



KINGSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Monday 4th December 2023 at 19:30

Present: Cllr Paul Chatley (Chairman); Cllr Jerry Cook; Cllr Davina Martin (Vice-Chairman); Cllr Val McWilliams; Cllr Steve Reeves; Cllr Laura Spencer; Cllr Richard Story; 4 Members of the Public; Mrs Steph Woods (Clerk)

1. Chairman opening remarks, apologies and approval of absences:

Cllr Chatley welcomed everyone present and thanked them for attending the meeting. No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of previous meetings:

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 6th November 2023 was approved as a true record, proposed by Cllr Cook and seconded by Cllr Story and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3. Declarations of interest

Cllr Spencer declared an interest in agenda item 8c.

4. Public Forum:

Members of the Public in attendance were afforded the opportunity to ask a question or make a statement.

- A question was asked on agenda item 9d and where PC meant Parish Council or Parochial Church Council. It was confirmed that it meant Parish Council.
- Questions regarding the current budget position and the reserves were raised in relation to the forthcoming grant request submission from the church. The Chairman advised that the finances and church request is to be discussed in item 9 on the agenda.

5. Reports from Kent Police, County and City Council members:

Our two Kent Police Rural Officers have confirmed that the PC can list their email details on its website.

Cllr Sole's November report has been previously circulated to all members and is on Facebook. To note that he detailed that there have been reports that the Nailbourne is due to be flowing soon.

6. Matters arising: (if not already on the agenda)

- Previous request for a Salt bin in Marley Lane/Jesse's Hill has been raised again. KCC Highways had agreed to do a site inspection by October but no follow up has been received. The Clerk has emailed KCC Highways earlier today to get an update.

7. Planning

a) New Applications:

- CA/23/02067: Birch Lodge, Church Lane, Kingston, Kent: Application for lawful development certificate for proposed replacement of ground floor window with French doors. This is just for information as it is not open to public comment.
- CA/23/02214: 78 The Street, Kingston, Kent: Single-storey outbuilding and shed following demolition of existing building. It was agreed that the PC support this application, with no further comments to make.

b) Determined

- CA/23/01882: 3 Rectory Orchard, Church Lane, Kingston, Kent: Erection of two sheds.
GRANTED

- CA/23/01698: Hornbeams, Jesse's Hill, Kingston, Kent: Detached single-storey ancillary annexe following demolition of existing Barn, including part change of use of existing paddock to garden. REFUSED
- CA/23/01806: 6 The Street, Kingston, Kent: Single-storey detached dwelling with accommodation in roof together with detached double garage following demotion of existing dwelling and double garage. Support but need to highlight that consideration of traffic during construction needs to be made with appropriate mitigation methods. GRANTED

8. Finance:

- a) Payments and Receipts: Bank Balance is £26,479.47 as of 28th November 2023 (Including grants and reserves) £25,135.96 in the savings account and £1,343.51 in current account of which £8,000 is reserves and £1,133.20 is left within the embankment grant

Payments:

Clerk - Salary (Nov 23)

Clerk - Backdate Pay Award (Apr-Oct 23)

HMRC – PAYE (Nov 23) - £41.00

Envisage – Inv 1486 for Grounds Maintenance (Oct 23) - £240.00

The above payments were proposed by Cllr Cook and seconded by Cllr Story. ALL AGREED

Clerk wages declaration was discussed again but the agreement remains unchanged.

The current account balance is now at £707.35 so it was proposed by Cllr Spencer to transfer £1,000 from savings account which was seconded by Cllr Reeves. ALL AGREED.

- b) NALC Pay Award 2023/24

NALC have circulated the 2023/24 pay scales for Clerks which equates to an Increase of £26 per month. The Standing order will need to be updated next month due to HMRC payments and backdate pay has been paid.

- c) Grant request from St Giles' Church – repairs and church yard

Clerk has obtained advice from KALC and a detailed response was received. It was highlighted that any grant given should not result in an increase in precept. NALC has also advised against grants to churches as it is currently not legally valid although there is an amendment going through Parliament currently but it is not approved yet. A decision is not expected from the House of Commons until Jan/Feb and it was advised by KALC that the PC hold off on any decision until there is a decision and NALC have issued a new briefing note. It was also noted that the Church must prove that a grant from the PC is a last resort and they have exhausted all other options for funding. Regarding this the KVHT have not approached for donation and they have potential available funds, no complicated legislation governing them or major projects planned. Support from residents appears to be limited as only a small amount has been raised through the Churches recent funding request in the village magazine. It is also important to note that any grant request is discretionary spending and the requested amount does not need to be paid, any amount below that can be granted or it can be rejected on budget or public interest grounds and it was suggested to canvas residents to gauge whether this grant is deemed acceptable use of the PC's funds.

The current budget position was summarised with the balance at the end of this financial year expected to be below £22,000 with further potential tree works needed. Reserves for next year need to be at the new precept value of £11,000 so this leaves a maximum of £8,000 left outside of the reserves for digressionary spending but it needs to be noted that there potentially a lot of work needed to the Embankment once the tree survey has been completed and this is a statutory requirement for the PC. If a grant can be made after the legislation change, this will be done under S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and a maximum amount that can be granted, by law, is £9.93 per elector which currently equates to a maximum grant of £3,922.35.

The councillors voted on whether the PC should we canvas residents which was agreed at 4/2 votes. Cllr Spencer did not vote due to a conflict of interest.

The councillors then voted on whether they should canvas resident before the legislation announcement and this was agreed at 3/3 with the Chairman having the casting vote. It was decided to work on this for finalisation at the next meeting with the canvas taking place sometime in January 2024. Cllr Spencer did not vote due to a conflict of interest.

The Councillors were reminded that no formal grant application has been received for the Church yet, only an email request from the Friends of St Giles Church. There was some confusion as to who would be making the grant request and it was confirmed that it will be the Kingston Parochial Church. Clerk to reply to the original email with an update on the situation following this meeting and ask them to get the correct person to make the grant submission.

The PC's involvement with the closed church yard was discussed again and Councillors were reminded that on 2nd March 2020 the PC agreed not to take responsibility by a vote of 5/2. It was passed onto CCC and then the PCC withdrew the request. As this request is from a Councillor and not the PCC a formal request would need to be received from them for it to be opened for discussion again.

9. Miscellaneous Parish Council Matters:

a) Refurbishment of the mosaic sign:

Clerk has chased quotation from artist for the mosaic village signs and received no response. A resident has spoken to the artist and he has been informed that the paint is peeling off and he advises getting a new mould which he can then paint. Quotations for this will be obtained.

b) Kingston Welcome Pack

No update.

c) Emergency Plan

No update.

d) Kingston Village Hall Trust PC Representative

Cllr Chatley has stood down as the PC rep on the KVHT and a replacement was discussed. It was agreed that Cllr Cook will stay as he is and if he decides to stand on the KVHT next year, will become the new PC rep.

e) Guest Speaker for Annual Village Meeting

Ideas for a speaker for the meeting next year were sought and Councillors were asked to come up with some suggestions for next meeting. One suggestion was to get a speaker to talk on the importance of vaccinations.

10. KALC, KCC or CCC Correspondence:

a) Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034: Consultation information (KCC)

Circulated to Councillors prior to meeting – deadline of 30th January 2024 to comment.

b) Household Support Fund (CCC)

Circulated to Councillors prior to meeting. The flyer has been printed to go onto village noticeboard and will be put on Facebook and in the Village Magazine.

11. Highways, Footpaths and Trees:

a) Highways Improvement Plan – including Marley Lane and Covert Lane

Email has been sent to KCC Highways regarding the wrong signs on Marley Lane and placement of horse signs on Covert Lane. No response has been received before the meeting.

- b) Woodland Management Plan – including KCC grant
Cllr Sole has approached PC about the grant of £5,000 for new tree planting. Cllr Sole has also been approached by Adisham PC for a grant towards their community orchard and he needed a decision on whether we were ready to apply for the grant. Cllr Chatley informed Cllr Sole that the earliest we can start to plant new trees is early autumn 2024 so the grant has now gone to Adisham.

The Volunteer group are waiting for the tree works to be completed so they can go ahead with their planned works to the Embankment.

- c) Tree Surveys – including ivy removal
As provisional date of w/c 11th December has been given to carry out the ivy removal but this is subject to workloads due to emergency tree works needed in the current bad weather.
- d) Footpath from Kingston to Barham
No further update has been received on this so it was agreed to remove from agenda.
- e) Footpaths within Kingston Parish
No updates on footpaths and the recent reported pot holes a lot have been repaired but more have now appeared.
- f) Litterbin outside The Barn
Clerk has still not received a response from CCC. This has now been forwarded to Cllr Sole to chase on PC's behalf.
- g) Nailbourne Clearance – Environment Agency
All brambles overgrown by Black Robin have not been cut back. Clerk to contact EA to ask them to cut back as worried they will cause an obstruction when the Nailbourne starts flowing again.

12. Clerk Report and Correspondence (Unless otherwise discussed):

- Parish Councillor Planning training 16 or 23 January 2024 at CCC has been circulated to Councillors.
- An enquiry has been received from a parishioner regarding overgrown hedges along The Street which has been resolved and the hedges have been trimmed back from Highway.
- An enquiry has been received asking if Parish Council contact SE Water on behalf of all the residents on Marley Lane regarding the insufficient pressure valves which is causing frequent water leaks and is damaging the Highway. Clerk to contact SE Water.

13. Matters for future discussion:

None.

14. Date of next meeting: 8th January 2024 at 7.30pm in The Barn, Kingston

The Chairman wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed to the public at 20:45.

Signed (Chairman)

Date

Please note these Minutes remain as draft Minutes until they are approved by the Parish Council at their next Parish Council meeting on 8th January 2024.

Future meeting dates: 05/02/2024, 04/03/2024, 15/04/2024, 13/05/2024 (Annual Parish Council meeting), 22/05/2024 (Annual Village Meeting), 03/06/2024, 08/07/2024, 02/09/2024, 07/10/2024, 04/11/2024 and 02/12/2024