

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2021 AT 8.00 PM  
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Present: Cllrs Newton, Cheesman, Butler (part); Alden-Morris, Everett, Brooks, Fincham, Mrs T. Irving – Parish Clerk, 3 members of the public.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Butler for part attendance.
2. **NOTIFICATION OF WHETHER ANYONE WISHES TO RECORD ANY ITEMS:** None received.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** None declared.
4. **ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** None received.

The meeting was reconvened.

5. **COUNCILLOR VACANCY/CO-OPTION:** The council is sorry to note the resignation of Rajaratnam Rajalingam due to ill health. MBC has been informed of the second vacancy.
6. **APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF MEETING 2 NOVEMBER 2021:** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Newton.

The following item was brought forward to allow Cllr Butler to contribute prior to leaving the meeting.

- 11 iii) **Report from Finance Committee:** The draft minutes of the meeting held on 30.11.21 were previously circulated to members for consideration.  
**Decision re 2022/2023 Budget Proposals & Precept:** The recommendation of the Finance Committee to:
  - uplift the Precept from £34,000 to £35,020 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**
  - increase litter picking contributions by 5% was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**
  - purchase 6 x string lights @ £50 each to facilitate the illumination of 6 columns that are unable to hold motifs was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED**
7. **CRIME REPORT:** No new crimes in the parish have been reported on e-watch.com
8. **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Not available.
9. **BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**
  - Strong issues are being experienced with youths in Brenchley Gardens at night. MBC has passed a motion that the gardens will close at night and have gates at the entrance/exit. New CCCTV and fencing will be installed.

- A motion to move from elections by thirds to a scheme of whole-council elections will be discussed tomorrow

This would mean that the elections under whole-council elections will first take place in 2024 at the timing of the ordinary elections;

Whole-council elections means that all wards of the Borough, and all Councillor vacancies will be up for election at the same time each with a term of 4 years.

- Members were heavily criticised by officers for ‘lack of knowledge’ regarding the Church Road development. The report put forward by officers was unanimously rejected and will now go to the Policies and Resources Committee in January.

**10. REPORT FROM DCA REPRESENTATIVE:** No items to report.

**11. FINANCE:**

**i. Items for Payment**

Aylesford Electrical	Christmas Lighting Installation	2,406.12
K. Alden-Morris	Halloween Trail Expenses	28.00
Playfix	Table Tennis Installation	816.00
A-M Butler	Expenses - Christmas Event	53.32
DCA	Hire of Lounge 30.11.21 (Finance Committee Meeting)	16.71
KCC	Load Testing	1,849.00
J. Noyce	Litter Picker’s Salary (Nov)	347.49
KCC Re Kent Pension Fund	Clerk’s Pension (Employer/Employee Conts)	349.25
T. Irving	Clerk’s Salary/Expenses (Nov)	973.71

**Cheques Received:**

MBC	PSS Grant	119.00
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**Balance of Current Account: £29,150.84 credit, after all cheques sent**

**Balance of Investment Account: £10,604.38 credit**

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

**ii. Banking Procedures: Electronic Banking Update.** Not available.

**iv Donation Requests: Bearsted & Downswood Angels.** Whilst the whole concept of the Angels is to be applauded, a donation was not agreed due to concerns that the group is not a registered charity. However, councillors have privately supported the organisation and will continue to do so.

**Marie Curie:** A donation of £50 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed in accordance with LGA S137. **RESOLVED.**

**v Foxden Drive Hedge:** See Item 17 below.

**vi Other Matters to Report:**

- Unfortunately, Mr Noyce has been taken unwell and is currently unable to work. Clerk to investigate/make appropriate payment of SSP during his absence. Due to the nature of his illness, a letter will be required from Mr

Noyce's doctor to confirm that he is fit to work before returning to his duties. **ACTION: Clerk**

- Cllr Alden-Morris has completed the half yearly audit with no issues found.

**12 PLANNING: New Applications and Existing Applications Update:**

Following Cllr Everett's interest in joining the planning committee, it was agreed that he will replace Rajaratnam Rajalingam.

**21/506285/FULL - 12 Longham Copse**

PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing garden building and erection of a single storey side extension.

Comments required prior to 20 December.

**Awaiting decision by MBC**

21/503538/SUB Land West of Church Road

21/503585 Land West of Church Road

21/505109 – 4 Longham Copse

21/505728 – 15 Ellenswood Close

21/505762 – 12 Kings Acre

21/504454 – 80 Murrain Drive

- 13 CHRISTMAS CAROLS & LIGHTS CEREMONY REVIEW:** It was agreed that this year's ceremony was one of the best, if not the best, ceremony held. Attendance was very good and Maidstone Rock Choir, Cllr Gordon Newton on his melodeon, Father Christmas & his elf all helped to make it a special event.

The allocated columns are all successfully illuminated.

A date of 3 December for next year's ceremony was proposed, with a request that Maidstone Rock Choir is asked to perform again. A donation request to be included on January's agenda. **ACTION: Clerk**

- 14 QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE (2022):** Cllr Newton to provide a sketch of the plinth in the New Year. **ACTION: GN**

- 15 RECYCLING PROPOSAL:** The recycling proposal that was submitted by Maidstone Lions Club was discussed. Unfortunately, in the absence of a volunteer to head up the project, it will not possible to participate.

- 16 BEE CORRIDORS:** MVCP has confirmed that they hope to have a quote available prior to Christmas for discussion at DPC's next meeting.

- 17 FOXDEN DRIVE HEDGE:** A resident whose garden backs onto the hedge has been in contact to say that the hedge is causing difficulties and he would like the length spanning his property - and a small part of his neighbours - reduced in height by approx 2'ft (with a step down in height).

A quotation has been obtained but due to the additional work that's required and the expense, the Clerk was requested to obtain two further quotations as a comparison.

**ACTION: Clerk**

- 18 REMEMBRANCE DAY UPDATE:** Cllr Alden-Morris reported that it was a lovely service in the Church and there was a good turnout at the War Memorial.

Cllr Everett confirmed that the Tommies are now in storage.

- 19 CCTV Review:** Cllr Everett has received a suggested password and login which he will try tomorrow.

**ACTION: JE**

- 20 CONSIDER PURCHASE OF DPC A-BOARD:** It was **RESOLVED** that a 6' x 2' banner be purchased from the Banner Warehouse (in the region of £30). Clerk to enquire if it is possible to have a white board type panel on the banner?  
Wording to state: 'Parish Council meeting next Tuesday at 8 pm'.

**ACTION: Clerk**

- 21 URGENT CORRESPONDENCE:** Various correspondence circulated by email for comment.

- Concerns have been received regarding the well-being of lone gentleman who has been spotted standing in the middle of Deringwood Drive on several occasions, appearing rather bewildered.  
Support has been requested from the police who have confirmed that he has been identified and they are looking into what support can be given, or what medical help may be needed. If he is seen to be walking in the middle of the road at any point people are requested to 'call it in'.  
Cllr Newton has also requested help from MBC's inclusion officer.  
Concerns were also expressed regarding the trolling of this individual on social media. It was agreed that his welfare is best left to the professionals to deal with but cllrs will try to engage with him, whenever possible.
- Invitation to attend a meeting with Kent Police on 11 November to discuss the issue of violence against women and girls. This was attended by Cllrs Newton and Alden-Morris who reported that it was a very positive meeting.  
An initiative is in place where any woman or girl who is approached by a police officer and feels at risk has the right to request that officer to radio the control room and obtain confirmation that they are presently on duty and where they are supposed to be.

- 22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING/NECESSITY TO HOLD JANUARY 2022 MEETING:** Following discussion, it was agreed that the council will next meet on Tuesday, 4 January 2022.

**23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:** Foxden Drive Jubilee Bench/Youth Shelter, Olympicnic 2022, Website, Maidstone Rock Choir Donation.

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 10.05 pm.

**The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8 pm on Tuesday, 4 January 2022**