for lighting/entertainment.

17 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS: No amendments required.

18 COMMEMORATION OF D-DAY (6 JUNE 1944) 80TH ANNIVERSARY: Tommies to be displayed – perhaps in a new location/positioned together? Union flag to considered.

19 DCA FETE – 1 JUNE 2024. Due to lack of available volunteers, the PC will be unable to man a stall. Consideration to be given as to how the PC can support the event?

20 CLERK'S REPORT: Receive reports & updates on previous actions. No additional items to report.

21 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- Meeting with Crime Commissioner/Helen Whately MP 08.12.23. Attended by Cllrs Cheesman and Wingett on 08.12.23.
- Communicating with the Community Pts 1 & 2. Slides shared with all.
- KALC Meeting 29.01.24 – Attended by Cllr Butler (draft mins circulated).
- Environmental Improvements & Opportunities 02.02.24 - Attended by Cllr Wingett.
- Co-ordinated Parishes Traffic Group (CPTG) 02.02.24 - Attended by Cllr Cheesman.

22 AGREE DATES: The following dates were **RESOLVED**

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – Tuesday, 2 April at 7.30 pm

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL – Tuesday, 7 May at 7.45 pm

23 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:

- Email from Resident: Social Media.
Following discussion, it was agreed that the query does not apply.
The Council expresses a commitment to addressing misinformation where appropriate, but we will only do so on the Downswood Parish Council Facebook page.

24 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for future agendas.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.30 pm

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on **Tuesday, 5 March, 2024.**