



## ACOL PARISH COUNCIL

The Village Hall  
The Street  
Acol  
Kent CT7 0JA

e-mail: [clerk@acolparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@acolparishcouncil.org.uk)

### Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.30pm, Acol Village Hall

**Present:** Parish Councillors Richard Steel – Chairman [RS], Chenice Butterworth [CB], Sarah Corby [SC], Gavin Winpenny [GW], Wendy Winpenny [WW]

**In Attendance:** Sara Archer – Clerk, District Cllr Abi Smith, KCC Councillors Derek Crow-Brown & Linda Wright plus 4 members of the public.

#### 40/23-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of District Cllr Sam Bambridge (Illness), and from PC Andy Howe who was on rest days.

#### 41/23-24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests declared.

#### 42/23-24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED:** To accept the minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 as a true record. These were proposed by Cllr G Winpenny and Seconded by Cllr Butterworth and duly signed by the Chair.

#### 43/23-24 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Steel advised that disappointingly there had been no volunteers come forward to assist with the D-Day commemoration event, planned to be held on the weekend of 8/9<sup>th</sup> June. The ongoing conflict in other parts of the world was acknowledged, however, it was felt important to respectfully mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and suggestions for the event were welcomed. The Thanet Rural Regeneration Group (TRRG) supported the idea of a 'Best Kept Village' competition.

Issues with regard to parking in the Village and the street lighting in Plumstone Road had been reported in the newsletter and would continue to be monitored. UK Power Networks were due to repair the telegraph pole, following which, the lighting should then be addressed by TDC.

It had been proposed that The Freedom of Acol awards should be presented on an annual basis as appropriate. Cllr Corby had been nominated to lead the working group, which would include representatives from the other Village Groups, to consider nominations for the award.

Cllr Steel encouraged residents to subscribe to the news alerts on the Parish Council website, to receive relevant updates for the village.

#### 44/23-24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk advised she had approached Lezanne Cesar regarding a grant towards the footpath to Quex, however, as the land was not owned by the local authority, it was not possible to make an application for funding.

An annual playground safety inspection had been organised and carried out on 31<sup>st</sup> January by Wicksteed. The report had been circulated to Councillors and recommendations would be considered. The Clerk had subsequently devised a monthly checklist for the play equipment to be monitored on a regular basis and findings reported to the Council at each meeting. It was noted and discussed that there were no litter or dog waste bins at the Recreation Ground, or in the Village at all. The Clerk would contact TDC and make enquiries about having a bin reinstated.

The Clerk had ordered an official portrait of King Charles III which was free of charge for Parish Councils.

Enquiries had been made with regard to transferring email provider from Ionos to Microsoft 365, however, the charges were significantly higher and would therefore be considered at a later date.

The road safety mirrors had been ordered and upon receipt, would be passed on to Cllrs Winpenny for installation.

The Clerk had met with Cllr Steel and a representative from Sunstone Systems to discuss the relocation of the CCTV. Following the site visit, a quote for the works would be forwarded to the Parish Council for consideration.

Grant funding towards the benches for the Recreation Ground had been received. Cllr Corby would liaise with the Clerk and order appropriate benches in due course.

Enquiries regarding the printing of the Village Appraisal document had been made with a local printing company. Once details had been finalised, the questionnaire would be printed and distributed accordingly.

The Clerk had attended an online meeting with Lezanne Cesar to update the Highways Improvement Plan prior to a review of the document. A further meeting would be arranged in due course once Lezanne had made enquiries regarding the North Thanet Link Project.

#### **45/23-24 COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

**Cllr Butterworth** advised that she was following up on the installation of the grass pathway from the Village to Quex Park. Appropriate planters for the Village were being investigated and options would be presented at the next meeting. Cllr Butterworth was organising a children's Easter Trail in the Village and the Village Hall Committee had generously offered to fund the prizes for the competition.

**Cllr Wendy Winpenny** was encouraged that Kent Police were organising speed checks in the local area, including along Minster Road. Permission from the relevant land owners, to place the safety mirrors, had been sought. Cllr Steel would approach Einer Willett for permission to place a mirror opposite Dilnot Lane.

It was noted that the pumping station had become very overgrown. Cllr Winpenny had reported the issue to Southern Water and was awaiting a response.

**Cllr Corby** confirmed she was exploring options for recycled plastic benches as these would require less long-term maintenance. Anchor kits would also be ordered with the benches and Cllr Corby would arrange for a plaque to be attached. A working group had been formed to discuss nominations for the Freedom of Acol awards, it was agreed the presentation would take place annually in December.

#### **46/23-24 INDIVIDUAL OFFICER REPORTS**

a)

**County Councillor Linda Wright** reported she had been very involved with advocacy work and in particular, raising awareness of safeguarding issues in care homes across the locality. The project to distribute toothbrushes to Primary Schools had been agreed in principle and would be rolled out to three pilot schools in due course.

Cllr Wright was supporting an initiative to set up a group for teenagers, in conjunction with Churches, Secondary Schools and Scouting Groups, to produce a lighting show/drama production in local churches. It was hoped it would encourage teenagers to become involved, raise funds for the church and increase footfall into the establishments. The KCC budget would be set in the forthcoming week. Adult Social Care would be prioritised, however, proposals to enable residents to stay in their own homes rather than be admitted into a care home, were being considered and it was hoped that advances in technology would make this more accessible.

**County Councillor Derek Crow-Brown** advised he had been heavily involved with highways and transportation concerns. He had issued a Corporate Complaint to South Eastern with regard to the number of short notice cancellations of the school train from Minster to Sandwich. South Eastern had responded that the age and lack of investment in the tracks had been the cause of the cancellations and they were working to improve the situation.

Kent Police and the Railway Enforcement Officers were congratulated for their prompt response to the recent Anti-Social Behaviour in Minster.

Concerned businesses had approached Cllr Crow-Brown regarding the road closures, and scheduled works to be carried out at Tothill Street. The situation would be monitored.

Following a recent resignation, a new Environment Cabinet Officer had been appointed at KCC which was welcomed by members.

b)

**District Councillor Abi Smith** confirmed that the recent reported online services outage at TDC had not been a cyber attack, but a problem with the IT services. Due to the possible threat to personal data, it had been reported to the National Cyber Service as a matter of precaution.

Residents were encouraged to comment on TDC's parking strategy consultation which could be accessed via 'Your Voice'.

Matthew Elmer was in the process of arranging regular Litter Forum meetings for the Villages. The Clerk would be advised of the date in due course.

TDC had set their budget, Cllr Smith reported that a modest increase of 3% to Council Tax had been agreed, which equates to approximately £7.60 for a Band D property.

c)

**Ward Police Officer – PC Andy Howe** was unable to attend the meeting, however, a report and crime statistics for both Thanet Villages and Acol were submitted as follows:

Burglary from the business community stands out as being concerning, these related to two incidents where a group of thieves entered and stole from a large number of storage containers on Manston. Three persons were arrested in relation to the second incident and that case is ongoing.

More recently we have had an upsurge in vehicle related theft offences, these have occurred over a two-month period affecting such areas as Minster, Monkton, St Nicholas, Birchington and Nethercourt. We have identified two suspects so far and our investigation is ongoing.

Over the last month, we have had incidents of youth related Anti-Social Behaviour mostly around Minster but also hitting Ramsgate Town. The youths have all been identified and proactive activity, disrupting their behaviour has resulted in arrests and Community Protection Notices being issued. British Transport Police and the Thanet Neighbourhood Task Force are working this week on an operation focused on dealing with this group.

I understand how frustrating it is when we seem to be unable to effectively deal with youth ASB, but I would encourage anyone to call in asap any ASB activity so we can disrupt and build a portfolio of incidents which then allow for a more robust policing.

My own focus during the last month has been towards ASB disruption, visibility and intelligence building around the vehicle thefts and poaching activity. I have been actively involved around arrest attempts and searches for the theft from motor vehicle offences, along with attending a small number of suspicious poaching calls. I have undertaken speed checks in Acol and Cliffsend and will be conducting further "pop up" speed checks over the next few weeks in and around the villages.

#### **Calls to Acol:**

There were four calls over the last month of which two were domesticated incidents, one was traffic related and a further call, which can't be relayed as it is an ongoing investigation.

#### **47/23-24 HIGHWAYS**

- a) Speedwatch/Lorry Watch – Alan Watson, Speedwatch Co-Ordinator had been invited to attend the next TRRG meeting to discuss the scheme more fully.
- b) Street Cleansing, litter, fly-tipping – As previously mentioned and discussed.
- c) Highways Improvement Plan – Cllr Steel is keen to push forward with the Plan and will be discussing the 20mph limit, and lorry watch with Lezanne Cesar.

A resident had retrieved the broken finger sign from the directional signpost at Plumstone Road. Cllr Steel would make enquiries to have the finger sign repaired if possible.

#### **48/23-24 FINANCE**

- a) The Clerk presented the monthly bank reconciliation between the cash book and bank accounts.

**RESOLVED: To approve the monthly bank reconciliation for December & January (Proposed: Cllr Steel, seconded Cllr Butterworth).**

- b) The Clerk presented the monthly payment schedule which included the following payments:

Hugofox - Website hosting	£11.99
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£337.33
Unity Trust - Service Charge	£18.00
Hugofox - Website hosting	£11.99
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£269.32
Ionos - Email hosting	£3.00

#### **Receipts**

Acol VHC - Ground lease repayment	£200.00
-----------------------------------	---------

**RESOLVED: To approve payment of invoices included in the monthly payment schedule for February.**

**(Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Butterworth).**

c) The quote to replace the diseased trees at the Recreation Ground had been circulated and considered by Councillors. Enquiries had been made by Cllr Corby, with the Horticultural Society regarding the options for replanting. It was suggested that the trees should be planted in either spring or autumn and an appropriate species should be chosen for the site. Further information was being explored together with potential grant funding for the project.

**49/23-24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

- A resident shared information regarding the invasive Asian hornet. Permission to place a non-toxic trap to capture the insect at the Recreation Ground was sought and approved. If any of these insects are trapped, DEFRA would be notified accordingly by the resident.

- The status of the telephone kiosk was queried. It was confirmed that the kiosk would be repainted in April by Cllrs Steel and G Winpenny. Cllr Winpenny was also in the process of confirming ownership.

**50/23-24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is to be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 20:40hrs.