

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18 January 2024 at the New Ash
Green Village Association meeting room commencing at 7.45pm

Present: Cllr S Fishenden – Chairman
Cllr M Aspinall
Cllr C Clark
Cllr J Clucas
Cllr F Cottee
Cllr C Gorton
Cllr S Hobbs
Cllr A Jauch
Cllr I MacLeod
Cllr M Manley
Cllr V Ngwenya
Cllr G Pender

In attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk
Megan Johnson-Hodges – Assistant Clerk

8770/24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr R Brammer(ill), Cllr M Howie (lambing) and Cllr P Kirtley (holiday). The apologies and reasons for absence were accepted.

PROPOSED: Cllr C Clark SECONDED: Cllr V Ngwenya and AGREED.

8771/24 Declarations of Interest

a. None

8772/24 Minutes

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 December 2023 be approved and signed as a true record with the following correction to the attendance, to remove the duplicate entry of Cllr P Kirtley and add Cllr I MacLeod.

PROPOSED: Cllr M Manley SECONDED: Cllr A Jauch and AGREED.

The meeting was suspended at 7.46pm

- to receive reports from the County Councillor and District Councillors.
- Public Session.

The reports from the above are attached to these minutes.

The meeting reconvened at 8.07pm.

8773/24 Clerk's Report

a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED. A copy is attached to these minutes.

8774/24 Council Administration

a. Hodson Street Play Area Visual Inspections. Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that the annual inspection of the Play Area remains with RoSPA and that the quarterly inspections are incorporated in the duties of the Parish Council officers.

SECONDED: Cllr F Cottee and AGREED.

8775/24 Finance

- a. Current Financial Position – the Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer advised members that December and January have been quiet months. The Parish Council General Reserves are £90,940.93, less the additional spending and running costs making the total £54,379.02. The Sports Centre redundancy costs have increased as more staff are eligible, this has, therefore, increased the total 3 months running costs and Sports Centre redundancy to £46,983.00. There will be an increase in the Internal Audit costs as a more in-depth audit was conducted. Subscriptions are as expected. Health and Safety is over budget as the defibrillator pads were more expensive than anticipated.
- b. Approval of payments – Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the payments made up to 18 January 2024 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
- c. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the repair of Velux window in the Gym is deferred to the February meeting as only one quote had been received. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.
- d. Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that £440.00 is donated to HiKent under **Section 137 of LGA 1972**. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

8776/24 Planning

- a. Applications
23/03311: Land to the Rear of 1 Bonnyacre Farm Cottages, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0RF – The siting of seven steel storage containers (for a 5-year temporary period) Cllr F Cottey PROPOSED that the Parish Council objects to this proposed development on the basis of the cumulative development on the site, which is gradually eroding the openness of the Green Belt.
The application is for storage of equestrian equipment displaced by the replacement of the original stables by a bungalow. Google Earth imagery shows that the stables would probably house four horses, whereas professional advice says that each of the proposed containers would accommodate the equipment for one horse, a total of seven horses. Either there are too many containers for the number of horses or the number of horses is disproportionate for domestic use, contrary to Policy LT2 of the ADMP. This policy also requires that account should be taken of the cumulative effect of development on the site on the Green Belt. The development record shows that in addition to extensions to the original property, 1, Bonnyacre Cottages, there has been the addition of a large bungalow, storage of 10 other containers and now this proposal for temporary storage to replace eight illegally sited containers already on site. SECONDED: Cllr G Pender and AGREED.
- b. Planning Applications Working Group - The notes of the Planning Applications Working Group meeting of 03 January 2024 were NOTED.

8777/24 Ash Green Sports Centre

- a. Current Financial Position – The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer advised that the Sports Centre has a surplus of £5,262, less the grant of £3,500 from Hartley Parish Council leaves a £1,762 surplus. At the same time last year, the Sports Centre was £10,000 in deficit. The Working Group was thanked for their help suggestions, including the increase in membership fees. The Parish Council had agreed to cover the costs of the shifts that were previously covered by Parish Council staff, but this has not been necessary. The January offer of half price memberships has been extremely popular, and we need to focus on retaining these new members. A TV Licence has been purchased as we now provide wi-fi in the gym and members can access broadcasters. Squash income is lower than

expected. Table tennis and tennis income is as expected. Sundry costs are lower than expected due to using micro-fibre cloths in the gym. January, February and March are traditionally good months for the Sports Centre.

- b. Approval of payments – Cllr F Cottee PROPOSED that the payments made to 18 January 2024 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.
- c. Sports Centre Management Committee Update – Cllr M Manley reported that the Sports Centre Working Group had recommended out-sourcing the management of the Centre to a Leisure Trust and initial expression of interest has been received from Swale Leisure Trust. However, following a meeting with Leigh Academies Trust to initiate a review the Dual Use Agreement and to start discussions on the provision of a sub-lease, it was felt that it would be inappropriate to pursue transferring the management of the Centre to a third party. The Sports Centre Management Committee has agreed to continue to manage the Centre for two years, while lease negotiations are in progress, with a review after 18 months. The new software has not met our expectations and the fitness instructor will investigate more compatible software.

8778/24 Community and Environment

- a. **Lances Almshouse Charity** - Cllr I MacLeod reported that a meeting of the Trustees had been held in November 2023 and another meeting is scheduled for February 2024. An investigation has been carried out on the two cottages and it has been confirmed that there is no dry rot, but there is wood worm . The year end financial statements have been completed and will be checked by the Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer. The Trustees are concerned that there is no succession planning and there is a need to recruit younger members and an article has been prepared for the next edition of the Bulletin.

8779/24 Items for Information Only

- a. Cllr C Clark – the Miracle Club will be shown at Ash Village Hall n 24 January 2024.
- b. Cllr C Gorton had noted that the new bin has not been emptied and is overflowing.
- c. Cllr F Cottee advised that the Big Breakfast will be held on the 1st Saturday of the month.
- d. Cllr J Clucas advised that the funeral for Hilda Glover will be on Monday 05 February 2024 at 12 noon at Thames View Crematorium followed by a service at Ash Church at 1.30pm. Cllr J Clucas delivered a letter to Mr Terry Vivian advising that the Parish Council had nominated him to receive the KALC Community award. He was incredibly pleased to be nominated, but due to health issues, may not be able to attend the Annual Parish Meeting.

8780/24 Progress Tracker

- a. The Progress Tracker was NOTED.

The meeting closed at 8.51pm

Signed:
Chairman

Date:

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **3 – Full Council (18 January 2024)**

Report Title: **County and District Councillors Reports**

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr Brazier advised that a decision was made to proceed with the reduction of the Warden Service. The Service will be reduced to six teams across the County and there will be a reduction in staff. It has not yet been determined which Wardens will be retained.

The C3 bus service is in place and requires approval from the Traffic Committee and it is expected to start during the February half-term. The route is the same as the previous 423 service.

The future of the Childrens Centres is a complex business and in contention with other buildings used for community purposes, excluding libraries. At a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Brazier mistakenly, got the impression that the option selected for the New Ash Green Children's Centre was that it would remain. It not known if the services from the Children's Centre can be retained in the village. A Photocopier Contract Renewal – report attached public meeting was held with very few attending. The alternative facility is on the outskirts of Gravesend and almost unreachable by public transport. The Council has to reduce expenditure by £50 million to balance the budget and expert management has avoided the circumstances that Birmingham and Peterborough Councils are in where the Government has given them emergency funding. County Hall is in the process of being sold

Cllr M Aspinall asked if the C3 Bus Service has been fully signed off, Cllr Brazier does not see any potential obstacles.

District Councillor S Manamperi asked about the right to petition and that a petition had been started to challenge the potential loss of the Children's Centre. Cllr Brazier confirmed that no petition had been submitted to the County Council in respect of the Children's Centre.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Cllr S Manamperi reported that the Local Plan 2040 provides for a possible 70 dwellings as part of any regeneration of the Shopping Centre. The District Councillors intend to call the application to build 16 houses on the Oast House Nursery site to the Development Management Committee.

Cllr Penny Cole reported that a ini drop-in event was held in Hartley for members of the public. Concerns were raised about development on Manor Drive and on Governor on Church Road. The development proposed for Pedham Place has been divisive and is in the Green Belt, however as the call for sites did not deliver sufficient housing to meet the Governments allocation, this may be the best of the worst options.

Tom Tugendhat MP, has visited Hartley and New Ash Green and intends to attend the Big Breakfast in Hodsoll Street in February 2024 along with the Cabinet Member for Communities from Sevenoaks District Council.

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Agenda Item: **4 – Full Council 18 January 2024**

Report Title: **Clerk's Report**

ASH GREEN SPORTS CENTRE

Cllrs M Manley, Chairman of the Sports Centre Management Committee, Cllr S Fishenden, Chairman and the Clerk met with Mr P Whittall, Estates Director for Leigh Academies Trust to discuss the Dual Use Agreement and Lease as well as communications between the school and Parish Council/Sports Centre

BURIAL GROUND.

The site visit on 08 January 2024 did not take place due to the weather and has been rescheduled for 15 January 2024.

HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A meeting with Nigel Rowe of Kent Highways has been set for 23 January 2024.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The internal audit took place on 09 January 2024.

IT AND EMAIL

Megan has collated responses from members regarding email and Teams and she will be arranging a drop in IT morning.

NORTHFIELD

Tree planting – planting of 2,500 trees on Northfield has been completed. The New Ash Green Woodlands Group assisted on all four planting days.

The next meeting of the Northfield Management Committee will be held on 16 January 2024.

Coppicing - The first section of the Ancient Woodland, (New House Shaw) on Northfield is being coppiced.

PAT TESTING

The Portable Appliance Testing of all electrical equipment has been tested.