



ACOL PARISH COUNCIL

The Village Hall
The Street
Acol
Kent CT7 0JA

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 21st December 2023 at 8.00pm, 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 Councillor Derek Crow-Brown plus 6 members of the public.

29/23-24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from KCC Cllr Linda Wright and PCs Beth Ninnim/Andy Howe. Cllr Abi-Leigh Barlow apologised for her late arrival as she was unavoidably delayed by an accident on the outskirts of the Village.

30/23-24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Steel declared an interest in item 37/23-24 (i).

31/23-24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: To accept the minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 26th October 2023 as a true record. These were proposed by Cllr Butterworth and Seconded by Cllr Corby and duly signed by the Chair.

32/23-24 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Steel proudly announced the institution of the proposed annual awards of the Freedom of Acol which recognised volunteers who gave an exceptional duty and dedication to the Village. A ceremony was held prior to the meeting in which three of the four nominees for 2023 were presented with certificates in appreciation for their support and commitment to the Parish.

It was confirmed that the Parish Council had officially signed up to the NALC Civility & Respect Pledge initiative. Cllr Steel had attended an online meeting with Matthew Elmer, TDC, regarding the street cleaning. It had been a positive meeting, the street cleaner would be instructed to attend the village more regularly. Additional staff were being appointed and investment into new cleaning vehicles was being undertaken.

A meeting with the Highways Community Engagement Officer, Lezanne Cesar, had been encouraging. Discussion regarding the lack of notice for street works affecting the Parish took place and it had been agreed that improvements would be made to ensure that, as far as possible, the Parish Council would be notified of any works scheduled to be undertaken. The Highways Improvement Plan would be reviewed in the New Year, however, the traffic data suggested support for the implementation of a 20 mph speed limit through the Village. This was also supported by Kent Police, and would be explored further in due course.

It was also noted that it should be possible to achieve a reduction in speed limit on Acol Hill to 50 mph, which would be an improvement but we were disappointed with advice that it could not be reduced further.

The street lighting in Plumstone Road had been repaired and would be upgraded to LED lighting in due course.

Cllr Steel gave a brief outline of the requirements for the Lorry Watch scheme. It was discussed and felt it should be considered further before making a decision whether to adopt the scheme. Cllr Steel and Cllr G Winpenny would meet to explore the options surrounding the initiative before presenting to the next meeting.

Volunteers were welcomed to assist with the arrangements for the forthcoming D-Day celebrations. Suggestions including the Best Kept Village and beacon had been put forward to be considered. Nursery Fields had been approached for permission to hold the event on the green, no response had been received, therefore, it was assumed that this had been approved.

Cllr Steel advised that the website statistics showed approx. 700 visits to the site during November, of this approx. 400 were interested residents. Residents were encouraged to subscribe to the news alerts to receive relevant updates for the village.

33/23-24 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk advised she had submitted an application with KCC Cllr Derek Crow-Brown towards grant funding in order to purchase a bench for the Recreation Ground. She had also attended the regular litter forum at TDC and raised the issues of street cleaning, requesting a copy of the cleaning schedule for the Village.

34/23-24 COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Cllr Corby confirmed the arrangements for the New Years Eve Party to be held at the Village Hall. Friends and families were welcomed to join in with the festivities. The Village Hall Committee were thanked for contributing to the administration charge to extend the licence for the event.

Cllr Wendy Winpenny advised the village appraisal document had been obtained from Birchington to be used as a template for the Acol appraisal. The questionnaire was now prepared and would be printed and ready for distribution in the New Year. Costs for the printing of the document were approximately £120 for 140 copies. This would be discussed under item 37/23-24 (f).

Four road safety mirrors would be purchased. Landowners at Crispe Road, near the Recreation Ground and opposite Dilnot Lane had been approached for permission to place the mirrors in the most appropriate places, and Plumstone Road would also be considered.

Cllr Butterworth reported that unfortunately due to the inclement weather, the footpath from the Village to Quex Park had not been sewn. Quex Farms had been approached with the suggestion to sew clover as pathway, however, no response had been received. Anthony Curwen, the Quex Estates Manager had been invited to present on their work with the [Nature Friendly Farming](#) Network at the Acol Parish Council AGM, in May. This was to be confirmed.

35/23-24 INDIVIDUAL OFFICER REPORTS

a) **County Councillor Derek Crow-Brown** congratulated the Parish Council for implementing the Freedom of Acol awards. He had attended a similar event for HMS Kent who had been presented with the Freedom of the County and had been the first in the country to receive such an award.

Cllr Crow-Brown advised the Parish Council that funding for active travel may be available to help with costs towards the footpath to Quex. Lezanne Cesar should be approached in the New Year with enquiries for the funding.

It was explained that the KCC Highways cabinet member met with Senior Members of the team last week to discuss what can be done to ensure KCC, as the Highways Authority, have more control over what happens on Kent roads than they have at present. Highways also discussed the need to ensure that where there are road closures, KCC have well-signed, well-placed, well-timed diversion routes that are easily followed, with as much notice being given as possible to those who will be caught in them.

Highways will look at how KCC use their existing powers, what they would like to be able to do and, if their powers don't go far enough, press the Department for Transport/Government to allow KCC to keep our roads moving for the benefit of residents and businesses. There is also work taking place, which will be of importance until such time (if) the fines levels are hiked, to build up a prosecution protocol so KCC can take the worst offenders to court.

Cllr Crow-Brown had successfully lobbied for Southern Water to compensate Monkton Nature Reserve for loss of income during the recent long period of road closure, being awarded £2500.

A strategic review of Westwood Cross has also been requested following the significant disruption recently.

b) **District Councillor Abi Smith** advised she had attended a very positive and engaging Full Council Meeting at TDC. A motion raised by the Leader of the Council to raise a voice against the National Grid/Sealink proposal at Minster Marshes had been unanimously supported, which had been a very encouraging response. Mitigation against the environmental disruption of the plan was demanded.

It was noted that £700m had been earmarked by Government to support Manston Detention Centre.

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

The only statistic of any concern is "Burglary – Business And Community. This large jump in numbers is attributable to one single incident at a storage depot in Manston where multiple lock ups were entered. So, whilst this was one incident, it has generated a large number of reports, as many units were entered. We are yet to identify any of the suspects for this, but attention is being paid to the area during night duties. We did arrest three persons in a similar incident recently but we have not been able to confirm a link between the offences.

The Thanet Villages remains a low crime area with traffic incidents making up the bulk of Police activity.

With regard to Acol, over the last month there has been just one call to Acol, and this was traffic related.

Crime reduction advice:

Please ensure your addresses are secure over the Xmas period, thieves will test dwellings and businesses for weaknesses, and they will often reconnoitre locations before trying a break, so keep an eye out for any suspicious persons.

Try to keep any high value items such as jewellery and tech out of view from windows. The same applies to the security of vehicles, so don't leave valuables on display in your car.

Check out My Community Voice for further crime reduction advice and the latest scams to avoid.

Speedwatch update:

During November Police assisted the Acol Speedwatch group to undertake some stops and checks on speed through the Village. The outcomes were negligible with over three hundred vehicles checked for speed and only a handful required stopping for words of advice to be given as their speed was only slightly above the limit.

During a two hour period, two HGV's have passed through the village which may have exceeded the weight limit. We will conduct further surveys and random checks over the next few months.

We have advised that a 20mph through the village may be helpful as this may bring the average speeds down thereby reducing the risks of serious injury. You may wish to approach Kent Highways in relation to this.

36/23-24 HIGHWAYS

- a) Speedwatch – No further update.
- b) 7.5 tonne weight limit – lorry watch: As discussed under item 32/23-24.
- c) Footpath to Quex – As discussed under item 34/23-24.
- d) Street Cleansing, litter, fly-tipping – As discussed under item 32/23-24.
- e) Highways Improvement Plan – As discussed under item 32/23-24.

37/23-24 FINANCE

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

RESOLVED: To approve the monthly bank reconciliation for October & November (Proposed: Cllr Steel, Seconded Cllr Butterworth).

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

S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£251.85
KALC - Cllr Training	£48.00
ICO - Registration fee	£35.00
Hugofox - Website hosting	£11.99
PicRights Ltd - Copyright breach	£51.00
Hughes - mowing	£80.00
Hughes - Tree surgery	£1,080.00
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£251.85

RESOLVED: To approve payment of invoices included in the monthly payment schedule for December. (Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Steel)

c) The Clerk presented the draft budget and precept request for 2024/25. It was noted that a significant increase in the budget had been proposed for 2024/25 which would be met from reserves as appropriate. Additional grant funding options would be explored if necessary. No increase in the precept was being proposed, therefore a request of £10,040 would be submitted to TDC.

RESOLVED: To approve the budget for 2024/25 and precept request of £10,040 from TDC. (Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Butterworth)

d) The payment for the tree felling of the storm damaged and diseased Ash trees at the Recreation Ground was noted. Cllr Crow-Brown advised there may be grant funding available to assist with the costs to replace some of the trees as appropriate. Advice would be sought to ensure suitable species were replanted.

RESOLVED: To approve the retrospective payment for essential tree works to remove diseased and damaged Ash trees at the Recreation Ground. (Proposed: Cllr Steel, Seconded: Cllr Butterworth)

e) The Clerk advised of the National Salary Pay Award, effectively increasing the salary by £1 per hour. This was noted and approved accordingly.

RESOLVED: To approve the National Salary Pay Award for the Clerk. (Proposed: Cllr W Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Corby)

f) As previously mentioned under item 34/23-24, the payment for costs towards the printing of the Village Appraisal document were duly noted and approved.

RESOLVED: To approve payment of costs for the printing of the Village Appraisal document, approx. £120.00. (Proposed: Cllr Steel, Seconded: Cllr Corby)

g) Quotes to install an honours board at the Village Hall were being obtained. The costs for the honours board, presentation ceremony and associated costs for the Freedom of Acol awards would be met from the Chairman's Allowance.

RESOLVED: To approve the purchase of an Honours Board for the Freedom of Acol presentations. (Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr W Winpenny)

h) The Clerk advised a grant application for funding towards a second bench at the Recreation Ground had been submitted. Quotes had been obtained and circulated to the Parish Council which had been considered accordingly. It was agreed to purchase the benches from Sustainable Furniture as per the quotes identified.

RESOLVED: To approve the purchase of a teak bench and A-frame picnic bench from Sustainable furniture as per the quotes circulated. (Proposed: Cllr Butterworth, Seconded: Cllr Steel)

i) It was noted that Cllr Steel had continued to pay the email hosting fees to date. This had now been transferred to a direct debit from the Parish Council bank account. The repayment to Cllr Steel for email hosting fees at a sum of £24 was approved accordingly.

RESOLVED: To approve repayment of £24 to Cllr Steel for email hosting fees. (Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Corby)

38/23-24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Clarification regarding the content of the Village Appraisal document was sought. It was confirmed the questionnaire would be focussed on general information gathering rather than specific items such as the telephone kiosk etc...
- Insurance concerns for the D-Day event to be held at Nursery Fields were raised. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had appropriate public liability insurance which would cover the event, however, a letter of confirmation regarding the position would be duly sent to the Resident's Association.

39/23-24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is to be held on Thursday 15th February, 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 20:50hrs.