

TESTON PARISH COUNCIL

These Minutes were approved by the Council at its meeting on 26th January 2021

Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held on Zoom on 24th November 2020

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

Maidstone Borough Cllr Mrs Fay Gooch
Mrs Michelle Tatton (Clerk)
No members of the public

While there were no members of the public present, the Chairman drew the Parish Council's Standing Orders on Photographing, Recording, Filming or Broadcasting of Teston Parish Council Meetings. No intention to photograph, record, film or broadcast the meeting was declared by Cllrs.

20/014	Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and/or Other Significant Interests: In the interests of transparency, all Parish Councillors declared that that they have 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, Cllr Miss Page and Cllr Mrs Wheat have an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee. No other interests were declared. Cllr Mrs Wheat and Cllr Miss Page declared an interest in item 20/024 – Proposed Unification to Barming and Teston Church Parishes.			
20/015	Apologies for Absence: None.			
20/016	Minutes of Previous Meetings on 16th June, 28th July and 4th August 2020: The Minutes of the meetings were <u>approved</u> as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.			
20/017	Ratification of Decisions Taken by Clerk under the Scheme of Delegation Since 16th June: A list of decisions taken since 16 th June had been circulated. These were <u>ratified</u> . Cllr Miss Page joined the meeting after this item.			
Finance and Administration				
20/018	a) Statement of Accounts: A Financial Statement dated 23 rd November 2020 had been circulated ahead of the meeting showing a cashbook balance of £29,527.40. A list of forthcoming payments had been circulated as follows:			
	01.12.20	3224	PKF Littlejohn Audit	£240.00
	01.12.20	3225	P Coulling – Padlock for Allotments	£21.15
	01.12.20	3226	Teston Village Hall Maintenance Grant	£750.00
	01.12.20	3227	SLCC for Charles Arnold Baker - Local Council Administration	£123.80
	01.12.20	3228	M Tatton – Total £418.41 a) Clerk's Salary November 2020	£362.79
			b) Clerk's Expenses	£55.62
	31.12.20	3229	M Tatton Clerk's Salary December 2020	£362.79
			TOTAL	£1,916.15
	The payments were <u>approved</u> .			
b) Budget 2021-22 and Precept: The Budget had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Applying a roughly 3% increase to keep pace with inflation, the Chairman recommended a precept of £26,500. This was <u>agreed</u> subject to final approval at the January meeting. The Clerk noted that as yet no payment had been made this year to Tapestry (line 18). This was discussed and it was <u>agreed</u> that this should be done.				

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	c) Banking Arrangements: The Chairman reported upon attempts to organise onscreen viewing access for Tapestry. The situation had become very difficult. It was <u>agreed</u> that the Clerk and Chairman should proceed with moving the Tapestry account to Barclays if this was found to be advantageous. d) Conclusion of Audit: The audit process had been concluded. An 'except for' matter had been noted relating to the posting of the notice advertising the period of public rights for 2018/19 which was done on the same day as the start period whereas this should have been done one day ahead of the period commencing. In completing this year's AGAR box 4 was ticked 'yes' but strictly this should have been 'no'. It was noted by the Clerk that, in any case, electors were not impacted in their ability to inspect the accounts which were available for inspection for the full period of public inspection and beyond. The necessary Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been placed on the notice board.
20/019	Accessibility Requirements for Public Sector Websites: The Cantium offer would not be proceeding. An alternative option had been put forward via KCC with Aubergine 262. The Chairman recommended that the Parish Council should investigate a transfer to Aubergine 262 with minimum creative changes to the website. KCC would be challenged regarding other offloading costs. Cllr Ms Burgon recommended that the Parish Council should avoid signing up to a long contract and should look carefully at the termination clauses. The above action was <u>agreed</u>. The Chairman and Clerk would consider the terms and report back before signing any contract.
	Highways
20/020	A Highways Spreadsheet had been circulated ahead. The following matters were noted: 1. The possibility of a speed table at the village crossroads would be added to the Highway Improvement Plan. 2. Water was still pooling on the PROW running north from North Lodge. 3. The salt bin at Tonbridge Road between The Street and Barham Court had now been removed. 4. The footway outside The White House was still in need of repair. This would be kept on the list. 5. The nameplate at Livesey Street had been replaced. 6. The potholes at Malling Road had been repaired. A new pothole was reported at the bottom of The Street on left hand side, measuring 8 inches in diameter and 4 inches deep with a similar one on opposite side of the road by the entrance to Teston House. The Chairman would take photos and the Clerk would then report. 7. The Aco channel below Court Lodge Farm was not doing the job. This would be raised again. 8. New signage had been installed in Malling Road to warn of pedestrians walking in the road. 9. Work to install the new post and rail fence at The Street had been completed. 10. The grass growing out of the pavement on the A26 pavement below Court Lodge Farm had been dealt with. 11. It was thought the drain at Teston Lane was still blocked. 12. The fallen branch at Livesey Street west of the pond had been cleared. 13. No further action would be taken regarding the pothole repair at Courtlands. 14. The temporary signs at the bottom of The Street had been removed. 15. The request for an anti-skid surface at South Lodge Bend and for the barrier to be extended would be moved to the Highway Improvement Plan. 16. Weeds had been a problem on the A26 heading west from no. 21. The Clerk had clarified the programme of weed killing and would liaise with Highways in the late spring to ensure early weed killing took place. a) Tonbridge Road Crossing: The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk had met with Highways to discuss further. Swept path analysis demonstrated that positioning a traffic island anywhere from no. 20 Tonbridge eastwards towards Barming would be difficult. A slight chance remained that it could be positioned outside one property but this would probably not be popular. It was possible that an island could be positioned just east of the track to Ripton Farm which might mitigate traffic speeds and be

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	convenient for those residents at the western end of the village. It was possible that this could be a full width traffic island. KCC had indicated that they would meet £1000 costs for the design stage. The Chairman's analysis of the recent traffic survey data was that the 30mph had worked and suggested that there was a case for extending the 30mph limit towards Watlingtonbury. It was agreed that the Parish Council should continue to progress the case for a traffic island as close as possible on the west of the access to Ripton Farm. The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk would continue to liaise with Kent Highways. Kent Highways had also been asked to look at the access to the Farm Shop as this is very narrow despite previous widening, to assess whether it is to reasonable standard from a safety point of view. It was considered timely to look at this issue as the traffic coming in and out of the Farm Shop had doubled during the pandemic and there were more pedestrians using the track. Kent Highways had also been asked to look at the junction of Church Street with Tonbridge Road. Despite previous narrowing, the entrance remains wide and sometimes drivers enter at speed. They will look at whether this could be narrowed slightly more. b) Highways Improvement Plan: This has been submitted to Highways. The items noted above would be added to it. c) Data from Recent Traffic Surveys: This was reported upon under a) above. d) Planting on the north side of Tonbridge below Court Lodge Farm: This was in hand. Initial weedkilling had taken place. Wildflowers would be sown next spring and bulbs next autumn.
	Environment
20/021	Replacement Notice Board: Details of a possible option had been circulated for an aluminium powder coated board green board. The display would be slightly narrow and taller than the existing board but display space would be almost identical. The estimated cost was £3650 with £500 for installation and delivery, plus vat. It was hoped that if an order were to be placed installation would be possible at Easter. All Cllrs agreed that the board needed to be replaced. Maidstone Borough Council were operating a grant scheme but it was not known how much would be available. Cllr Mrs Gooch suggested that it may be worth applying to the Kent Community Fund. The total display space would be almost identical to the existing board. It was suggested that one bay be for community use including the Church. Cllr Miss Page noted that prior to installation of the existing board the Church had its own notice board and the Parish Council had its own and when these were combined it was agreed that each retain their own space. Cllr Miss Page asked for unilateral use of 2 bays as exists now. The Clerk noted the Notice Board policy. Cllr Miss Page confirmed that the Church would need space for 4 pages of A4. The Notice Board policy would be updated in due course on this basis. The Parish Council would ask that the TVHMC consider the matter. Cllr Douglass noted that the hedge below the fence would need to be removed and from the point of the view of the preschool the gap would need to be replaced. In principle, it was agreed that the board be replaced in line with the general specification outlined, subject to confirmation of the nett after any grant and any consideration of any planning/Conservation Area implications and liaison with the Village Hall.
20/022	Allotments a) Regular Inspection Report from Cllr Douglass: The allotments had continued to be well used. The Clerk would provide Cllr Douglass with tenant details once renewal was complete. A leak had been found on the water meter and an engineer would be attending shortly. b) Renewal Update: In the run up to the renewal the opportunity had been taken to review the terms of the Tenancy Agreement to clarify some aspects. The rent remained unchanged for the coming year. A significant number of Tenants had already paid their rent. The Clerk would chase outstanding payments. Payment by Bank Transfer had been encouraged.
20/023	War Memorial Hedge: The hedge was lopsided on each side and it was suggested the back could be straightened up. The Parish Council had not previously been responsible for maintaining the hedge.

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	Cllr Levett would take a look and subject to confirming it would regrow, the Parish Council would offer to take over the hedge within the War Memorial area, with work carried out in the spring. The Chairman commented that the ceremony on Remembrance Sunday had gone well.
	Other
20/024	Proposed Unification to Barming and Teston Church Parishes: The Parish Council had responded to the consultation and this had been acknowledged. Notification as to the next steps and process for hearing the matter were awaited.
20/025	Assets of Community Value Status: The current situation was discussed. The existing application would be withdrawn. Cllr Mrs Gooch offered to discuss with Maidstone Borough Council and the matter would then be reviewed
20/026	Possible Future Grant to Teston Village Stores CIC: The Chairman noted the current financial position. The concern was that sooner or later enthusiasm for using the shop would wane. The Chairman asked that the matter be kept in mind for the future.
20/027	Clerk's Report: The report provided an update on a number of previous Agenda items that were being monitored and this was noted.
20/028	Chairman's Report: The Chairman had attended a Highways Seminar and Local Plan Presentation and provided a brief verbal report which was noted. In addition, Cllrs were asked to give some thought as to whether they wished to continue receiving emails across all subjects or have them tailored to certain areas of interest.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 9.45pm

List of Decisions Taken by the Clerk Since 16th June 2020 Under the Agreed Scheme of Delegation During COVID-19 as noted at Minute 20/017

Detail	Decision and background	Date Taken
Tree works	20/502517/TPOA and 20/502431/TCA Two applications for tree work at St Peter & St Paul Church. Cllrs were consulted on both matters. No adverse comments were received regarding the removal of a self-seeded Common Ash growing very close to the wall. MBC advised that the Parish Council raised no objection to its removal. Concern was raised regarding the removal of the TPO protected Red Oak and enquiries were made. All Cllrs were kept updated and in line with comments received a response was sent to the Tree Officer objecting to the Oak's removal.	29.06.2020
Tree/hedge works	20/502814/TCA The Old Post Office – various tree works. Cllrs were consulted upon the proposals. There was no objection to the removal of the Leylandii hedge but there was some concern about how crown lifting the Lime would affect the look of the tree and comments were submitted on this basis.	06.07.2020
PSPO Consultation	MBC issued a Public Space Protection Order relating to dogs. The Chairman provided a draft response which all Cllrs had an opportunity to see before it was submitted.	06.07.2020

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Fencing at The Street	The decision to proceed with fencing work at The Street near Crown City was confirmed at the email based 'meeting' on 31 st March 2020 (Minute 19/221) with decisions taken at that 'meeting' being ratified on 16 th June 2020 (Minute 20/003). Work commenced on 29 th July. The Chairman inspected the work while in progress and considered, on reflection, that some the fencing ought to have been taken beyond the telegraph pole to the road sign. This would increase 'security' of the verge in terms of alleviating the problems with anti-social parking that had been occurring prior to lockdown. Urgent comments were sought from all Parish Councillors who agreed that this further work should be carried out. The contractor was authorised on 30 th July to proceed with the additional work at a cost of £480 plus vat.	30.07.20
Tree application	20/503311/TCA The Cottage East Church Street Teston ME18 5AJ Conservation area notification to remove lower branches of one Beech to height of 4m where they overhang Church Street and parking area for the house; Remove half of the principal stems (approx 20) of one Bay, and associated young shoots on the northern and western sides of the tree, where they grow adjacent to the Listed Building; Remove one Spruce; Cut two Holly to 2 metres and allow to re-grow. This will remove all the existing branches and foliage, leaving the trunks. Comments were sought from all Cllrs. No adverse comments were received. A comment was submitted to MBC confirming that so long as the Tree Officer is satisfied with the proposed work to the Beech and the Conservation Officer is happy with all proposed work, the Parish Council raises no objection.	04.08.20
Tap repair at Allotments	On 9 th August a report was received from an Allotment holder that the tap over the tank had broken. The matter was raised with the Chairman and Cllr Douglass and an urgent decision was taken to repair the tap to avoid water wastage. The contractor who carried out other recent water related repairs was instructed to attend as quickly as possible to resolve the issue.	10.08.20
List Building Consent	20/503258/LBC Listed Building Consent for demolition of an existing red brick garage which and erection of new garage re-using materials from original garage and construction in similar style. Raising the height of a chimney attached to the single storey side of the property The Cottage West Church Street Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AJ Following receipt of comments from Cllrs a response was sent as follows: The Parish Council does not object to the principle of the proposal but has the following observations that it would wish to be taken into account: 1. The bonding used for the brickwork of the garage should be the same as the front of the house. 2. "Multi" bricks, to match, as closely as possible, the main house. 3. Drive-way not to be tarmac or pavers, but a surface recommended by the Conservation Officer. 4. Reclaimed roof tiles to match, as closely as possible, the roof of the main house. 5. Detailing of garage window, including its immediate surround, and side door (and its lintel) to match the main house. 6. Garage main doors to match the above detailing wherever possible. 7. Barge-boards, soffit, guttering, downpipes to match main house.	14.08.20
Street Trading Application	Mobile catering facility at Barnjet Lay-by The Parish Council was consulted upon the renewal of the street trading licence. All Cllrs were asked for comments, following which it was agreed that a response be sent as follows:	27.08.20

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	We have no objection to the application but, if possible, suggest a condition as follows: <i>While it is recognised that this facility does not generally result in litter in the lay-by, a condition of permission is that, at the end of each session of provision of service, the applicant ensures that any litter from the lay-by that is clearly a result of its service activity is collected and removed from the lay-by.</i>	
Planning Application	20/01401/OA MOD Land South of Discovery Drive Kings Hill West Malling Kent Outline Application: development of up to 65 dwellings (all matters reserved other than access) In line with the previous, established responses regarding the pressure to create an access from Kings Hill eastwards a letter was drafted by the Chairman challenging the access and opposing the application. This was circulated to all Cllrs for comment prior to submission by the Chairman to TMBC. The Clerk did not have any input into this particular matter in view of her position as a TMBC Borough Councillor but from a procedural point of view the Clerk was kept informed at all times of the action being taken.	27.08.20
Planning application	20/503547/FULL The Granary Court Lodge Farm The Street Conversion of garage into an annex for occupation by elderly relative Following consultation with Cllrs and receipt of comments, a response was submitted as follows: Despite the fact that, within the Local Plan, Teston is designated as 'open countryside', we have no objection to this application, but request that conditions be applied: 1. No additional access to be created to / from the curtilage of The Granary (including the current garage); 2. Permitted Development Rights are removed from The Granary (including the current garage); 3. The converted garage remains part of the property known as The Granary and is not disposed of; and 4. The converted garage is only used for family members and is not let out to other persons.	27.08.20

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Planning Application	20/01695/OA 430 Red Hill Wateringbury (but in Livesey Street) Outline Application Two 3 bedroom semi-detached houses Comments were sought from Cllrs following which the following response was submitted. While we are not within Tonbridge & Malling, we have reviewed the outline application documents as this site is close to our boundary and, albeit not excessive on an individual level, will have an impact on traffic through Malling Road, Teston, which already raises serious traffic safety concerns. We have three main comments: 1. the Proposed Plans depict a very contorted and confused layout. The storage area for 430 is separated from the flat itself; flat 432 seems to have no garden; parking arrangements for 430, 432 and the two new houses are chaotic and inadequate; and each house's floor-space at 84sq.m <u>over two</u> floors must call into question the quality of the dwellings. 2. access to the property would be via the already hazardous junction of Wateringbury Road, Teston Road, Livesey Street and Malling Road – and would pass through the parking area for the North Pole public house. Additional vehicle movements are not to be encouraged. 3. the supporting documentation states that, as an adjacent permitted site, Cromar Nursery, has been permitted, it should add weight to this application. On the contrary; for a semi-rural area, it is already becoming too congested and even a good quality application in the immediate area would raise questions.	28 th August
Planning White Paper	NALC offered an online session relating to the Planning White Paper. The cost for Members was £30 plus vat and a small booking fee (total cost under £40). Following consultation with Cllrs it was agreed that the Chairman should attend. No invoice for this session has been received.	11.09.20
Consultation	'Changes to the Planning System' A response to the consultation was drafted by the Chairman and circulated to all for comment prior to being submitted by the Clerk.	18.09.20
Tree Application	20/503618/TCA 6 Court Lodge Farm Cllrs were asked for their views following which no objection was raised on the basis that the Tree Officer and Conservation Officer would consult. A query was raised as to whether all the necessary ownership notices had been served.	18.09.20
Wildflower verge on north side of A26	Kent Highways have granted a Cultivation Licence to create a wildflower verge on the northern side of Tonbridge Road for a roughly 70 metre section set back about 1 metre from the edge of the footway. The Drainage Team have cleared the Aco channel. In terms of cost, there are two elements: • 3000 daffodils £165, • 4000 crocuses £200 • wildflower mix – under £100 • all plus VAT. Ground work to be done by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and comprising the following: • weed spraying £130, • labour (2 days) £500	30.09.20

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	all plus VAT Total cost is around £1130 plus VAT. Ongoing maintenance costs for an annual stream/cut and raking off of vegetation in late summer/early autumn and probably a late spring/early summer strip/cut after the spring bulbs have finished. Costs to be confirmed. The above detail was shared with Cllrs who indicated a wish to proceed. MVCP have been instructed and have completed the initial spraying.	
Tree application	20/504347/TCA The Lodge Courtlands Close Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AT Conservation area notification to crown reduce one Silver Birch to height of 5m and width of 3.5m. Comments were requested from all Cllrs. No adverse comments were received. A comment was submitted to MBC indicating that subject to the Tree Officer being satisfied with the proposed work the Parish Council raised no objection.	01.10.20
Planning application	20/504739/FULL Knole Farm House Malling Road Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5BH Replacement of existing temporary garage with an open barn style, 2 bay garage Comments were sought from all Cllrs. It was proposed that a comment be submitted noting that the garage would be above the height of the existing hedge and that a condition be required for materials to be close match to the existing house. This response was supported by Members and was subsequently submitted to MBC.	19.10.20
Allotments Tenancy Agreement	In consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, a revision to the Tenancy Agreement was produced to provide some additional clarity on some matters and introduce some administrative improvements. The draft was circulated to all Cllrs for comment prior to the revised document being adopted. This has been sent to all Tenants as part of the renewal process for the coming allotment year. No comments upon the new terms have been received	23.10.20
Planning application	20/504823/FULL The Cottage West Church Street Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AJ Demolition of existing garage and erection of new garage re-using materials from original garage in similar style. Raising height of chimney on existing dwelling. Details were circulated to Cllrs who raised no objection provided the conditions applied to the previous application 20/503258/LBC were applied to this application.	29.10.20
TPO	5004/2020/TPO Red Oak - St Peter & St Paul Church, Teston Following the application to carry out work to the Red Oak Maidstone Borough Council imposed a Tree Preservation Order and sought comments upon it. Following consultation with Cllrs a response was submitted noting that the tree adds considerably to churchyard and local visual amenity and therefore the Parish Council supports this TPO.	29.10.20
Planning application	20/504551/FULL River Barn Tutsham Farm West Farleigh Maidstone Kent ME15 0NE Amended proposal seeking part retrospective planning permission for a replacement barn as 4/5 bedroom dwelling involving reduction in fenestration, addition of barn doors, ragstone plinth, removal of garden walls, reduced garden and parking area with new ragstone piers, native hedgerows and structural landscaping Details were circulated to all Cllrs and a draft response prepared for consideration, objecting to the proposals, in particular with regard to light	03.11.20

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	pollution. Upon a quorum of Cllrs confirming agreement the response was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council.	
Village sign post	The post had been noted as being in very poor condition. A quotation was obtained from Maidstone Borough Council for two options and these details were circulated to all Cllrs. A quorum of Cllrs agreed that for reasons of durability a metal option should be accepted in preference to an oak option. The Clerk has accepted the quote for a metal post (£1120 including all installation costs) and it is hoped work will take place shortly.	12.11.20
Tree application	20/505234/TPOA Barham Mews Tonbridge Road Teston Kent – various tree works Details were circulated to all Cllrs for consideration. The majority view was that the Parish Council should support the views of the Tree Officer / Conservation Officer, on condition that work is restricted just to those trees listed in the application and that diligent care is taken to avoid work on any other trees shown in the Plan of the site showing the approximate locations of trees. The Clerk submitted a response on this basis	13.11.20

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