

# STOKE PARISH COUNCIL



50 Pepys Way, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3LL

## MINUTES

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021

Face to Face Parish Council Meeting

Village Hall ~ 7.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr B. Stone (Chairman) Cllr J. Wallace ~ Vice-chair  
Cllr G. Blackman Cllr K. Copping  
Mrs J. Allen ~ Clerk

Members of the public: 0 (None)

### **PUBLIC SESSION ~ NOT PART OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

#### **Part A. Public Discussions**

None

#### **Part B. Public Discussions on any agenda items**

None.

Before the meeting commenced it was acknowledged that Cllr R. Bridge had left the Village Hall after signing the members register, owing to the fact that he refused to record his name on the COVID 19 track and trace form, contrary to current government guidelines for meetings indoors.

Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, opened the meeting at 7.00pm and thanked the Councillors present for attending.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Min 4064:21 An apology for absence was received from Cllr R. Morrad, who had confirmed that he did not feel comfortable in attending face to face meetings at the moment, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cllr J. Wallace spoke to propose that the members accepted Cllr R. Morrad's apology, where her proposal was seconded by Cllr K. Copping and unanimously agreed.

The Clerk was also asked to record Cllr R. Bridge's unauthorised absence

#### **2. To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

Min 4065:21 Cllr K. Copping spoke to declare his interest concerning the below planning application, where he confirmed that he was a direct neighbour.

- MC/21/1371 – The Chimes

#### **3. Disclosure of any other business of an urgent nature**

Min 4066:21 None.

#### **4. Ward Councillor report**

##### **a). A report by Ward Councillor Mick Pendergast.**

Min 4067:21 Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise that Ward Cllr Mick Pendergast had been unable to attend the meeting, owing to his pre-existing work commitments, and that she had no report to provide in his absence.

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## 5. Vacancies

### a). To discuss any applications received relating to the Parish Council's outstanding vacancy.

**Min 4068:21** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that she had not received any notification of an application concerning the outstanding vacancy for Cllr G. Barron's post.

Following the end of the statutory bye-election period with Medway Council, the Clerk was instructed to advertise the vacancy for a member to be elected by co-option instead, on all the village notice boards.

## 6. Minutes from previous Parish Council Meeting

### a). To receive and approve the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**Min 4069:21** The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting, held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021, as already circulated by the Clerk, were submitted.

It was proposed by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and seconded by the Cllr K. Copping, that they be approved as a correct record. This motion was unanimously agreed.

## 7. Information arising from the minutes not on the agenda

**Min 4070:21** None.

## 8. Planning

### a). Applications

**Min 4071:21** The members discussed the one (1) new planning application that had been received since the last meeting:

#### i. MC/21/106 MC/21/1371 – The Chimes

Cllr K. Copping spoke to inform the members that following his declaration of interest **Min 4065:21** that he was not going to participate in any of the discussions surrounding the above application.

A conversation between the remaining members ensued, where they agreed with the majority of the comments made by Cllr R. Bridge, sent prior to the meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that the design and access statement was very misleading, where this statement spoke of numerous places of worship, restaurants and public houses. It stated that the property was in close proximity to the school (which had been announced was closing at the end of the academic year and the doctor's surgery (that had not reopened after the practice was placed into special measures). The members made comment to the site being overdeveloped, where they raised additional concerns over the lack of parking.

It was acknowledged that the members needed to submit their comments by Monday 7<sup>th</sup> of June in line with the expiry date, where the Clerk Mrs J. Allen was asked to write to Medway Council to advise that of the statement was misleading and to raise concerns over the lack of parking.

### b). Decisions

**Min 4072:21** The members confirmed receipt of below new planning decision, where it was noted that Medway Council had discharged some of their conditions:

- MC/21/1053 - Malmaynes Hall Farm, Malmaynes Hall

### c). Appeals and Other Matters.

**Min 4073:21** None.

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## 9. Finance

- a). To agree financial performance against the budget for the month of May 2021.
- b). Update of account(s) for 2021/22 including payments received.
- c). Accounts paid since the last meeting to be ratified.
- d). Accounts for payment.
- e). **Payment requests to be discussed for approval and payment.**

**Min 4074:21** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to advise that having consulted with Cllr R. Morrad prior to the meeting that he was satisfied the Parish Council's accounts. He also disclosed that he understood Cllr R. Morrad had a further query in regards to the members insurance cover, where he urged the Clerk to make contact with him.

Accordingly it was proposed by Cllr G. Blackman to approve points a,b,c,d & e, this proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and unanimously agreed.

Payee	Reference	Payment Method	Amount	Notes
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£468.08	May 2021 Wages
Mrs J. Allen	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£35.00	Use of home office –May 2021
HMRC	Min 1436:18	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£12.00	Tax & NI Payment
Vodafone Telephone & Broadband	Min 1451:18	DIRECT DEBIT	£49.45	Broadband & Telephone line rental for May 2021
Colin Davis	Min 1992:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£168.00	May 2021 Payment Inspections & Cleaning INV: 3213
Colin Davis	<b>NONE</b> (Health & Safety Concern)	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£25.00	Repair of gate at Heron Way INV: 3208
The People's Pension	Min 1775:20	DIRECT DEBIT	£42.43	Both Employer & Employee Contributions for May 2021
LumberZac	Min 4041:21	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£264.00	Removal of overhanging trees at Heron Way
Flexi Labels	Min 4037:21	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£36.46	Correct telephone number labels (for playpark signs) INV: 2392042
Treeventures Ltd	<b>NONE</b> (inline with terms & conditions of insurance)	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£440.00	15 monthly arboricultural report
St Peter & St Paul Church	Min 3058:21	PAID BY BACS	£50.00	Donation in memory of Gordon Barron

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British Heart Foundation	NONE (spoke of before meeting on 03/02/2021)	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£50.00	Donation in memory of Peter Tungate
TWS Consultancy Ltd	Min 1892:20	TO BE PAID BY BACS	£180.00	COVID-19 Risk Assessment to face to face Parish Council Meetings INV:5248
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£1,820.42</b>	

## f). Update on the progress of the Internal Auditor for the year ending 2020/2021

Min 4075:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to confirm that she was in discussions with Mr L. Robbins concerning the last arrangements for the internal audit, due to take place at the end of the month.

## 10. Management of the Council's land and property

### a). Playparks

#### i Allhallows Road Playpark

#### ii Heron Way Playpark

#### iii Upper Stoke Playpark

Min 4076:21 The Play Park inspections from the month of May were accepted. The report received confirmed that the play equipment in all three parks appeared to be in good order and that all the touch points were being regularly disinfected. It was also noted that the contractor had found only a couple of empty alcohol containers in the Upper Stoke Playpark.

### b). Update on the replacement apparatus, following the removal of the toddler tunnels at Button Drive & Heron Way

Min 4077:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, advised that following her email to the members surrounding the types of play equipment available within their budget, that she had ordered the preferred apparatus for both sites, as requested.

She spoke further to advise that she understood the new equipment had a lead time of between 5 and 6 weeks, where she had asked the contractors to install the new equipment in time for the school summer holidays and ideally before the 'Big Lunch' event if possible.

### c). New baby/cradle swing for the Heron Way Playpark

Min 4078:21 The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to refer the members to the quote she had received from Safeplay Playground Services Ltd, for the installation of a baby/cradle swing at the Heron Way Playpark, at a cost of £239.00 per seat.

The Chairman Cllr B. Stone spoke to express his concerns that if the swing was not installed correctly then it could be dangerous for young children. A discussion ensued where it was recognised that if the cradle swing had been measured and installed by a professional then the Parish Council would be covered under the company's insurance, in the event of any problems.

Accordingly, the members agreed to purchase a new baby/cradle swing, where the Clerk was instructed to place an order by Safeplay Playground Services Ltd.

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## **d). Tree surgeon quotes for the removal of limbs overhanging the property adjacent to the Heron Way Park**

**Min 4079:21** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to advise the members that the overhanging branches from trees located in the Heron Way Play Park had now been removed. He made comment that the tree surgeon could have cut more off the limbs to make it flush with the trunk.

## **e). Tree surgeon update on the pollarding of the trees at Button Drive**

**Min 4080:21** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that she had only managed to organise one quote to pollard the trees at Button Drive so far, owing to their size.

Accordingly, she confirmed that the quote she had received was for £875.00 plus VAT, where the contractor was yet to send her copies of the following documents, in line with the members financial regulations:

- A copy of the company's insurance cover (with public liability insurance cover for at least five million pounds),
- A copy of the company's risk assessment,
- A copy of the company's health & safety standards policy,

A discussion ensued where the Clerk was asked to confirm that the contractor was going to cut the trees 2 inches below the crown, where it had been acknowledged the trees had previously been cut back to some years ago.

Owing to its urgency, the Clerk was asked to instruct the contractor to carry out the works as soon as possible, once she had received the relevant correspondence.

## **f). Notice board in Lower Stoke**

**Min 4081:21** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, confirmed that she had not placed an order for the new notice board for Lower Stoke, as she was waiting for the car park lease to be renewed first, before asking Medway Council permission to relocate the board.

A discussion ensued where the members advised that they understood they did not need permission to move the notice board, accordingly the Clerk was instructed to place the order with the Noticeboard Company.

**Min 4082:21** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke to inform the members that he had located a contractor to look at and to dig out the French drain, over reports of flooding to the rear of Kasmira House ref: **Min 4015:21** .

**Min 4083:21** Finally a discussion ensued surrounding the Lower Stoke car park lease, where the Clerk confirmed that despite chasing Mr E. Ntekim of Medway Council regularly, that she was still waiting for a hard copy of the lease to arrive. She confirmed that she understood this document had been passed to the legal department to amend the renegotiated terms and conditions, but that she had circulated an email from the surveyor with the proposed wording for the conditions.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise that before agreeing to the contract that he wanted to see a hard copy of the documentation beforehand, the other members concurred.

## **11. Highways & Transportation**

### **a). Footpaths**

**Min 4084:21** No report.

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## **b). Lighting**

**Min 4085:21** No report.

## **c). Highways and verges**

**Min 4086:21** Cllr G. Blackman spoke to raise concerns over the length of the grass on the verges, which he commented appeared to be the same all around the Medway towns.

The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone spoke in response to advise that he understood Medway Council were deliberately letting the verges grow wild for a while, to help with the 'Save the Bees' project.

## **d). Pot holes**

**Min 4087:21** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to confirm that the large pothole located on the corner of Cuckolds Green Road and Allhallows Road, opposite the garage in Lower Stoke, had finally been repaired, ref: **Min 4002:21**.

## **e). Fly tipping**

**Min 4088:21** No report.

## **f). School Warning Signs**

**Min 4089:21** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, advised that she had not chased for the repairs to the third school warning sign, as she was now waiting to see what was happening with the Stoke Primary Academy school following its announced closure.

The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace spoke in support to advise that she concurred with this decision.

## **12. Communication**

### **a). Update on the Parish Council's new webpage and associated email addresses**

#### **b). Parish Council owned tablets**

**Min 4090:21** Cllr J. Wallace spoke to inform the members that the Parish Council's website appeared to in good working order, and that she and the Clerk were keeping the website up to date.

She also advised that after seeking further assistance concerning the member's parish council email addresses that a communication discrepancy had been located between the two servers.

Accordingly, she confirmed that she would be speaking further with the technician resolve this Discrepancy, where she also advised that she understood he was arranging for an application to be installed on the members tablets to enable immediate access to their Parish Council emails.

Finally, she advised the members that the set up of their website and associated email addresses had been more in-depth than she had initially been led to believe, where she confirmed that to date she had spoken in excess of four companies to get everything set up. She closed her report in confirming the member's website had finally been made secure.

#### **c). General communications**

**Min 4091:21** The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen, spoke to advise that she understood Cllr R. Morrad was experiencing difficulties in connecting his Parish Council owned tablet to his personal broadband provider.

She confirmed that because she did not use a tablet for her work, that she did not know how the members tablets worked, however she was happy to get in touch with him to arrange for some additional support and if helpful she would set up one of the member's spare tablets to demonstrate on.

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The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace also spoke to advise that she would be happy to demonstrate how to connect the tablet to the internet, using her tablet too.

## 13. Village Hall

### a). To receive an update on the Village Hall

**Min 4092:21** The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to advise of a bleak future for the Village Hall, following the closure of the doctor's surgery, unless the Village Hall committee was able to obtain a COVID-19 grant from Medway Council.

He spoke to advise that despite numerous of telephone calls and letters to the surgery that he still did not know if the doctors were intending to return to the premises.

Accordingly, he asked the Clerk to aid him in obtaining a grant through Medway Council, where it was agreed that he and the Clerk would speak independently to discuss the matter in further detail.

## 14. Lower Stoke Car Park Lease

### a). To discuss the proposed conditions for the new Medway Council Lower Stoke Car Park lease

**Min 4093:21** It was accepted that the members had already received an update on the Lower Stoke Car park lease earlier in the meeting. Please refer to ref: **Min 4083:21**

## 15. External Contractors

### a). J R Brickwork

**Min 4094:21** None.

### b). Eastborough Landscapes

**Min 4095:21** None.

### c). Colyn Property Services

**Min 4096:21** None.

## 16. Christmas Celebrations

### a). To receive an update on the installation of a Christmas Tree and Christmas lights in Lower Stoke for the month of December 2021.

**Min 4097:21** The Vice-chair Cllr J. Wallace spoke to advise the members that she understood the village were not allowed to hang any lights in the High Street, as they were no free-standing street lights to connect them to.

She understood however that the 'Stoke Safari's' were starting a campaign to encourage Parishioners to hang their own lights outside the front of their properties, where she mooted the idea of a 'Christmas lights competition'.

A discussion ensued where it was agreed that all parts of the village, including Upper Stoke, Middle Stoke and Lower Stoke should be included and that the competition should be judged by the children of the village.

The Clerk was asked to start advertising the competition from immediate effect, where Cllr J. Wallace referred her to a programme named 'Adobe Spark' to create a poster.

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## 17. **Sponsorship for The Big Lunch in Stoke**

**a). To discuss potential sponsorship towards 'The Big Lunch in Stoke' hosted by the Methodist Church.**

**Min 4098:21** The members acknowledged receipt of a letter from Ms J. Barrett of the 'Big Lunch Committee' asking the Parish Council to provide sponsorship for the event, due to be held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July.

It was noted however that the letter did not confirm the balance of the grant being requested, what the funds were going to be used for and it was also recognised that the committee had provided no correspondence relating to their risk assessment(s) and their indemnity insurance.

A discussion ensued, where it was also understood the committee were also asking for additional sponsorship for two portable toilets, following a refusal by the school to use their facilities.

The Clerk, Mrs J. Allen spoke to advise the members that she had looked further into the costs to hire two portable toilets, where she had received a quote from a local firm for £234.00 to hire both toilets for that weekend that included their haulage to and from the venue.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise that he did not agree in providing sponsorship for both the event and the facilities, where he proposed the members offered the committee a grant of £300.00 only. This proposal was seconded by Cllr G. Blackman and unanimously agreed.

Accordingly, the Clerk was asked to get in touch with the committee to request the outstanding correspondence, before she paid the grant.

The members also reminded the Clerk to ensure the event was still taking place, following an extension of the 'freedom date' by Boris Johnson.

## 18. **Village Voice Publication**

**Min 4099:21** The Vice-Chair, Cllr J. Wallace asked the Clerk to place notification of the village Christmas light competition in the next Village Voices publication.

## 19. **Policies**

**a). To discuss the compilation of an antiracism policy**

**Min 5000:21** The members discussed an email sent by Cllr R. Bridge, concerning the introduction of an antiracism policy.

The Clerk also referred the members to the correspondence included in Cllr R. Bridge's email, where he had provided a link for a training course held by the 'Diversity Trust' at a cost of £950.00 per day or £550.00 for half a day's training.

Cllr K. Copping spoke to advise that he thought the introduction of this policy would be very outdated, wherein he made reference to the Equality Act 2010.

He spoke further to confirm that as of December 2020 he understood the Government were phasing out 'unconscious bias' training such as this, due to evidence which showed it to be ineffective in the long term. The government urged other public sector bodies to do likewise. He, therefore, proposed that the members should not adopt an antiracism policy or approve expenditure for this type of training for parish council members. This proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chair Cllr J. Wallace and unanimously agreed.



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**20. Correspondence**

Min 5001:21 None.

**21. Reports and Circulars**

Min 5002:21 None.

**22. Date of next meeting**

Min 5003:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, spoke to inform the members that the next meeting would take place in the main Village Hall on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

He also reminded the Councillors that the number of people allowed in the Village Hall would be limited again, to allow for social distancing.

**23. Close of meeting**

Min 5004:21 The Chairman, Cllr B. Stone, closed the meeting at 20.40pm and thanked everyone for attending.

**The next Parish Council meeting will be held on:**

<b>Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021</b>	<b>7.00pm</b>	<b>Village Hall</b>
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