

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2025 AT 8.00 PM
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Present: Cllrs R. Wingett - Chairman; R Cheesman; A-M Butler; J Tournay; P Fincham; N Clifford; G Newton; Mrs T Irving – Clerk/RFO; MB Cllrs Val Springett & Ciaran Oliver, 9 members of the public, Mr Duncan Edwards – Representing Bearsted CAN

Cllr Wingett gave a fire safety address.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** 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 Tournay declared a friendship with Mr John Cottis (candidate for co-option – Item 6).
- 4. RECORD THANKS TO FORMER LITTER PICKER, JIM NOYCE:** The Parish Council extends its heartfelt thanks to Mr Jim Noyce for his dedicated service as a litter picker over the past 22 years. As a gesture of gratitude from the parish, he was presented with a small gift.
- 5. APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2024:** Following an amendment to include Councillor Butler as in attendance, the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Wingett.
- 6. PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:** Cllr Fincham withdrew from all discussions, due to a personal relationship with one of the applicants.

All three applicants are ideally suited to fill the vacancy. However, following interviews with each candidate, it was agreed to co-opt Mr John Cottis, due to his previous experience and continuous work as an open spaces volunteer.
A declaration of Acceptance of Office was completed by Cllr Cottis. Co-Option and DPI forms to be submitted to MBC.

The additional vacancy will be decided with a by-election.
A full council meeting will be held on Tuesday, 28 January at 7.30 pm to discuss the financial implications of a by-election to the 2025-26 budget.
- 7. PRESENTATION BY BEARSTED CAN:** Mr Duncan Edwards gave a very informative presentation about forthcoming events and the work they are involved with.
- 8. ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

9 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:

9.1 Kent County Councillor – See Appendix 1

9.2 Maidstone Borough Councillors. A report was submitted by Cllr Springett – see Appendix 2. In addition, it was noted that some of the bins had been missed from recent collections.

Councillor Oliver stated that he had been in contact with MPE about parking during football matches at Mallards. He reminded them about the lack of parking and suggested that car sharing is explored.

9.3 DCA Representative. Cllr Clifford confirmed that the DCA will no longer be contributing towards the cost of the parish litter picker, as they cannot afford the expense.

Tickets are available online for a drag show that will be held on 13 March.

10 CRIME REPORT: No new reports have been recorded on e-watch.co.

11 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:

23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove

24/504348/TPOA - 15 Bournewood Close

12 FINANCE:

**DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCIAL REPORT 22.01.25**

	UNITY BANK	UNITY	NS & I	NATWEST
	Crrt Acct	Inst Access	Saving Acct	Crrt Acct
Balance b/f	47,409.05	Nil	10,697.44	Closed

Transfer of funds	30,000	30,000		
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	UNITY BANK	UNITY	NS & I	NATWEST
<u>Expenses: Name</u>				

KALC	Training - Clerks Conf	42.00			
HOKH	Donation	100.00			
Willow Rise Pre School	Donation	50.00			
	Expenses - Xmas				
A.M. Butler	C'mony	80.05			
Boxley Hand Bells	Donation	50.00			
Emma McLeish	Face Painter	60.00			
Lord Geoffrey	Balloon Modeller	250.00			
Maid. Churches Shelter	Donation (Chq 300001)	100.00			
DCA	Hall Hire	428.50			
Staffing Costs - Dec	Payroll and Expenses	2,862.55			
Unity	Service Charge	6.00			
Total expenditure:		34,029.10			-
Receipts:					
Interest			57.70		
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Balance c/f		13,379.95	30,057.70	10,697.44	0.00

- 12.1 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 Cheesman & unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**
- 12.2 Account(s) Update:** The previously agreed transfer of £30k to the Instant Access Account was confirmed.
- 12.3 Consider Donation Request:** Friends of Greenfields (Re Greenfields School Choir). In accordance with LGA S137 a donation of £100 was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED:**
- 12.4 Community Warden Service:** Cllr Springett confirmed that KCC has provided Bearsted PC with an option to buy in the service, initially on 3 days per week, to be reviewed after 12 months.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's Office has confirmed that they are willing to explore the possibility of Special Constabulary or Community Policing Volunteers assisting the Downswood community.

Direct contact will be made with the Clerk to discuss the matter in more detail.

- 12.5 Consider Quotations for Foxden Drive Hedge/Orchard Spot Roundabout.** Following due consideration, quotations from Paul Waring in the sum of £595.20 for the hedge and £44.10 per time for the OS Roundabout were proposed, seconded **RESOLVED**. Clerk to advise that visits to the OS roundabout are limited to 4 times per year.
- 12.6 Annual Internal Audit.** Clerk to confirm with Auditing Solutions that records will be provided electronically. Once the 2024/25 accounts have been closed down, further documentation will be submitted to enable the audit to be concluded.
- 12.7 Other Matters to Report:** None
- 13. REVIEW CHRISTMAS EVENT 07/12/24:** Thanks were given to everyone that participated and helped to make the event such a success.
CONSIDER PLANS FOR 2025 EVENT: Date/Venue. Unfortunately, the DCA Bookings Clerk has advised that Community Centre is not be available on the requested dates. The Orchard (Spot) has been contacted to provide a quotation. The initial response is that they are willing to host the event, free of charge, on Sunday 30 November, if all refreshments are purchased through them. Further information awaited.
Lighting, Entertainment - To be considered by all, pending a decision on the above.
- 14 CONSIDER EVENTS FOR 2025: Family Fun Day – Delayed until next meeting/Spring Clean – Big Day Out –** The two to be combined. Awaiting further information.
- 15 COMMUNITY CPR TRAINING EVENT/DEFIBRILLATOR UPDATE:** Training to be held from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm on 12 February*
* The date was changed from 11 Feb as the hall was no longer available.
Paediatric pads to be ordered as the existing pads will expire next month.
- 16 REVIEW: STANDING ORDERS –** It was confirmed that no amendments are currently required. **/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS –** To be updated in accordance with NALCs 2024 Model Regs.
- 17 CONSIDER REMOVAL/REPLACEMENT OF DPC SALT BIN:** Clerk to Contact the DCA to request the existing bin can remain until the end of March, at which time it moved to the top of Reinden Grove/Deringwood Drive.
Cllr Butler to contact Cllr Cooke to ask if the salt spreaders can be donated to Madginford School.
- 18 REVIEW OF OPEN SPACES & SOCIAL COMMITTEES:** OSC Members agreed as: Cllrs Fincham, Cottis, Wingett (Cllr Tournay stated that Trevor Tournay will also be happy to volunteer).
SC Members: Cllrs Clifford, Tournay, Fincham, Cheesman & Butler.
- 19 CLERK’S REPORT:** Receive reports & updates on previous actions:

- Both MBC & KCC denied ownership/responsibility for the light set into the steps between Ravens Dane & Deringwood Drive. However, MBC has agreed to undertake repairs, as it could be considered a health and safety issue.
- The Mallards Gateway has been destroyed by a vehicle. Highways has retrieved the 'Downswood' sign for reuse. Clerk has made enquiries to ask if a replacement can be issued under the Highways Improvement Plan.

20 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:

Community Wardens Event attended by Cllr Wingett and the Clerk on 20 January.

21 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED: Various correspondence circulated by email - no questions raised.

22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: It was resolved that an additional meeting will be held on Wednesday 28 January, commencing at 7.30 pm. The subsequent meeting will be Tuesday 4 March commencing at 8.00 pm.

23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: 28.01.25: By- Election & Christmas Event.
04.03.25: 80th Anniversary of D-Day (Thurs 8 May)/VJ Day (15 August) Cllr Fincham to send information via email. Community Resilience Plan.
 Please contact the Clerk if you have additional items that you wish to be considered.

The following items were held in closed session.

24 CONSIDER LITTER PICKER APPLICATIONS/REVIEW OF ROLE:

Councillor Cottis did not take part in discussions.

Both applicants were considered to be very suitable and it was a difficult decision to make.

However, it was decided to offer the position to the candidate that lives in the parish.

It was agreed to extend the role to cover additional parts of the parish, with some flexibility on working hours/days.

A starting date of Saturday 1 March was agreed.

25 LEGAL CONSULTATION ADVICE: Advice has been sought from two firms of solicitors, which were recommended by KALC, both of whom are willing to offer their services for an agreed fee.

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm

Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 28 January 2025 at 7.30 pm.