

Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council

The Minutes of the Meeting of Hoo Saint Werburgh Parish Council
Held via Zoom on Thursday 3rd December 2020 at 7.00pm.

***Councillors present: Cutting
Counsell
Fray
Freshwater
Gissing
Pearce
Pratt
Rees
Sands
Savage
Tildesley
Williams
Winstanley***

Also: Parish Clerk.

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Tildesley .

1. Apologies.

No apologies were received.

2. Declaration of Interests.

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to all present.

It was proposed by Cllr Williams to accept these as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Gissing and agreed by all present.

The approved Minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

5. Public Question Time.

No matters were raised.

6. Urgent Matters.

MC/20/2712 – Cllr Sands stated that this application was submitted to change an affordable housing condition. He suggested that this should be discussed under planning matters. This was agreed.

7. Parish Councillor Vacancy.

The stated that with members permission, this item would be discussed as a Confidential Item at the close of the meeting.

This was agreed.

8. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman gave his report to the meeting.

9. Clerks Report.

The Clerks Report was noted.

HIF Infrastructure Consultation

Medway Council HIF team would like to invite parish members to a virtual meeting to discuss the proposals for the HIF infrastructure project.

Leaflets with more information will be sent to residents and businesses on the Hoo peninsula mid-December. This will include details on the consultation process which will be live from January 2021.

I can book you in for a meeting anytime in January/ February to give you the opportunity to either receive a full presentation or general meeting. If you could send me dates and times that suit yourselves. If you could also indicate your time restrictions if any, on how long you would be prepared to attend a meeting.

This was discussed and it was agreed that the meeting agenda should be reduced for January to enable Medway Council to give a presentation on the HIF Infrastructure Consultation.

Christmas Tree

It was reported that the Christmas tree had now been installed in the Village Centre. Members confirmed that the lights were now on.

10. Monthly Financial Statement.

The Financial Statement was circulated to all members.

This was proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Rees, and agreed by all present.

It was further agreed that the PC would transfer £80,000 from the PC Cooperative Bank Account, to the PC Unity Bank Account.

11. Financial Matters.

Cllr Savage asked for members approval to purchase a hamper for £200 for the care home. This was proposed by Cllr Perfect, seconded by Cllr Williams and agreed by all present.

Action: Cllr Savage to action.

12. 2021/2022 Budget.

The following report was presented to Members with the draft Budget.

The Finance, Audit and General Purposes Committee met on Monday 30th November 2020 to discuss the 2021/2022 budget and report. The attached draft budget was agreed to put to full council for members consideration and approval.

The draft budget recommends a 2021/2022 Precept of £95945, an increase of 3.5%.

It was agreed that an amount would be brought forward from reserves in order to balance the budget and the precept increase would be capped at 3.5%.

When considering the draft budget, the following matters were considered:

1. Recreation Grounds

The allocation inserted for recreation ground has been reduced to £5000 as some of the previously planning work has been covered, and the tree maintenance is now under a separate allocation.

This is to cover the following:

- **Repairs to play area as necessary.**

The Parish Council needs to make provision for the repair of the play area as it cannot rely on having Section 106 money to cover this, also vandalism is not covered under our insurance Policy.

- **Repairs to footpaths and benches.**

The Parish Council needs to make provision for the replacement/repair of benches and footpaths should this be necessary within the financial year.

A footpath in Pottery Road Recreation Ground has already been identified as needing some remedial work and this is been undertaken by the Chairman and Warden, however at some point in the future it may be necessary to have a contractor in to undertake repairs, and therefore the allocation in the budget should be sufficient to cover this.

2. Maintenance of Parish Council and trees and recreation grounds

This is likely to be the biggest cost to the Parish Council in the next financial year.

As agreed at a recent meeting, Norse has been commissioned to inspect the Recreation Ground and draw up Management Plans for our recreation grounds.

We are still awaiting the final reports – this was delayed due to Covid.

To date we have received an estimate for the maintenance of the trees at Kingshill Recreation Ground over a five-year period, this indicates that in year one the maintenance needed will cost in the region of £1500, reducing to £350 in year five.

It is anticipated that this cost will be similar for each recreation ground and therefore for the maintenance of the trees alone requires an allocation of approximately £5000 – this can be financed by increasing the precept or from the PC reserves.

At present for budget purposes, I have brought forward an allocation from our reserves, this can be changed.

The Parish Council needs to consider the maintenance of its trees and land as the insurance cover dictates that we must have evidence that maintenance is carried out on a regular basis should a claim arise against us, therefore the Parish Council has a legal obligation to have this work undertaken.

3. Neighbourhood Plan

Members considered whether to insert an allocation to assist with the Neighbourhood Plan, and also considered the following suggestion from Cllr Pearce.

My budget idea/suggestion/allocation is for the Neighbourhood Plan/Local Plan which in my view is the most important emerging thing just around the corner. The Local Plan will decide the future of Hoo and Chattenden for the next 20 years.

It would be something along the lines of £2 per dwelling (4,500 approx.) - an allocation of £9,000 let us say. This will be used to support the neighbourhood plan as well as any activities relating to the Local Plan which we decide to do - it is there if we need it.

Regardless of being pro or anti the Local Plan (or representing pro or anti local residents), it is safe to say that the more we put in the more we get out, especially in terms of the Neighbourhood Plan. Because of the scale of change and proposals for Hoo I do not feel that standard grants which we may or may not obtain cuts it, the Parish should invest some of our own money as well, so it is there if needed.

It was agreed that the precept should not be increased to finance the NHP as grants were available to assist with the finance of this.

Should the NHP Group require financial assistance at some point in the future, they could request support from the Parish Council, and this could be considered from the Parish Councils reserves.

4. Allotments

The allocation for allotment expenditure has been decreased to £1000 as the standpipe work has been completed.

5. Youth provision

The Youth Provision allocation has been maintained at £2000.

6. Burial-ground

An allocation of £5000 has been included for the Burial Ground expenditure, based on Cllr Rees notes below and the need to keep the area well maintained. There may also be S106 funding available for the fencing.

The Burial Ground:-

1. *Grass Cutting*
2. *Hedge Maintenance – I have prepared a 40-year cycle of minimal maintenance which will ensure a strong hedge.*
3. *School Gardening Project. This did not proceed in 2020 because of the pandemic. A water supply is an issue though particularly with the heat waves. I did obtain quotes last year and if the Parish Council is happy to do so then please include this in the budget. £1234.15*
4. *Gates have been budgeted in the past but if a transfer to the Church is not imminent then I am inclined to leave gates until the hedge grows otherwise, they could be stolen.*

7. Van renewal fund

I have inserted an allocation of £500 to start the new van replacement fund, it was agreed that this may need to be increased in future years.

8. Grant and donations

The Grants and Donations allocation has been increased to £2200. The £200 increase is included to finance the cost of a hamper to donate to the Care Home on an annual basis.

9. Village planting

An allocation of £1000 has been included in the budget for Village Centre Planting as discussed at a previous meeting.

It was agreed that this item should be discussed in detail at a future Environmental Meeting to establish how this could be undertaken in partnership with Medway Norse who are responsible for the maintenance of the Village Centre.

10. Newsletter

An allocation of £600 has been included for the provision of a newsletter.

11. War Memorial Maintenance.

An allocation of £2500 had been included for the maintenance and cleaning of the War Memorial and the Church. Clock. The Parish Council is responsible for both.

It was noted that there is a War Memorial Trust and grants can also be obtained through this at warmemorials.org.

12. Other matters for discussion/consideration:

The following a suggestion from Cllr Williams was considered. It was agreed that an allocation of £12000 would be included for the provision of a part time assistant to the Parish Warden. Working 15 hours a week alongside the Warden, to assist with the increased duties in and around the Parish.

The allocation of £12000 would cover the annual salary and the purchase of additional equipment.

Should we now be planning for additional staffing to assist the Warden. This is because of the following.

We now have the maintenance and continuing development of the New Burial ground as our responsibility for at least three years, maybe longer. At the moment, this is being maintained at a minimum standard by a contractor and by the Warden working overtime. If we are to continue to manage this area and improve it, we need to allocate additional resources.

There are an increasing number of jobs occurring where it is impossible for the Warden to tackle without assistance. At this time, we are dependent upon the good offices of Chairman John assisting him.

There are increasing numbers of new residents arriving to occupy the new developments, this will invariably increase the use of open spaces and recreation grounds, which will generate the need for increased maintenance.

Also, at this time we have no cover for the Wardens holiday's, which can leave gaps in work being covered.

I would suggest that we give consideration to making provision in the budget to the employment of a part-time assistant warden for 15 hours per week. Actual hours to be discussed. Rate of pay to be slightly lower than the existing rate for the Warden, plus we will need to make an initial allowance of £1,600 for equipment.

Cllr Tildesley spoke regarding the draft budget and the allocation to finance an Assistant Warden. He stated that he felt the workload of the Warden did not warrant an Assistant, he felt that the PC should consider contracting out specific work such as the Burial Ground.

Cllr Rees stated that she agreed with the points put forward by the Chairman.

Cllr Sands stated that this was not about now, it was about planning for the future, he felt that the PC should be proactive.

Cllr Savage agreed with this view.

Cllr Williams stated that he had considered this for some time and felt that now was the time to progress this and discuss the options further, He stated that there were elements of the Wardens work

where it was necessary to have assistance for health and safety reasons, and he did not feel that this was a role for the Chairman or any other councillor.

He identified a number of areas where the Wardens workload would benefit from an Assistant Warden. He stated that the employment of an Assistant would not undermine the Wardens role, it would compliment it.

This was discussed, and it was agreed that the allocation in the budget would remain, and the options for the employment of an Assistant Warden would be discussed in more detail by the FA&GP Committee at a future meeting.

Cllr Gissing proposed to accept the draft budget unchanged and agree a Precept of £95945 for 2021/2022. This was seconded by Cllr Fray and agreed by all present.

Action: Precept agreed £95945.

13. Environmental Matters.

The Chairman reported that he had met with representatives for Wickstead Leisure to discuss the final arrangements for the installation of the new play equipment at Pottery Road Recreation Ground. He stated that the children's seats needed to be relocated in order to accommodate the new equipment, and he asked for members approval to progress this.

This was agreed by members and the Clerk was asked to progress this with Wickstead.

Action: Clerk to progress.

Cllr Winstanley reported that the bridal path at the top end of Bells Lane had been destroyed by contractors, and was now impassible. She stated that she had reported this to MC Officer, Adam Taylor and was awaiting action.

14. Planning Matters.

Cllr Sands reported on planning related matters.

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| MC/20/2674 | Complete Moling Services , Fenn Street, St Mary Hoo, Rochester
Construction of 6no office/light industrial buildings with associated car parking.
Objections – Peninsula Way overcapacity, Hoo Stop Line. |
| MC/20/2930 | 1 Ropers Farm, Ropers Green Lane, High Halstow, Rochester
Construction of a swimming pool to rear of property and construction of associated filtration room and store.
No objections. |
| MC/20/2945 | Homeleigh, 218 Main Road, Hoo St Werburgh, Rochester, Medway
Outline application with all matters reserved for the construction of 7 detached self-build houses with associated access - demolition of stable block/menage.
Objection – Backland development. |

15. Highway Matters.

Cllr Williams stated that following the last PC meeting, a letter regarding highway matters had been sent to Medway Council, Kelly Tolhurst MP, the DoT, and the Police, he reported on the response received. He stated that since then a meeting had taken place between Kelly Tolhurst and Medway Council.

He reported that a meeting of the PC Highways Committee had taken place, and it was agreed that the Parish Council should continue to put pressure on Medway Council to take action regarding the highway issues. He stated that Cllr Pearce had put forward some ideas to improve Four Elms Hill, and these would be incorporated in the letter to Medway Council.

Members agreed to sending a letter to Medway Council.

Members discussed the issues with HGV lorries parking along the verges and roads in the parish, and the issues associated with this.

Cllr Sands stated that he was due to have a Zoom meeting with Kelly Tolhurst MP to update her on matters, he stated that the issue was now out of control. He reported that an article was due to be published in the Sunday Times to publicise the problems regarding Amazon lorries.

16. Ward Councillors Report.

Medway Councillor Ron Sands gave his report to the meeting.

17. Neighbourhood Plan Report.

Cllr Cutting gave a report on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

She reported that a grant application had been submitted for further funding for the NHP and the work had been shared with Medway Council, and feedback was due before Christmas.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Cutting for her report.

18. Date of next meeting.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 7th January 2021.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman closed the meeting to the press and public at 8.40pm.

Signed.....

Chairman

Dated.....