



Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday, 19th October 2023 at 7pm at Cuxton Library

Present: Cllr Porter (Chair to start meeting), Cllr Chamberlain, Cllr Jensen, Cllr Chalker (Elected Chair of meeting), Cllr Manning, Cllr Nightingale and Cllr Vye.

In attendance: In the absence of the clerk, Cllr Jensen took the minutes.

There were two members of the public present.

105) Extraordinary Vote for Chairman to chair this meeting – see apologies for absence.

Cllr Porter advised Councillors a chairman had to be elected for this evening's meeting and asked for nominations. Cllr Porter proposed Cllr Chalker chair the meeting. Cllr Nightingale seconded the proposal. No other proposals were received. Cllr Chalker accepted the nomination. Six Councillors voted for the proposal and Cllr Chalker did not vote. Cllr Chalker was duly elected to chair the meeting.

It was resolved Cllr Chalker chair the meeting.

106) Apologies for absence

Cllr Thorley – illness

Cllr Wilson – prior engagement

Cllr White – prior engagement

It was resolved to accept these apologies.

107) Declarations of Interest (DPI, conflict of interest and personal interests) and alterations to the Register

Cllr Vye entered the meeting at 19:05 and apologised for his lateness. His apology was accepted.

Cllr Vye - 6c

Cllr Porter - 10 (v)

Cllr Nightingale - 10 (v)

108) Minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2023 – for approval

No amendments required. Cllr Porter proposed the minutes be accepted without amendment. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Nightingale. All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

It was resolved to accept these minutes as a true record of the meeting.

109) Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 9th October 2023 – for approval

No amendments required. Cllr Porter proposed the minutes be accepted without amendment. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain. All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

It was resolved to accept these minutes as a true record of the meeting.

110) Matters Arising

None.

Medway Councillor's report and Public Session

Councillors had been provided with a report received from Ward Cllr Fearn which had been distributed to them prior to the start of the meeting. Following discussion of the items within the report, Councillors agreed when the outside tap had been provided for the use of the library garden volunteers, the Parish Council would pay any additional water charge to compensate the library. The new clerk to liaise with the library to confirm this arrangement.

The Parish Council would like to accept Cllr Fearn's generous offer of a donation towards the Christmas tree and the clerk to advise Cllr Fearn accordingly.

Cllr Chalker advised a presentation was to be given later this year regarding the proposed Marina development and any amendments could be made at that time. Cllr Chalker suggested local residents might want to be involved and Cllr Nightingale stated a notice should be added to noticeboards to alert residents. The new clerk to arrange once they are in situ. Cllr Chalker also stated an outline proposal had been submitted by the vineyard to Medway Council.

Resident 1: Asked if speed cameras could be sited in Bush Road. Cllr Nightingale stated this could be discussed at the next Traffic Management meeting on 3rd November. Cllr Chalker suggested the Parish Council asked for a sign to be installed advising of pedestrians in the road, where the pavement ended in Bush Road. The resident asked if 'read receipts' could be issued as an email had been sent to a Parish Councillor but no reply had been received. Cllr Porter suggested Councillors could set up an automatic response acknowledging receipt of emails.

Resident 2: Raised an issue regarding the strip of land between Six Acre Wood and the bungalows in Woodhurst Close which residents had previously requested to purchase but this had been declined by the Parish Council. The resident referred to a Forestry Commission report which advised the trees were dangerous and residents were concerned about the lack of sunlight in the winter months. Cllr Porter advised Qualitrees had removed some trees infected with Ash Dieback and suggested this matter could be considered at the next Land Management Committee meeting in 2024 and that the resident contact the CCG representative. Cllr Chalker asked if a copy of this report could be provided to the Parish Council.

111) Finance

a) Bank Balances

No comments raised.

It was resolved to accept these balances as correct.

b) Approval of payments made since last meeting

The clerk had provided Councillors with details of payments made since the last meeting. Cllr Vye commented on the payment made to CSG Global and asked how many refuse sacks were received for the amount paid.

It was resolved to accept these payments as correct.

c) Approval of accounts for payment

The clerk provided Councillors with four accounts for payment.

The first related to the yearly rental for the allotment site to AW & OE Law. Approved.

The second related to the invoice received from Mazars, who as external auditors had concluded the audit for 2022/23. Approved.

The third related to the annual subscription to the KCPFA (Kent County Playing Fields Association). Approved.

The final invoice related to the fee for the speaker at the recent KALC meeting. The clerk had been asked to obtain further details which had been provided to Councillors. Following discussion, this payment was approved as a gesture of goodwill with a comment advising that Cllr Chalker was part of Halling Parish Council at the time of the KALC meeting, so was unaware of any agreement to pay by Cuxton Parish Council.

It was resolved the clerk would make payment of all the invoices and confirm the above details to Frindsbury Parish Council when making payment.

112) To consider the External Auditor's report for 2022/23

The clerk had provided Councillors with the audit report received from the external auditors Mazars. Following discussion, Councillors were pleased no issues had been raised. The report was accepted as approved unanimously.

It was resolved to accept the external auditors report for 2022/23.

113) Pavilion Re-Development

As there had been no meeting of the steering group regarding the comments made by residents in the survey replies, there was nothing to report.

114) Lower Thames Crossing enquiry – new Councillor contact required

As not all Councillors could attend this meeting, this matter was deferred for a contact to be decided at the next full Council meeting.

115) Report from Land Management Committee meeting 12th October 2023 (JP)

(i) Courts Re-development – discussion as to the Parish Council's requirements for future use

As not all Councillors could attend this meeting, this matter was deferred to the next full Council meeting for further discussion.

(ii) Firework celebrations – bonfire (clearance and fencing) update following response from insurers

Following discussion, Cllr Vye suggested in future the bonfire could be burnt on corrugated iron to help collect the nails. Cllr Nightingale suggested the Wheel of Cuxton be invited to a meeting to discuss future bonfires. Cllr Porter proposed the Parish Council pay for the clearance of the bonfire this year with a review in 2024. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain and all Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. The Clerk was asked to contact Andrew Bayliss to arrange the clearance of the site and request the Wheel of Cuxton fence the site off as soon as possible after the event.

(iii) Christmas Tree Lighting Event – response from school re choir, music for event and discussion regarding possible change of date

The school had confirmed their choir was able to sing traditional carols at the annual village tree lighting event, initially scheduled for 2nd December. As Piers Gray, lighting and sound technician, could only attend on the 9th December, a discussion took place regarding changing the date as it was felt sound and lighting was required. Cllr Porter proposed to change the date of the event to 9th December. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. The clerk to contact the school to inform them of the new date and to put a notice in the village noticeboards. The clerk to contact Mr Gray and request he liaise with the school regarding which carols they wanted to sing. Cllr Chamberlain volunteered to act as school liaison in the absence of a clerk. The lights to be placed on the Christmas tree at the end of November but not be turned on until 9th December. The Clerk had contacted stallholders and sent a letter to the Manager of the Co-Op asking for donations of mince pies and apple juice for the event. The Parish Council would need to purchase the mulled wine.

(iv) Teenage Village – Painting of base & Playground fence, discussion regarding recommendation regarding quotations received

The Council discussed the various quotations received to undertake this work and decided to accept the recommendation of the Land Management Committee that Medway Norse should be the preferred contractor. Cllr Porter proposed Medway Norse be engaged to undertake the works as specified in their quotation. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. The clerk was asked to contact Medway Norse and the other contractors to advise of Council's decision.

(v) Bike track – discussion regarding recommendation of quotation for bulb planting

Councillors read the written proposal for bulb planting. Cllr Chamberlain asked how many bulbs would be planted and was informed as some bulbs are sold by quantity and others by weight, a definitive number could not be given. Cllr Chamberlain proposed the bulbs be purchased and planted as per the quotation. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Manning. Five Councillors

voted for the proposal. Cllrs Porter and Nightingale abstained as they had already declared an interest in this matter.

(vi) Discussion regarding recommendation of request to purchase bark for Library gardens and 6 Acre Wood memorial site

Following discussion, Cllr Nightingale suggested he might be able to purchase the bark cheaper so either more bags could be purchased within the budget, £192, or sixteen bags be purchased at a slightly lower price. Cllr Chamberlain proposed the Parish Council agree to purchase sixteen bags of bark @ £12 each total £192.00. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Porter. All Cllrs voted in favour of this proposal. The Clerk to contact Mr Bourner to advise and ask him to liaise with Cllr Nightingale.

(vii) Discussion regarding the quotations received for the provision of a cableway in Recreation Ground

It was resolved to defer this item until there were more Councillors present as there might be staffing and consultation implications.

(viii) Steps behind Woodhurst Close – update and discussion regarding how to progress the repair/replacement of the steps

The clerk had asked the Ward Councillors for an update to confirm if Medway Council could assist but no response was received. For this matter to be considered by the Parish Council, Medway Council needed to advise they could not assist. Following discussion, the safety of the steps and the handrails, as some rails were quite low and not joined together, should be considered. Some of the concrete upstands were deteriorating. Cllr Manning suggested a slope be installed, but it was agreed this would not be as safe as steps. Cllr Chamberlain asked if estimates could be obtained. It was proposed to ask the new clerk to obtain three estimates and all Councillors agreed.

116) CCTV – discussion regarding quotations received

The three quotations received to install a new CCTV system were considered in detail. Following discussion, Cllr Manning proposed Logic Alarms Company instal the new CCTV system. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Jensen. Six Councillors voted in favour of the proposal and Cllr Vye abstained as he was concerned with a technical detail of the system.

117) Bike Track – update regarding Veolia Grant application

Cllr Jensen advised the Parish Council would not be able to fulfil the criteria for the grant and it would be more beneficial to apply to improve the courts in the Recreation ground. Cllr Manning asked how many people used the

facility. Cllr Nightingale suggested when the new CCTV was installed, it could be used to review this matter.

118) S. 106 monies and discussion regarding roundabout feasibility study at A228 junction with Bush Road and update on traffic loop reinstatement

Cllr Chalker stated the Parish Council does not hold this money and Medway Council may not be able to help. It will be loosely ring fenced and most would be used on feasibility studies regarding improvements on the A228. Cllr Nightingale suggested an informal A228 action group be initiated or the matter could be added to the Traffic Management Group. Cllr Chalker suggested low grade improvements as if major changes were made this could add to the chances of more housing developments being approved. Cllr Vye suggested only a left turn option out of Bush Road and Station Road might need to be considered due to safety concerns. Medway Council confirmed the traffic loop had been checked and was now working. Some Councillors had noticed the loop appeared to be working when turning right out of Bush Road.

119) Discussion regarding reimbursement received from Rural Liaison group

Following discussion, several suggestions were considered to beautify the village with this reimbursement. Councillors unanimously agreed the Land Management committee could discuss and make recommendations to full Council how this money might be spent.

120) Discussion regarding the provision and cost of an additional litter bin junction of Bush Road/Charles Drive

A discussion took place as to why the original bin was removed and where the new bin should be situated. Cllr Porter proposed the purchase of a new litter bin as per the quote from Medway Council, to be sited at junction of Bush Rd and Charles Drive. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Manning and was voted for unanimously by all Councillors.

121) Following request by Councillors, discussion regarding the quotation received from Medway Council (Norse Group) for the cost of a monthly gutter cleanse by the Scarab vehicle

Following discussion, it was decided the quotation was too expensive and the Scarab vehicle wouldn't be able to sweep around cars, although Cllr Chamberlain suggested residents could be asked to move their vehicles if the route was known. Cllr Chalker suggested the road sweepers had a set route to ensure everywhere was cleaned. The new clerk to manage this when they are in post and spot check the routes. Councillors unanimously decided to defer the Scarab quotation but revisit when the leaves had fallen.

122) Discussion regarding listing assets of Community interest (MN)

Cllr Nightingale suggested the Parish Council register an interest in purchasing Cuxton Community Church, although Cllr Vye stated such an interest did not mean it had to be sold to the Parish Council. Cllr Chalker suggested if there was a change of Government the rules might alter. Under current rules you had six months to complete a purchase but if the value of the land increased you could be liable for the difference. There had been no rumours of a sale, but the Church had lost its' income. Following discussion, it was decided to revisit this matter after November 2024 unless an indication of a potential sale had been received.

123) Discussion regarding the creation of a Parish plan (MN)

Cllr Nightingale suggested a Parish plan would be helpful to connect with the community. Cllr Chalker said Cliffe Woods spent years on their Parish plan, but it was subsequently overridden by the Local plan. Cllr Chalker also stated Cuxton Parish Council had considered this previously but there was little response from the community. Cllr Nightingale said it was more of a vision for the village. Cllr Porter suggested the Parish Council should submit comments regarding the Local plan, but Cllr Chalker stated he was working on a response from the Parish Council. Councillors agreed to defer this matter.

124) Discussion regarding new Councillor co-option advertisement detail and timescale for advertisement subject to confirmation from Medway Council on Monday 23rd October that no election has been called

The Parish Council was due to be advised by Medway Council if an election were needed on Monday 23rd October. If no election was required it was suggested the advertisement for a new Councillor was more holistic, e.g., 'interested local people'. Cllr Chalker suggested the Parish Council contact KALC for advice. The advertisement should be publicised on 23rd October and submissions to close on 6th November. Cllr Nightingale and the Chairman to sift the applications and prepare a shortlist of applicants to be invited to the next Council meeting on 16th November.

125) Discussion regarding the election of a new Chairman of Parish Council

It was discussed a Chairman for the Council was needed for business to continue. Cllr Nightingale asked if Cllr Chalker was Chairman would it be a conflict as he was also chair of the Finance Committee. Following discussion, it was agreed this would complement the position. Cllr Manning had some concerns regarding the Standing Orders. Cllr Chalker suggested not all Standing Orders were compulsory, but they needed to be updated. He also confirmed, if necessary, another Chairman could be voted in at the next AGM.

Cllr Porter proposed Cllr Chalker as the new Chairman of Cuxton Parish Council as he was the most experienced member. This was seconded by Cllr Manning. Six Councillors voted for this proposal, but Cllr Chalker did not vote for himself as he felt it was inappropriate.

As Cllr Chalker would be absent at the next Council meeting it was agreed Cllr Porter would open the next meeting and Cllr Jensen would take the

minutes if the new clerk was not in situ. Cllr Nightingale advised he would consider becoming Vice-Chairman with support from the Chairman. Cllr Chalker confirmed he would prepare the agenda for the next meeting.

126) Discussion regarding amending date of Finance meeting scheduled for 9th November (TT)

Following discussion, Councillors unanimously agreed to change the date of the Finance meeting to 30th November 2023.

127) Reports of Meetings Attended on Behalf of Council

a. KALC

No meeting had taken place since the last full Council meeting.

b. Rural Liaison

No meeting had taken place since the last full Council meeting.

c. Cuxton Academy of Schools

No meeting had taken place since the last full Council meeting.

d. Police Liaison

Cllr Wilson did not attend the recent meeting but had asked for a slot at the meeting due at the beginning of November.

128) Correspondence

None.

129) Information Exchange

Cllr Porter said the Clerk had contacted Ben Sweeney from Plant Life and he had agreed to attend a pre-meeting on 16th November. However, as not all Councillors would now be present at that meeting, the clerk was tasked to ask if Mr Sweeney could attend the December Council meeting.

Clerk recruitment: Cllr Porter, Cllr Wilson and Cllr Thorley were due to interview the seven shortlisted candidates on Saturday 21st. In Cllr Thorley's absence, Cllr Chalker confirmed he would be able to assist with the interviews. The Clerk was asked to contact the candidates to arrange interview timings to start at 10am and half-hourly thereafter. It was agreed the panel would use the questions and scoresheets used at previous interviews. The interview panel to meet at 9.30 am in the pavilion. Cllr Porter was to ask Cllr Thorley for her keys so that Cllr Chalker could open the pavilion. Cllr Porter asked if any Councillors would be able to meet and greet interviewees and Cllr Manning agreed to assist. Cllr Porter advised the offer letter and contract would need to be completed for the new clerk once a decision had been made. Cllr Nightingale asked whether the Clerk's contract

could be amended to state three months-notice was required on resignation to allow for future handovers.

Cllr Porter confirmed Cllr Wilson had offered to deal with the clerk emails from 26th October.

Cllr Wilson reminded all Councillors of the Kent Police fraud talk in Cuxton Social Club on Wednesday 25th October at 7pm.

Cllr Chalker confirmed Chris Fribbins, Halling clerk, would help with the financial aspects of the Council until a new clerk was appointed.

Cllr Jensen advised the current clerk wanted to know the details for the handover of equipment. It was decided this would be discussed after the interviews and the arrangements would be confirmed to him.

130) Members Future Agenda Items

Pavilion Re-Development

Lower Thames Crossing Enquiry – new Councillor contact

Courts Re-Development

Discussion regarding quotations received for the provision of a cableway in the Recreation Ground

Christmas Tree Lighting event – update regarding School Choir, charity to be supported and mulled wine/mince pies.

Steps behind Woodhurst Close update

Update from Traffic management meeting

Co-option of new Parish Councillor

Feedback on Fraud talk

Update re: new Parish Clerk

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:33 pm

Next meeting 16th November 2023, 7pm at Cuxton Library

Signed

Chairman

On the

day of

2023