

TESTON PARISH COUNCIL

These Minutes were approved by the Council at its 'virtual' meeting on 31st March 2020

Minutes of Meeting on 28th January 2020

Cllr Peter Coulling - Chairman
Cllr Christopher Douglass
Cllr Ms Tina Burgon (part)
Cllr Roger Levett
Cllr Robin Owens
Cllr Mrs Nina Wheat

Mrs Michelle Tatton (Clerk)

2 members of the public

Before the meeting commenced the Chairman drew attention to the Council's policy on photographing and broadcasting of Parish Council meetings. No intention to film, photograph or broadcast was declared.

19/200	Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and/or Other Significant Interests: In the interests of transparency, all Parish Councillors declared an interest in (a) Ash Tree Corner, Courtlands Verge and the Allotments, as the Parish Council owns the land; (b) the Village Green and Village Hall as Custodian Trustees; (c) Teston Land Conservation Trust Matters as they are Trustees; (d) Teston Village Stores CIC as they are Directors of the CIC; and d) Cllr Douglass, Cllr Owens, and Cllr Mrs Wheat declared an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee.			
19/201	Apologies for Absence: Received from Cllr Miss Page. These were accepted . Cllr Mrs Gooch had also sent her apologies.			
MEETING ADJOURNED FOR COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC				
A resident commented about the drains in Teston Lane. They had been told that the work could not be done until April as the work needed to be done out of hours. This would be chased by the Clerk as a pedestrian safety issue. It was noted that the drains on Tonbridge Road had been cleared in November. A resident had lost her footing in the dark and fallen over on the new dropped kerb on the north side of Church Street opposite the Store. The kerb was not the Parish Council’s responsibility and it was not known what could be done to make the kerb more obvious but it was suggested that the resident might like to carry a torch in future.				
MEETING RECONVENED				
19/202	Minutes of Meeting on 26th November 2019: These were approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.			
19/203	Ordering of Agenda: None.			
	Administration and Finance			
19/204	a) Statement of Accounts: A Financial Statement dated 20 th January 2020 had been circulated ahead of the meeting showing a balance of £26,124.98 from which the following payments were authorised including a post dated cheque for the Clerk’s salary for February:			
	28.01.20	3171	Mr P Coulling Yuletide/New Year's Day drinks	354.44
	28.01.20	3172	Miss D Page - Yuletide refreshments	83.52
	28.01.20	3173	Teston Parochial Church Council	250.00
	31.01.20	3174	M Tatton Clerk's Salary January 2020	353.95
	28.02.20	3175	M Tatton Clerk's Salary February 2020	353.95
	28.01.20	3176	Teston Village Hall - Grounds and Fabric Maintenance Grant	744.55
			TOTAL	£2,140.41
	It was noted that the end of year figure of £16,531.69 was likely to be slightly greater than shown in the Statement as no expenditure on seats or play repairs was likely to take place before the end of March. It was also noted that the Clerk had submitted a VAT reclaim in the sum of £786.88. It was felt the Tapestry estimate of £4328.47 for end of year was reasonable.			

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		b) Budget 2020-21 and Precept: It was noted that the PSS Grant from Maidstone Borough had been confirmed at the anticipated figure of £1374.00. The Parish Council had provisionally agreed a Precept of £25,500 for 2020/21. The letter now received from Maidstone Borough Council indicated a slightly higher Tax Base than the previous year. The Chairman recommended that the Precept should be increased roughly in line with inflation and therefore that the Band D rate should be increased by 1.95% to give a Precept of £25,800 particularly bearing in mind the additional costs that will be incurred in relation to the website (see item 19/208). Cllr Levett was reluctant to see the Precept go up given the effect this would have on people with a fixed income. This was noted. The Chairman recommended £25,800 and this was approved.
19/205	*	Policies and Procedures - Standing Orders Review: This would be actioned shortly.
19/206	*	Tapestry Article to Promote Future Parish Council Vacancies: Cllr Owens and Cllr Ms Burgon arrived during this item. A matter of a confidential nature was raised under item 19/240.
19/207		Tapestry Matters: a) Any general issues: The Joint Editors were working well together alongside the Chairman who was hoping to reduce his input over time. b) Teston Tapestry Fund: A suggestion had been received about the possibility of picnic benches at the rear of the Village Store. It was noted that the existing seat was in very poor condition. While a picnic bench was not favoured, it was agreed that an article should be placed in Tapestry regarding a 2-3 seater bench to replace the existing bench. c) Review of Tapestry Advertising Fees: The Chairman circulated details of current fees and advertisers which was considered in detail. It was noted that an increase of 5% on fees would generate a further £80 income. It was agreed that a 5% increase be applied on the assessed total.
19/208		Accessibility Requirements for Public Sector Websites: Following the last meeting the Clerk emailed KCC and had now heard that Parish Councils with a precept of less than £30,000 would be exempt from paying the first year's fee for the Cantium contract. The contract had not yet been received. The original proposal from Cantium was for £995 for the first year and then £675 for following years, subject to a 3 year contract. The importance of having a compliant website was recognised. It was agreed that, subject to the detailed terms and conditions, the Parish Council would accept the Cantium offer.
19/209		Hedge Cutting Maintenance 2020-21: It was noted that the Village Green hedge was looking untidy. The Clerk had asked the contractor to carry out an early cut. For reasons of commercial confidentiality quotations for 2020/21 were considered in private at the end of the meeting. It was agreed that the Parish Council would accept the quotations from Gary's Landscape for £260 per cut of the Village Green hedge and £320 per cut of the Courtlands hedge; and the quotation from Three Counties Contracting for £75 per cut of the Allotments hedge. It was noted that the cost of cutting the adjacent TLCT hedge would also be £75.
		Planning
19/210		i) New/pending decisions a) TM/17/01595/OAEA and 17/503416/ADJ Land East Of Hermitage Lane And South Of London Road Maidstone Kent Adjoining Authority: Outline application for the erection of up to 840 dwellings (including affordable homes) with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage systems, land for a Primary School, doctors surgery and for junction improvements at Hermitage Lane/A20 junction, and a link road between Poppy Fields roundabout and Hermitage Lane. Vehicular accesses into the site from Poppy Fields Roundabout and Hermitage Lane. All matters reserved with the exception of means of access – Approved (TMBC) 21.11.19 but called in to the Secretary of State by local MP b) 19/500452/FULL River Barn, Tutsham Farm, West Farleigh

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	Erection of dwelling and associated works with parking and landscaping as shown on drawing references: DHA/10757/11; 15; 16; 18; and 19; and un referenced existing elevations received 26/02/19 Refused - 29.03.19 Appeal pending c) TM/18/03031/OAEA 18/03031/OAEA 18/03031 - Site North of Amber Lane, Kings Hill (TMBC) Redevelopment to provide up to 85 Class C3 residential units, together with landscaping, open space and other associated works. All matters reserved for future approval except for access (Site 5.4) Application refused – 11.07.19 Public Inquiry concluded and Inspector’s decision awaited d) 19/505329/FULL 2 Leigh Terrace Malling Road Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5BH Erection of a single storey side extension – Approved 17.12.19 e) 19/505694/TCA The Village Green Church Street Teston Crown lift 6 no. Prunus Pandora, 1 no. Indian Bean Tree, 1 no. Silver Birch tree and 3 no. Prunus trees to give a clearance of up to 3m above ground level and 3 no. Hawthorn trees to give a clearance of 2.1m above ground level and to maintain the above clearances on an ongoing basis Approved – 24.12.19 ii) Newly submitted applications/ratify submissions made, including: a) 19/02966/FL Coppice Court 70 Teston Road Watlingbury Maidstone Kent ME18 5BG Erection of building for indoor dog training. In view of the time limitations a response had been submitted to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. This had been circulated previously to Councillors. The response was ratified. b) 20/500243/FULL 12 Courtlands Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AS Proposed enlargement of existing garage and landscaping to front garden. It was felt that the proposal was satisfactory. No objection.
19/211	Local Plan Review and Call for Sites: Following the meeting in the Village Hall a response had been drafted for submission to Maidstone Borough Council. It was agreed that this would be updated following receipt of additional comments before being sent.
19/212	Adjoining Authority Local Plan Consultations: There was no date as yet for Tonbridge & Malling's Local Plan Examination, nor any news regarding Tunbridge Wells. This item and the previous one would be combined as Local Plan Matters on future Agenda.
19/213	Assets of Community Value Registration: The ACV application for the Church would be ready to be submitted very shortly. The Clerk had resubmitted the Teston Club ACV application. A letter had been drafted to go to the Archdeacon and it was agreed this would now be sent. A Parish Councillor would endeavour to attend future PCC meetings as an observer and for support. Cllr Miss Page would be requested to provide a list of future dates. It was noted that the May Parish Council and PCC clashed and the PCC would be asked to consider whether that month's PCC meeting might be moved to another date.
19/214	Abbeyfield Development: There were no issues to report. This would be removed from future agenda.
	Highways and PROW
19/215	Highways Spreadsheet: A spreadsheet of current items had been circulated. In particular, the following matters were noted: a) As private individuals (and not on behalf of the Parish Council), Cllr Levett and Cllr Douglass had met with MP Helen Grant to discuss traffic issues in the village. Ms Grant would contact Cllr Mrs Stockell and Cllr Mrs Gooch prior to producing a circular to seek clarification of what solutions were being sought. b) Gully cleansing on Malling Road had been completed. c) The dead tree on the north side of the A26 had been removed. d) The footway on the north side of the A26 below Court Lodge Farm had been sided. e) The utility cover that had been sitting proud at the bottom of The Street had been re-set.

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		f) The salt bin had not been replaced. There was concern that there were sharp edges The Clerk would chase. g) Overgrown vegetation was severely narrowing the footway in Teston Lane. The Clerk would ask Kent Highways to side the path. h) Enquiries were outstanding with the Highways Definition Team regarding the extent of the highway boundary in Church Street adjacent to The White House. i) Kent Highways had declined to fill the salt bin by the shop and the Clerk was pressing the matter. j) Various potholes on Malling Road had been filled during the last few days. The Clerk had suggested to Highways that the entire road required redressing but no response had been received. This would be chased. k) Multiple potholes had been reported in Livesey Street. l) A litter pick had been requested for Malling Road from Leigh Terrace to North Pole.
19/216	*	Speed Surveys/Traffic Calming: These had been booked for June.
19/217	*	Traffic Island on Tonbridge Road in the Vicinity of Ash Tree Corner: No further progress.
19/218	*	Purchase of Solar Powered, Moveable Speed Monitoring Equipment (deferred): This item would be removed from future Agenda and brought back at appropriate time.
19/219	*	Fingerpost to Village Centre, Shop and Church: Maidstone Borough Council had not yet been in touch to install the sign which the Chairman still had for safekeeping. Clerk to chase.
19/220	*	Speed Watch: The success of the scheme at Watlingbury was noted. Volunteers had not yet come forward in Teston to support the person who was prepared to help with data entry.
19/221		Tonbridge Road Eastern Verges a) Update on establishment of the wildflower verge: Cllr Levett reported that the verge was showing signs of establishing. b) Future maintenance: At the last meeting Cllrs had indicated an interest in taking over maintenance of the wildflower verge on the A26. KCC had indicated that they had no issue with the Parish Council maintaining the verge on an ongoing basis and the cultivation licence given would simply roll over. Unfortunately, the administrative and financial burden that would be placed upon the Parish Council should it take over verge maintenance more formally made the proposal unworkable and it was agreed this would not be pursued further. Cllrs discussed whether a sign should be placed on the verge as a reminder to KCC that it was being managed as a wildflower verge and should not be cut but this was not considered necessary. c) Further possible work on the verge below Court Lodge Farm: The quotations from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership were considered. It was agreed that the Parish Council would wish to proceed on the basis of quote 1 i.e. spraying vegetation, planting a c40 metre hedgerow and spring bulbs, at a cost of £1245 excluding VAT. The Clerk would make a provisional booking with MVCP for 6th-8th October and seek permission from KCC indicating that, before work is commenced, something should be done about the water that flows across the pavement. The French Drain installed around 10 years ago had failed. If necessary the Parish Council would consider a contribution towards the cost.
19/222		Bollards on the western side of The Street: Quotations had been received and were considered. The Chairman calculated the total length of the verge to be roughly 230ft / 75 metres. Following detailed discussed it was agreed that for the time being a more limited scheme would be pursued based on Option 2 of the KTC quote (Birds mouth post and rail barrier) but with Oak posts, with the fencing limited to an immediate area either side of the entrance to Crown City. This would be about half the length of fencing within the quotation. If vehicles continued to park on other areas of the grass, consideration would be given to extending the fencing. The Clerk would check with the grounds maintenance contractor to confirm whether access would be adequate for machinery.
		Environment

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19/223	Allotments a) Regular Inspection Report from Cllr Douglass and agree action: Cllr Douglass reported that soil had been dumped in the car park area and in the wooded area around tree trunks. He proposed that a digger be hired in the spring to push the soil up to the pavement end to the north to make it neater and remove the soil from around the trees to prevent them dying and this was agreed. Although hiring a skip would also be useful for the removal of further rubbish the funds held against the allotments would not currently allow for both at this time. It was agreed that the Clerk should approach Three Counties for a quote. Subject to funds a skip would be considered in the autumn. It was noted that vacant plots 1 and 2 required strimming. These had fruit cages, plastic netting, posts wheelbarrows and a bath which would need to be removed first. Cllr Douglass confirmed that the tenant did not wish to have these. It was agreed that Cllr Douglass should liaise with the Clerk upon an email to existing tenants to see whether they could make use of the items. Cllr Douglass would provide the Clerk with details of other plots that were looking untidy so that letters could be sent. The Clerk had been in touch with Insurers regarding a Risk Assessment for General Maintenance and it was considered that there was now an acceptable framework within which tenants could volunteer. This would be subject to them reading and signing the Risk Assessment. The Chairman would liaise with Cllr Douglass and the Clerk. The Chairman noted that there was still some money to be returned from the previous water company. The Clerk reported that the rent for Plot 13 remained unpaid and the Tenant had not responded to letters, messages or phone calls. It was agreed that the Clerk would check whether a deposit was held and would then liaise with Cllr Douglass upon a letter to be sent terminating the Tenancy which the Clerk suggested should be delivered by hand. b) Shelter: (deferred from the November meeting): Bearing in mind the limited funds available, and the fact that only a couple of Tenants had raised the issue, Cllr Douglass did not feel providing a shelter would be money well spent at this time.
19/224	* Ambulance Sirens: No news.
19/225	Teston's Trees and Hedges a) Teston Village Green: The permission that would allow crown lifting of trees on the Village Green on a perpetual basis was noted. Cllr Levett would inspect and confirm what work was required at this point but this was likely to be to lift all trees to 6 feet clearance from ground. b) Other tree issues: The report from the Kent Men of the Trees had again highlighted the rabbits at Teston House. It was agreed that the Clerk should contact Golding Homes and provide a copy of the report.
19/226	Beacon Yuletide and VE Day 8th May 2020 Events: It was felt the Yuletide event had gone well, including the use of the Church. For VE Day the Chairman had booked a Bugler. It was thought that Mr Astridge should be asked whether he could do something with a World War II theme. Other possible aspects for commemorating the event were discussed. It was agreed that the event should be based on the Armistice model. Cllr Levett suggested a children's tea party. Cllr Ms Burgon suggested music on the green. Perhaps some of the veterans from RBLI would wish to attend. Cllr Ms Burgon would discuss the matter generally with Cllr Miss Page and then contact other Parish Councillors. The Clerk would send details through received so far on VE celebrations. Cllr Owens raised the prospect of commemorating VJ Day on 14th August. At present the Council would focus on VE Day.
19/227	* Village Green/Village Hall Boundary: Nothing to report
19/228	* Telephone Kiosk re-painting and broken light: The light had been repaired.
19/229	* Removal of seating from play area at Teston Bridge Country Park: The Ranger had advised that KCC would schedule the installation of some benches in or near the play area during the next financial

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	year, assuming no emergency spending was required on other infrastructure such as boardwalks, fences, gates etc. Whether or not seating could be provided within the play area or needed to be outside would depend on the safety fall area from the equipment and meeting any ROSPA safety requirements.
19/230	Seat at Crown City: Details of alternative seating had been circulated by email. Cllrs preferred a seat option over a bench. A preference was expressed for single plugs under each of the legs rather than the bases from back to front at each end, for the seat to come ready painted, and for the old seat to be taken away. It was agreed that the Clerk have delegated authority to progress the matter with Maidstone Borough Council within a budget of £600.
19/231	Play Area Matters a) Review of Play Equipment: deferred until the next meeting. c) Inspection Rota: February – Cllr Ms Burgon; March – Cllr Levett; April – Cllr Douglass
	Other
19/232	Highways Seminar 28th November: The Chairman attended and spoke with Highways about the Biddenden-type platform.
19/233	Annual Parish Meeting 24th March 2020: The Chairman suggested that there be no speaker this year and this was agreed . Cllr Levett suggested that the leaflet should be separate to Tapestry. It was agreed that it would be delivered with Tapestry but outside of it.
19/234	* Dates of Meetings during 2020/21: These were confirmed as follows: in 2020 - 19th May, 28th July, 29th September, 24th November; in 2021 - 26th January, 30th March
	Consultations – to consider responses
19/235	* a) Strengthening Police Powers to Tackle Unauthorised Encampments – closing 4th March 2020 b) Kent's Five Year Plan - closing 17th February 2020 The Chairman suggested that if anyone wished to respond to either consultation they do so individually.
19/236	ANY LATEST REPORT UPDATES FOR NOTING ONLY
	Cllr Ms Burgon wished to offer her apologies for the APM which she would be unable to attend.
MEETING ADJOURNED TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING REPORTS	
	a) Teston Land Conservation Trust - It was agreed that inflation would be added to angling fees - A dozen saplings had been donated by the Young Farmers – to be planted - Cllr Levett had planted a tree of reasonable size - There was an ongoing issue with a neighbour of Upper Boathouse Meadow regarding access. The fence might need to be replaced. A quotation had been received. b) CIC - Cllr Levett observed that one of the tall freezers in the shop was very noisy. This was noted. - An application would be made to the Kent Community Foundation for a grant - A meeting would be arranged for the week beginning 24th February
MEETING RECONVENED	
19/237	Confidential Items: It was resolved that the press and public be excluded from the items 19/238-240 below on the basis that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted
19/238	Enforcement issues: The latest reports from Maidstone Borough Council were noted.
19/239	MBC Call for Sites & related matters: The current position was noted.
19/240	Parish Council Elections: A matter was raised and noted.

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Date of next regular meeting of the Council – 7.30pm 31st March 2020 at Teston Village Hall
(Available at meeting: Agenda, Clerk's Report, Correspondence List, Financial Statement, and Highways Sheet)

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