

Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 25th September 2024 at 7.30pm
in the Booth Hall

Cllr Powell welcomed all present to the meeting.

Public discussion

A resident spoke regarding Twinning and, having investigated this, the Borough of Maidstone is twinned with Beauvais. After brief discussion, Cllr Powell suggested that, if they wish to be involved, the resident should contact the Mayor's office to find out more.

A resident announced she would be standing down as the Chair of the Friends of St John's at the next AGM.

1 Present

Cllr E Powell, Cllr C Roots, Cllr Dean, Cllr S Brown, RFO/Amenity Manager Mr M Cuerden and the Clerk
Mrs A Broadhurst
4 Members of Public

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr T Sams, Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Griffiths, Cllr F Stanley, Cllr S Luck, Cllr R Dayes

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 31st July 2024: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Brown, seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour.

4 Disclosures and confidential items

Changes to the Register of Interests

There were no changes to the register.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations.

Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

The meeting then closed at 7.38pm to members of the public

5 Co-option of Parish Councillor

After brief discussion with the applicant, Cllr Powell proposed that Mr Donley be co-opted onto the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour. Mr Donley was duly co-opted as a Councillor and signed the Acceptance of Office.

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Donley would join as a Trustee on the Village Hall Trust.

The meeting the re-opened at 7.47pm to members of the public

6 Planning

6.1 The outstanding planning applications were noted.

6.2 The approved applications were noted.

6.3 The refused applications were noted.

6.4 Other Planning Matters

Cllr Powell spoke briefly regarding the various items which will need to be individually discussed as planning applications come forward, as part of the Local Plan, such as sustainability, the need for a railway station and a new motorway junction. It was noted that Bredhurst Parish Council had attended the High Court regarding the Lidsing development and the judge refused them progressing with a Judicial Review.

7 Environmental

7.1 Minutes of the Environmental Meeting held 9th September 2024: The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Brown; with 2 in favour (those at the meeting).

7.2 Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:

There were no recommendations from the Committee.

The Clerk reported on several items relating to the Environmental Committee's recent meeting:

- Teers Meadow Grass Cut: The cattle are to arrive on the meadow imminently, but it was confirmed that these would not be enough to keep the grass under control. Cllr Brown proposed that Teers Meadow receive a cut in Oct/Nov (weather dependent) at a cost of £1,500. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.
- Medway Valley Countryside Partnership's work in Teers Meadow: MVCP have enquired whether the Parish Council wish them to complete scrub clearance in the Spring, at a cost of £200. It was proposed by Cllr Dean to ask them to complete the work. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.
- Damaged Bench on West Street Green: The Clerk reported on damage to both benches on the Green. One can be repaired, however the other is older and has a concrete stand and legs, which may prove more challenging. The Amenity Manager is to investigate this further and report back to Council. **ACTION: Amenity Manager**
- Amenity Contracts 2025-2028: Cllr Dean proposed that the amenity contracts, which have been circulated to all Councillors, should now be put out to tender. This was seconded by Cllr Powell, with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.

7.3 Other Environmental Matters

- New Burial Ground: The Clerk stated that the Amenity Manager had included a comprehensive update in the Environmental minutes. In brief, the dig had found several items including a possible drainage ditch from an Iron Age roundhouse and 3 burials (one of which was a cremation and two were burials with small daggers). It has been confirmed that land cannot be used as a churchyard if it has already been used for ancient burials. However, use of part of the site may be possible, if a full excavation of that section is carried out, as part of the planning application, although the cost could likely be prohibitive. The Parish Council is now awaiting the interim report, however CDS has stated that, as the evaluation report is a mandatory requirement there is an additional cost due to the volume and nature of the archaeology encountered. The invoice supplied is for a further £1,500 (in addition to the £1,950 already paid). It was proposed by Cllr Powell to approve the additional invoice and this was seconded by Cllr Dean; with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.
- Basket Swing Repair: The Clerk reported that the latest safety inspection has flagged that 4 links on the basket swing chain are worn and need replacing. It was proposed by Cllr Roots to accept Safeplay's quote of £156.20 (+vat), seconded by Cllr Brown; with 4 in favour and 1 abstention. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Tommy Statue for the War Memorial: The Clerk reported that the Tommy statue's fixing is damaged beyond repair and the whole figure will need to be replaced. The design has changed slightly and now requires being cemented into the ground. The cost of Tommy is £650, but it is likely that, when adding the cost of our contractor preparing the cement base, the cost is likely to be approximately £1,000. After brief discussion it was proposed by Cllr Roots to progress with installing a new Tommy statue. This was seconded by Cllr Dean, with 4 in favour and 1 abstention. **ACTION: Clerk & Amenity Manager**
- Poppy Display 2024: The Clerk reported that the usual request had been received regarding this year's poppy display and asked that the Parish Council formally adopt it again, for the duration of the Remembrance period, so that it is cover by insurance. It was proposed by Cllr Dean, seconded by Cllr Powell; with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.
- Allotment Issue: The Clerk reminded all present that information had been circulated regarding a particular allotment in a poor state, who had been sent a letter regarding their eviction. The various photos taken over the Summer had been included, along with the body of both letters sent to the tenant. It was noted that, if an allotment is left in a poor condition, the tenant is charged £200 towards the cost of clearing the plot ahead of offering it to the next person on the waiting list. This charge is detailed in the tenancy agreement, which is signed each year as part of the renewal process. After brief discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Dean to progress with the eviction with the expectation that the outstanding invoice be paid promptly. This was seconded by Cllr Powell, with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.

ACTION: Clerk

8 Finances

- 8.1 Income and Expenditure Spreadsheets: The finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Roots, seconded by Cllr Dean; with 4 in favour and 1 abstention.

8.2 Other Financial Matters

- External Audit report for 2023/24: The RFO reported on the Conclusion of the External Audit, stating that no issues had been found. The RFO was thanked for his efforts.
- Medical Centre: The Clerk reported that the Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust had contacted the medical centre requesting a copy of their RAAC survey. As no survey has been completed, the Clerk had contacted Bureau Veritas, who the Parish Council has worked with before, and they had confirmed that they could complete one, as soon as access could be granted, at a cost of £655 (+vat). It was proposed by Cllr Roots to accept the quote, seconded by Cllr Powell; with all in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

9 **Highways**

It was noted that a highways report had been circulated prior to the meeting, which detailed the current situation following the removal of the average speed cameras on the A20. Cllr Roots gave a brief overview for members of the public.

Cllr Roots had put forward to recommendations in the report:

- That Council add to the Highways Improvement Plan a proposal to have a “village gateway” at the eastern end of the village where the Harrietsham village sign currently is outside Harper Lea.
- That Council agrees to support Shellina Prendergast, the KCC member, in her efforts to arrange for the average speed cameras be alternated between Harrietsham and Brasted with each village having the cameras for a few months.

All Councillors were in support of both items and the Clerk will progress accordingly. **ACTION: Clerk**

10 **Santa’s Grotto**

The Clerk reported that a provisional date had been set for Saturday 21st December, due to the limited available slots in the hall. Depending on discussions with hirers, it may not be possible to use the Ambrose Hall. The Clerk asked whether, if booking is confirmed, selection boxes should be purchased and Councillors confirmed that 5 boxes should be purchased at a cost of £214.50. **ACTION: Clerk**

The Clerk added that the Co-op Manager had informed Cllr J Sams that he could help fund the event with a donation of £150 from their Community Funding Scheme. This would be a cheque, rather than items from the store. If the event is confirmed, the Clerk send submit a letter requesting a donation, which would help with the cost of the selection boxes. **ACTION: Clerk**

11 **Future Events**

28th September - Invicta Concert Band in the Church (7pm for 7.30pm start). Tickets are available from Chris Roots, Steve Brown or Audrey Joy

28th September - Macmillan Coffee Morning in the Booth Hall (10am - midday)

11th October - HIB AGM in the Village Hall (7.30pm)

12th October - Ploughman’s in the Church

26th October - Bingo Night in the Village Hall (7pm start)

Coffee Morning - Every Friday in the Booth Hall (10am - midday)

12 **Items for Future Consideration**

- Social Media - *Cllr Dean*

13 **Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 30th October 2024 at 7.30pm in the Booth Hall**

With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 8.27pm.

Items covered in the public discussion:

- A resident queried why the Parish Council was having to pay for the work required to create a new burial ground and the Clerk explained the process. The Amenity Manager added that the field is a community asset and the Parish Council wishes to keep control of the land, if it cannot be used as an extension to the churchyard.
- A query was raised at the cost of the allotments for the forthcoming year and the Clerk confirmed that the price will remain unchanged from the current year.
- A resident spoke regarding the speed of vehicles along the A20 and added that, following a recent accident, a police speed check had flagged a driver travelling at approximately 80mph.