

**MINUTES - DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023 AT 8.00 PM  
IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Present:** Cllrs R. Cheesman - Chairman; J Tournay; J Cottis; R. Wingett; B Cottis; Mrs T. Irving – Clerk/RFO; 3 Members of the Public

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Roz Cheesman.

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor Gordon Newton – conflicting appointment, Cllr Gary Cooke (KCC). The apologies were noted and accepted.  
Apologies were subsequently received from Cllr Alden-Morris.
- 2 NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO FILM/PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD THE MEETING:**  
The Clerk for the purpose of minuting.
- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS:** No declarations received.
- 4 APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 07.11.23 & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 22.11.23.**  
The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and were duly signed by Cllr Cheesman.
- 5 COUNCILLOR VACANCY:** Two members of the public confirmed their previously expressed interest: Lawrence Rustem and Peter Fincham.  
After due consideration - following an address by both candidates - Peter Fincham was invited to join the council. Lawrence Rustem was thanked for his interest.  
An Acceptance of Office was duly signed (additional co-option paperwork to follow within 28 days.)
- 6 ADJOURNMENT FOR QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No questions were raised.  
  
The meeting was reconvened.
- 7 REPORTS RECEIVED FROM:**
  - 7.1 County Councillor** – Not available.:
  - 7.2 Borough Councillor** – Nothing to report.
  - 7.3 DCA Representative** – Not available.
- 8 CRIME REPORT:** No new reports.

## 9 PLANNING:

**New Applications** – No new applications.

### **Applications Awaiting a Decision.**

23/504382/TPOA The Glebe, Otham.

23/502544/full – 32 Reinden Grove

### **Application Permitted**

23/504410/Full – 25 Monkdown

## 10 ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT FOR THE RIVER LEN UPDATE:

The exiting MBC Manager has asked the new manager – or a member of the team – to make contact with the Clerk to hear ideas and see where the Borough can support community involvement. A meeting is expected for the winter period.

Cllr Wingett is also hoping to involve Helen Whately MP.

**ACTION: Cllr Wingett**

## 11 FINANCE:

### 11.1 Approve Statement of Account:

Opening Balance

	£
Balance of Current Account:	<b>46,122.80</b>
Balance of Investment Account:	£
	<b>10,615.31</b>

<b>Less cheques sent:</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Amount £</b>
R. Cheesman	Expenses - Christmas Event	27.99
DCA	Hall Hire	65.61
HOKH	Donation	100.00
We Are Beams	Donation	75.00
A. M Butler	Expenses - Christmas Event	86.00
T. Irving	Expenses - 5 x Fruit Trees (F P Matthews)	321.00
Staffing Costs (November)	Payroll & Expenses	2,779.59
Miss V L Bass	Music (Dulcettes) Carols Event	125.00
Sparkx	Christmas Lighting	3,468.00
KALC	Training - KALC (R. Wingett/T. Irving)	88.80
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>7,136.99</b>
<b>Cheques Rec'd:</b>		
Maidstone Borough Council	PSS Grant	76.00

### Closing Balances:

	£
Balance of Current Account:	<b>39,061.81</b>
Balance of Investment	£
Account:	<b>10,615.31</b>

Acceptance of the previously circulated account was proposed by Cllr A-M Butler, seconded by Cllr J Tournay and unanimously agreed. **RESOLVED.**

**11.2 Consider Donation Request for U Can Too:** Unfortunately, due to current financial restraints, it was unanimously agreed that the council are unable to assist with a donation at this point in time.

**11.3 Budget/Precept Proposal for 2024/25.** Following consideration of the Finance Committee's recommendation, it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to increase the precept by 5% to £39,0000. **RESOLVED.**

**11.4 Insurance:** Update re Cyber Attack Cover. Following investigation by Cllr Wingett, it was agreed that it is not necessary to request cyber-attack cover.

**11.5 Conclusion of Internal Review:** Cllr Tournay confirmed that a second review has been completed and all documentation has been returned to the Clerk. Cllr Tournay was thanked for her efforts.

**11.6 Review of Fixed Asset Register.** No update necessary (no assets in excess of £500 have been purchased since the last review).

**11.7 Other Matters to Report:** Cllr Butler to investigate alternative investment accounts.

**ACTION: Cllr Butler**

### 12 TRAFFIC RELATED ISSUES

- Review of Speed Watch Proposal. This is dependent on the data that is currently being gathered by the speed survey.

#### **HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE:**

Meeting held with Highways on 16/11/23.

Concerns were raised that when exiting from Parsonage Place onto Church Road, visibility is restricted by the hedgerow to the right-hand side.

The kissing gate to Public Right of Way KM88 (rear of Kings Acre) has been turned round, as requested. However, the footpath leading to the PROW has not been completed and various pieces of wood and a tree trunk need to be cleared from the site.

Members were advised that a 20-mph speed limit would be a waste of time & money as it is not enforceable, and salt spreaders etc cannot work at that speed. (This was assessed by KHS in 2020 when DPC were advised that 'mean speeds do not support a 20 mph limit'. No further action to be taken by KHS).

Verge posts to be requested for the layby opposite The Spires Shops.

Corner protection for the junctions of Gorham/Murrain Drive and Grampian Way has been requested by a resident. This was assessed by Highways in 2020 and rejected.

**13 TREES UPDATE:** Highways has advised that 31 trees are due to be planted in the parish. The request for a substantial fir tree is under investigation by Highways.

- Planting of the fruit trees at the roundabout is imminent.
- 14 CCTV: Approve Removal of Equipment Quotation:** Awaiting information from the DCA.
- 15 REVIEW CHRISTMAS CAROLS AND LIGHTS CEREMONY:**  
It was unfortunate that one of the performers was unwell and unable to attend. However, lots of children and parents were in attendance, although numbers were slightly down on the previous year. Leftover sweets and drinks were donated to Messy Church at St Nicholas.
- Load testing of the columns is due to be carried out during 2024. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Hall to be requested for Saturday 7 December 2024 between 3 pm and 6 pm.  
Rock Choir to be requested to attend. **ACTION: Clerk**
- Cllr Butler to ask the Madginford School Singing Club if they would like to participate?  
**ACTION: Cllr Butler**
- It was suggested that a Sub Committee meeting could be held to review the style of lights etc. **ACTION: Cllr Cheesman**
- 16 REVIEW OF POLICIES:**  
**Media Relations Policy** – It was agreed to update with a new Section 2 ‘Civility & Respect’. A new paragraph to be included at the end of Social Media Policy regarding responsibility of Social Media Platforms. **RESOLVED**  
**Reserves** – Reviewed with no updates necessary.  
**General Privacy** – Reviewed with no updates necessary.  
**GDPR Data Audit** - Refence to Satswana to be removed. **RESOLVED**  
**Document Retention** - Reviewed with no updates necessary.
- 17 COMMEMORATION OF D-DAY (6 JUNE 1944) 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY:** Consider purchase of a beacon and/or peace lamp: A beacon was dismissed as too large (previous enquires made with venues were refused). Peace lamp on hold awaiting further information from Cllr Cheesman. **ACTION: Cllr Cheesman**
- 18 FOXDEN DRIVE HEDGE:** Due to the tight time frame that will be left for tidying the hedge following February’s meeting (bird nesting), the Clerk was authorised to agree the work based on an increase of no more than 10% of last year’s cost. **ACTION: Clerk**
- 19 CLERK’S REPORT:** An area of Mallards has been fenced off by the lake due to concerns about the bank/revetment. Awaiting assessment by MBC.
- 20 REPORTS FROM MEETINGS/SEMINARS ATTENDED:** Cllr Wingett was unwell and send his apologies for the KALC AGM.  
• **Highways Seminar (November)** – Attended by Cllr Wingett and Clerk.
- 21 CONSIDER NECESSITY FOR JANUARY 2024 MEETING:** It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the council will next meet on Tuesday, 6 February. If an urgent matter arises, an extraordinary meeting will be held. **RESOLVED**

**22 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:**

Various correspondence previously circulated by email.

**23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:**

- Review Banking Arrangements
- DCA Fete

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.45 pm**

Please contact the Clerk if you have items that you wish to be considered for future agendas.

The next meeting of the Council will be held at 8pm on **Tuesday, 6 February, 2024.**