

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY, 2023 AT 8.00 PM  
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Present:** Cllrs G Newton - Chairman (part); R Cheesman; A-M Butler; K Alden- Morris; J Cottis; B. Cottis; J Tournay; P Fincham; Cllr G Cooke (KCC); Mrs T. Irving – Clerk/RFO.

Cllr Roz Cheesman chaired the meeting to Item 7, until Cllr Newton was available to chair.

- 1. APOLOGIES:** Cllr Alex Pallant – work commitment.  
The above reason for absence was noted and accepted.
- 2. NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO RECORD ANY ITEMS:** The Clerk for the purpose of minuting. Councillor Cooke reserved the right to make a recording.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** Cllr Newton Item 8.6 - a member of the Maidstone Rock Choir.
- 4. ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No members of the public were present.
- 5. APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FINANCE MEETING 16.11.22 & FULL COUNCIL 14.12.22 :** The minutes of both meetings were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Newton.

- 6. CRIME REPORT:** Crime reports issued on e-watch.co.uk.

**‘Pennine Way.** Between 12.00 on Monday 26 December and 10.00 on Wednesday 28 December. Somebody slashed the tyres of a Toyota Aygo parking in the road.’

**‘Cotswold Gardens.** Between Wednesday 4 January and Thursday 5 January. Somebody slashed the tyres of a Ford Focus parked in the road.’

In addition to the above, at least 3 further crime incidents are known to have been reported (but do not appear): car tyres slashed x 2 and a garage was broken into.

- 7. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**

**7.1 COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT:**

- 100 Trees have been planted in schools as part of a project to plant 1.5 million trees. Free trees for the community are available upon application to Cllr Cooke
- A Community Asset Review is currently being carried out. This is to ensure the best use of assets/buildings.
- A meeting is taking place tomorrow at which KCC will be expressing their regret following the earthquake and loss of life in Turkey & Syria.  
A balance budget for 2023/24 will be agreed with a 5% increase.

- The Members' grants are being slashed: instead of £10,000/year, this will now be £300/month.

Cllr Cooke is trying to introduce a 'Youth Decides' event which will take place after the May elections. There will be no 'You Decide' as there is not sufficient funding.

- School parking issues are being tackled at Shepway and Parkwood with £1,000 being given to both schools.
- A defibrillator and housing are being donated to Parkwood.

**7.2 BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**

- The most complaints that Councillor Newton is receiving from residents are concerning potholes. These need to be reported to KCC as they are not an MBC issue.
  - Areas have been marked out at The Beams for the cycle route (as per the agreement at last month's Borough Council meeting).
  - Cllr Newton is the final stages of Flood Warden training.

**7.3 REPORT FROM DCA REPRESENTATIVE:**

Cllr Tournay attended the DCA Committee meeting and reported as follows:  
A party to mark the Coronation will be held on Sunday, 7 May. This will be a free event with a band & barbeque and a paid bar.

The annual Fete will be held on Saturday, 3 June.

**8 FINANCE:**

**8.1. Approve Statement of Account**

**Items for payment:**

Staffing Costs (Dec)	Payroll & Expenses	2,200.37
Staffing Costs (Jan)	“ “	2,140.41
Downswood Comm Centre	Hall Hire	292.50
EDF Energy	Christmas Lighting	629.66
R. Cheesman	Expenses (Plants – Open Spaces)	41.86

**Cheques received: Nil**

NS & I Investment Acct	Interest	9.87
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**Balance of Current Account: £24,464.58 credit, after all cheques sent**

**Balance of Investment Account: £10,615.31 credit**

Acceptance of the previously circulated financial report was proposed by Cllr Newton, seconded by Cllr Cheesman and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

**8.2. Donation Request: Folly Wildlife:** Following discussion, a donation of £50 was **RESOLVED** in accordance with LGA S137.

**8.3 Review of Fixed Asset Register:** It was **RESOLVED** to remove the Clerk's computer from the register as the shared value for DPC is now below £500. The value of Christmas motifs to be increased from '£9,507' to '£9,747' (to include 3 x £80 each garland lights, purchased in December '22).

**8.4 Review of Financial Regulations:** In accordance with the recommendation of the Internal Auditor re. Item **11.1.h**. It was **RESOLVED** to amend "...of less than

£25,000...” to read “.....of more than £10,000.....’ and ‘Where the value is below £3,000 and above £500....’ to become ‘Where the value is below £10,000 and above £1,000....’

**8.5 SLCC Membership 2023:** A 2/3 payment (£148) towards the Clerk’s membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks was **RESOLVED**.

**8.6 Other Matters to Report:** The leader of the Rock Choir has been in contact to confirm the previously agreed donation of £50 towards expenses should be made payable to her.

**9 PLANNING: New Applications and Existing applications Update:**

**New Applications**

**22/505941/FULL 8 Frithwood Close**

Erection of 2 storey side extension.

No objection

**Awaiting Decision**

22/505482/FULL - 29 Horton Downs

**Applications Granted**

**21/503538/SUB Land West of Church Rd, Otham.**

Submission of Details to Discharge Conditions 9 (Ramp to Public Right of Way KM86), 11 (Pedestrian/Cycle Route Details), 35 (Pedestrian/Cycle Link to South), and 38 (Upgrade Works to PROW KM86), subject to the Appeal Decision of Application 19/506182/FULL

**10 GOVERNANCE & POLICY REVIEW:** Cllr Butler sought confirmation for the Litter Picker’s contract that the holiday year runs from April to March. **Confirmed**

**ACTION: Cllr Butler**

**11 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES/HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN:** The date for the traffic surveys has been changed to avoid the recently announced road closures.

**12 CLERK’S REPORT: To receive reports & updates on previous actions:**

- Grass verge by Reinden Grove has been damaged by contractor. This has been reported to KCC for reinstatement.
- Swing at Mallard’s Way Play Area was reported as damaged and has since been removed for repair/replacement.
- The Medical Centre alarm has been triggered twice recently.
- Clerk is to receive training to carry out Playground Inspections for Otham PC.
- The DCA indicated that they may be able to help with the request for work towards the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. However, when the Clerk tried to make contact with the youths to request permission to pass their details to the centre, no response was received.

**13 OPEN SPACES/DOWNSWOOD DIGGERS UPDATE:**

- A lot of old, ivy clad trees have fallen by the river in pedestrianised Old Spot Lane and require removing. In addition, brambles are overgrown and chocking everything, making the area look very unkempt.

- Downswood Diggers to meet at The Triangle on Old Spot Lane at 9.30 am on Saturday, 11 February to plant native species, for example; snowdrops, primroses, pulmonaria, winter aconites, star of Bethlehem. Various councillors offered to dig up plants from their gardens. In addition, approximately £50 to be released from the Open Spaces budget. **RESOLVED**

**14 CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III:** Various ideas were discussed to mark the Coronation: a village sign, fruit trees to be planted behind the hollies, a bug hotel with plaque. All requested to give the matter some thought and submit details of the proposals and bring to the next meeting on 7 March. **ACTION: ALL**

**15 UPDATE FROM FLOOD WARDEN/EMERGENCY PLAN:** Cllr Newton is receiving ongoing training. An Emergency Plan will be produced in due course. **ACTION: Cllr Newton**

**16 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS:** It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to amend (as per the recommendation of the Internal Auditor). **RESOLVED**

Paragraph 18.a.v.

The existing paragraph: 'whenever possible, three quotations should be sought for orders with an estimated value above £1,000' to be amended to: 'when a contract in excess of £10,000 is to be negotiated, formal tender action should be taken in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and whenever possible, three quotations should be sought for orders with an estimated value above £1,000.'

Paragraph 18c. Record the value as £25,000, not £1,000.

**17 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:**

- **KALC 30.01.23** was attended by Cllr Butler who advised there is 'a small pot of money available for something artistic'.
- Cllr Newton and the Clerk attended a meeting with an MBC officer at **Foxden Drive Play Area** to discuss the **ramp proposal**.
- **Bellway Homes 18.02.23** was attended by Cllr Newton and the Clerk (notes circulated & to be made available on the website).
- It was noted that the next **Ward Cluster meeting** will be held on **14.03.23** between 12-1 pm.

**18 CAROLS & LIGHTS 2023. Date of ceremony:** Saturday, 2 December at 4 pm was agreed. **Consider lighting installation quotation:** Whilst the quotation from Sparkx has increased by £400 for 2023 @ £2,750, this is still significantly cheaper than the previous, alternative quotations. In addition, the company performed very well for 2022 and produced a good display. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to accept the quotation from Sparkx **RESOLVED. Ideas:** Various entertainment was suggested, resulting in Maidstone Rock Choir to be invited to perform. Cllr Cottis to establish if 2022's Santa will be available. All other suggestions welcome.

**ACTION: Cllr Cottis**

**19 FOXDEN DRIVE HEDGE:** Completely removing the hedge was discussed, resulting in the Clerk being requested to write to residents to advise that this will be a consideration during 2024 and ask for their views.

The quotation from Steven Waring @ £540 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed **RESOLVED**.

**ORCHARD SPOT ROUNDABOUT QUOTATION:** Steven Waring has advised an increase of £2.10 per visit (based on approx. 12 visits per year) @ £37.65 per visit). Acceptance of the quotation was proposed, seconded and unanimously **RESOLVED**.

**20 CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE – Confirm agreement & sign pledge:** As agreed at December’s meeting, the Clerk signed up for the pledge on the Council’s behalf. The certificate was duly signed and dated by the Chairman.

**21 UPDATE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL LITTER BIN REQUEST:** Cllr Newton’s request for additional/replacement bins was refused by the Borough as they are trying to train people to take their litter home.

**22 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING/ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:** It was **RESOLVED** that the APM will be held at 7.45 pm on Tuesday, 4 April. It was further **RESOLVED** that the monthly meeting of the council is postponed by one week to allow the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council to be held on the same day: Tuesday, 9 May. The AMPC will be held at 7.45 pm, followed by the monthly meeting at 8.00 pm.

**23 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:**

- Cllr Alden-Morris advised that she has been contacted to ask if a dance troupe could perform at the Olympic? Cllr Alden-Morris to request more information and report back. **ACTION: Cllr Alden-Morris**
- A renewed request has been received (from the same resident) asking for draft minutes to be published on the website (if only during the Christmas and Summer period). Following due consideration, it was agreed that draft minutes will not be published. Clerk to reconfirm that the best way to keep up to date with proceedings is to attend the meeting(s). **ACTION: Clerk**

**24 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: DCA Fete – 2 June 2023, Garden Competition (judge).**

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 10.08 pm.

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on **Tuesday, 7 March 2023**.