

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

Present: Cllrs R. Cheesman - Chairman; K Alden- Morris; J Tournay; J Cottis; R. Wingett; B Cottis; G Newton, Mrs T. Irving – Clerk/RFO; 16 Members of the Public

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Roz Cheesman.

Prior to the meeting commencing - in accordance with fire safety procedures, in the event of a fire - Councillor Cheesman made everyone aware of the nearest fire exit.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor Anne-Marie Butler – working late, Cllr Gary Cooke (KCC), Mr Gary Butler.
- 2 NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:** A resident confirmed their intention to record & the Clerk will record 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 03.10.23:**
The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Cheesman.
- 5 COUNCILLOR VACANCY:** Mr Gary Butler has expressed an interest in the vacancy. However, he is unable to attend this evening’s meeting and sent his apologies. It was agreed to put a decision ‘on hold’ until Mr Butler is available to attend a meeting.
- 6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** Question were raised in respect of ‘yellow boxes’ and the position of the impending traffic lights on Willington Street. A drawing was subsequently obtained and shared on DPC's website & Facebook page, as this details the preliminary layout of the road.

The meeting was reconvened.
- 7 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
 - 7.1 County Councillor** – Not available.
 - 7.2 Borough Councillor** – Nothing to report.
 - 7.3 DCA Representative** – Nothing to report.
- 8 CRIME REPORT:**
The following report was initially thought to be a duplication but, in fact, it is a new crime.

Grampian Way. On Tuesday 24th of October, somebody stole 4 back-up batteries from a road side cabinet.

9 PLANNING:

New Applications – No new applications.

Applications Awaiting a Decision.

23/504382/TPOA The Glebe, Otham.

DPC has requested refusal of this application.

Information to get access routes into the Glebe reinstated as a Public Right of Way was read out to the meeting (also available online and a hard copy is available, on request).

23/504410/Full – 25 Monkdown

DPC has no objection to this application.

23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove

DPC - no comment.

Application Permitted

23/503383TPO – 13 Kings Acre

23/503675 – 34 Pennine Way

23/503644/FULL - 21 Cheviot Gardens

Local Plan Review. Maidstone Borough Council Consultation.

No comment required – amendments not applicable to Downswood.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT FOR THE RIVER LEN UPDATE:

Maidstone Borough Council has advised as follows:

'The formally designated 'Local Nature Reserve' (LNR) is a status in law defining the purpose of the land and its value for nature, there is no expectation for any significant change of management rather it is a statement of long term intent and status/recognition in the community. Maintenance will continue with MBC to a management plan lodged with Natural England, and if opportunities for community involvement arise we would love to explore those with local people and organisations. Obviously there are certain caveats regarding what work is undertaken ie . it must be in furtherance of nature and community access objectives.

From time-to-time grant funds become available but nothing is directed solely at Local Nature Reserves, but this status does help focus positive attention of grant bodies.

The small triangle was not included in the 'LNR' as it did not meet the expectations as stated by Natural England – this allows it to be utilised for your planting scheme without any challenge/query from MBC.'

Clerk to request a meeting with MBC to discuss the LNR in more detail.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Wingett to head up discussions on the project.

ACTION: Cllr Wingett

11 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY: Parish Representative for Sunday 12 November '23.

Cllr John Cottis to present the wreath at the Otham War Memorial.

A formal note of thanks to Mr David Marchant was recorded in recognition of the many years that he represented RBL & collected for the Poppy Appeal.

12 FINANCE:

12.1 Approve Statement of Account:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Opening Balance | £ |
| Balance of Current Account: | 49,378.88 |
| Balance of Investment Account: | 10,615.31 |

| Less cheques sent: | Details | Amount £ |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Staffing Costs (October) | Payroll & Expenses | 2,387.90 |
| Sparkx | 4 x Garlands (Mins 05.09.23 Item 17) | 360.00 |
| ICO | Data Protection Fee Renewal | 40.00 |
| Scarbutts | Printing of Newsletter & Posters | 117.00 |
| KALC | KALC AGM | 6.00 |
| Cobtree Men's Shed | Produce BioTotem (funded by MBC grant) | 300.00 |
| Paul Waring | Maintenance of O/S Roundabout | 45.18 |
| | Total: | 3,256.08 |

Cheques Rec'd:

Nil

Closing Balances:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| | £ |
| Balance of Current Account: | 46,122.80 |
| Balance of Investment Account: | 10,615.31 |

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

12.2 Consider Donation Request for:

The Beams Charity. We Are Beams - a charity which supports disabled children and their families – is currently supporting 5 families in Downswood.

In accordance with LGA S137 A donation of £75 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

The Heart of Kent Hospice confirmed that 11 patients from Downswood have been cared for during the past 12 months.

In accordance with LGA S137 A donation of £100 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**

12.3 Insurance: Consider the inclusion of Cyber Attack Cover. It was agreed to put this on hold pending further investigation by Cllr Wingett and the Clerk.

ACTION: Cllr Wingett/Clerk

Due to the confidential nature of 12.4 and 12.5, it was agreed to move these items to the closed session at the end of the meeting.

12.6 Agree date for Finance Committee Meeting re 2024/25 Budget. Clerk to check availability of the lounge and report back. Meeting to be held prior to December's meeting as MBC will require details of the precept during January '24.

12.7 Internal Review: Councillor Tournay to carry out the internal review and report accordingly.

12.8 Other Matters to Report: There were no further matters to report.

13 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES/HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE:

HIP meeting to be held on 16 November.

Speed survey for Deringwood Drive, Church Road and Willington Street will be carried out towards the end of November. The results can then be analysed and appropriate action considered.

14 TREES UPDATE: Consider Fruit (Coronation) Tree Quotations/S106 Funded:

An order was placed due to low availability from the supplier. Trees are expected to be planted by Steven Waring during November.

15 CCTV REMOVAL: Approve Removal of Equipment Quotation: DCA to confirm their preferred method of removal; remove the equipment in its entirety and make good the walls, or remove the cameras and leave the cables in situ.

16 CHRISTMAS CAROLS AND LIGHTS CEREMONY: Consider purchase of additional garlands/Repair of motifs. Confirm arrangements for Saturday 2 December '23.

It was **RESOLVED** that 1 x motif will be repaired at a cost of £60 and garlands to be purchased, as required to replace motifs.

Social Committee will be meeting on 8 November to finalise arrangements.

Due to the extremely tight time constrictions, The Dulcettes have been booked at a cost of £320. Reverend Mark Pavey has been requested to lead carols towards the end of the event.

17 PARISH NEWSLETTER/CHRISTMAS FLYER UPDATE: This has been printed and will be available for delivery to all residents shortly.

The note which appears on the latest newsletter was referenced, in which residents are asked to let the Parish Council know if there is anything they would like to be considered for discussion.

18 CONSIDER REQUEST FOR A RESIDENTS' FORUM: This was requested at the PC meeting of 3 October. However, the meeting subsequently went ahead on 31 October. No further action required by DPC.

- 19 CLERK'S REPORT:** The lighting at Foxden Park is still awaiting costing by Bellway Homes. They are hoping to open the steps that lead to the Public Right of Way next week, but the ramp will remain closed until the electric HV connection is complete.
Clerk to enquire if temporary lighting can be installed. **ACTION: Clerk**

The question of motorbike restrictors* for the PROW has been raised with Bellway Homes previously. Clerk to check the response and advise.

*The advice from BH was subsequently confirmed as follows: *'The proposals have gone through quite a vigorous design review with the planners and interested parties when we were obtaining its approval, and was designed with wheelchair users and cyclists in mind. Unfortunately, if a motor cyclist chooses to ride up here there is not really a lot that can be done. If you put barriers up to prevent this, the cyclists and wheelchair users will also be compromised'*

- 20 TOTEM PROJECT UPDATE:** The totem has now been completed. Cllrs B & J Cottis and Clerk to view the project tomorrow. **ACTION: Cllrs B & J Cottis/Clerk**

21 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

- Cllr Cheesman attended the unveiling of John Leaf's bench at Mallards Park.
- The KALC Chairman's Conference was attended by Cllr Cheesman.

22 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:

- 80th Commemoration of D Day (6 June 1944). Possibility of purchasing a beacon and/or peace lamp to be discussed*

23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:

- * See 22 above.

In accordance with Schedule 12 of LGA 1972 and Standing Orders n vii: Members of the Public and Press to be excluded from the next item(s) due to their confidential nature.
The public session closed at 9.10 pm.

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

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on **Tuesday, 5 December 2023.**