

TESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held on Zoom on 26th January 2021

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

Mrs Michelle Tatton (Clerk)

No members of the public

While there were no members of the public present, the Chairman drew attention to 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.

20/028	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. Cllr Miss Page declared an interest in the Proposed Unification to Barming and Teston Church Parishes in the event that this was discussed.			
20/029	Apologies for Absence: Received from Cllr Mrs Gooch and Cllr Mrs Stockell.			
20/030	Minutes of Previous Meetings on 24th November 2020: These were <u>approved</u> as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.			
20/031	Ratification of Decisions Taken by Clerk under the Scheme of Delegation Since 24th November 2020: The decisions taken by the Clerk under the existing enhanced scheme of delegation, as noted on the attached list, were <u>ratified</u> .			
	Finance and Administration			
20/032	a) Statement of Accounts: A Financial Statement dated reconciled to the bank statements dated 12 th January 2021 had been circulated ahead of the meeting showing a cashbook balance of £25,918.12 from which the following payments were approved:			
	18.01.21	3232	ES Solutions - 15% deposit for noticeboard	608.04
	18.01.21	3233	Gary's Landscapes - Village Green Tree work	85.00
	26.01.21	3234	SLCC Subscription	112.00
	26.01.21	3235	ALCC Subscription	40.00
	26.01.21	3236	M Tatton expenses Dec/Jan - includes defibrillator supplies of £156.76	179.88
	31.01.21	3237	M Tatton Clerk's Salary January 2021	362.79
	28.02.21	3238	M Tatton Clerk's Salary February 2021	362.79
	26.01.21	3239	Teston Village Hall - Storage Charge	25.00
	26.01.21	3240	A Tatton Pay for Web Support	20.00
	26.01.21	3241	Cloud Next Ltd – gov.uk domain name	132.00
	TOTAL			£1927.50
	The Financial Statement indicated an estimated year end figure of £19,622.			

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	It was noted that the PSS grant had been expended in full and the notional amount for the allotments would remain in surplus at c£406. The estimated year end figure for the Tapestry account would be c£4,100. b) Budget 2021-22 and Precept: The Clerk had circulated a revised Budget and this was considered. As part of the Budget Cllrs considered quotations received for grounds maintenance. A comparison of quotes had been circulated ahead of the meeting. There was a clear preference to remain with 14 cuts per year. While the quotation from contractor 2 on the list was favoured, there was a concern regarding the terms of indemnity. It was <u>agreed</u> that the Clerk and Chairman liaise with the contractor to seek a variation in the terms and conditions. At the same time the Parish Council would approach contractor 1 with a view to seeking a revised quotation. The Clerk would report to Cllrs prior to accepting any final quote or terms. The Clerk would also seek advice from the insurers. It was noted that row 36 was based on the anticipated grounds maintenance cost prior to receipt of the revised figures from Nuture Landscapes. This figure would need to be adjusted. The Clerk confirmed that row 45 included the cost of the replacement noticeboard and village sign. The position with regard to VAT would be clarified. Regarding the Budget, it was felt that the predicted underlying year end figures for 2021 and 2022 were reasonably healthy. While noting the increase in grounds maintenance charges, it was <u>agreed</u> that the Precept be set at £26,500 as discussed at the previous meeting. Cllr Owens recommended that the sink fund remain at £2,500 and this was <u>agreed</u>. He recommended that should any item above £2,500 be purchased the default position should be to add the item to the insurance policy unless the Parish Council at that time took an alternative view and this was <u>agreed</u>. The new notice board would be added to the policy when installed. c) Banking Arrangements: The Chairman provided an update. The priority was to obtain viewing capability for the Tapestry Account to assist with managing payments from advertisers. However, obtaining viewing access for the Tapestry Account would result in viewing access to the main accounts automatically and it seemed this could not be disengaged. However, it was noted that provided no bank card or card reader was issued no transactional capability would be possible. It was confirmed by the Clerk that currently no cards are issued in respect of any of the Parish Council's accounts. Cllrs <u>agreed</u> that the Parish Council accounts should remain with Natwest and viewing capability should be sought, understanding that this would open up viewing access to the main accounts also but no request for bank cards or card readers would be permitted for any of the accounts and, therefore, no online transactional capability would be acquired. All correspondence and paper bank statements would continue to be sent to the Clerk and in the event that any cards were issued by the bank the Clerk was to be advised immediately with cards to be destroyed. Cllr Ms Burgon suggested that in time the Parish Council could look at making electronic payments. This Parish Council would review two stage electronic transactions at a later date. It was noted that the payment for the Parish Council's regular items to Tapestry had not yet been made. This would be done at the March meeting.
20/033	Accessibility Requirements for Public Sector Websites: Eyelid Productions Ltd had been contracted to develop the new website with hosting provided through Cloud Next Ltd. Andrew Tatton had been enlisted to help with the website on a zero hour basis and placed on the Parish Council PAYE scheme. The new site was likely to go live by the end of March. A gov.uk domain name had been purchased. Following the initial cost for development there would be an annual cost of £100 for website support and £79.99 for hosting, with, every two years a renewal cost of £100 for the domain name. Mr Tatton would continue to assist post launch with managing web content.
	Highways

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20/034	Tonbridge Road Crossing: The Chairman provided an update. If the Parish Council still wished to have a refuge it would not be possible at Ash Tree Corner but would be just west of the track to Ripton Farm. Highways maintained that the road was 0.4 metres too narrow for a full refuge. The desired carriageway width could be achieved through highways adoption of a narrow strip of roadside TLCT land, if approved by TLCT's Trustees. It was noted that TLCT has 2 categories of land – one that cannot be disposed of (Upper and Lower Boathouse Meadow) and the other that can be transacted, being Ripton Wood and Ripton Farm (<i>subsequently corrected by the Chairman to clarify that Ripton Farm has the same status as Boathouse Meadow</i>). If TLCT were prepared to cede a strip 1 metre wide by 40 metres long it would enable the road to curve lightly around the refuge. A technical report has been prepared by Highways. The cost of obtaining a legal order to dedicate the acquired land as highway would be in the region of £2000 with the cost of the refuge design expected to be around £8,000, plus construction costs. Cllr Mrs Stockell might be able to help directly with funding from her Member's Grant and Helen Grant has offered to assist with sources of funding. It was felt that the matter should be pursued and it was agreed that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Clerk would produce a draft way forward and would seek funding from Cllr Mrs Stockell and that TLCT would be asked for its approval. Highways Spreadsheet: A spreadsheet showing outstanding items had been circulated. Items on the list would continue to be monitored.
	Environment
20/035	Replacement Notice Board: Cllr Douglass had confirmed on behalf of the Village Hall that there were no concerns with the proposal and the order has been submitted. A quotation was awaited for installation from a local contractor. Cllr Douglass would chase. Regarding the Notice Board Policy, access arrangements for putting up notices were discussed. It was agreed the policy would give exclusivity to information pertinent to Teston.
20/036	Allotments a) Regular Inspection Report from Cllr Douglass and Proposed Skip Hire: It was noted that the allotments were relatively quiet at present in terms of activity. It was agreed that a skip be arranged for the spring – probably April. Final timing was delegated to the Clerk in consultation with Cllr Douglass The water meter had been replaced and this had resolved the leak in the chamber. b) Renewal Update: It was noted that all the allotment plots had been let or re-let.
20/037	War Memorial Hedge: Cllrs had been asked to consider what work might be required to the hedge. The majority view was that the shape of the hedge should not be changed. Cllr Levett suggested some work could take place on the righthand side with it being eased back away from the Portland base and on the left it could be lifted from the wall by a couple of inches. The matter would be on the next Agenda for further discussion.
	Other
20/038	Removal of Wreaths from the War Memorial after 31st January: It was agreed the wreaths should be removed.
20/039	Steps to Promote the 2021 Parish Council Elections: The position as to whether elections would take place as planned remained unclear. Articles had been placed in Tapestry previously and it was agreed this would be done again. A note would also be placed on the notice board. The Chairman and Clerk would draft an article.
20/040	Proposed Dates for Future Parish Council Meetings 2021: 30th March, 18th May, 27th July, 28th September, 30th November – these were noted, recognising that if the election was deferred until later in the year this could affect the meeting date after that election.
20/041	Clerk's Report: The report provided an update on a number of previous Agenda items that were being monitored and this was noted.

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Regarding the wildflower verge on the north side of Tonbridge Road, the Clerk was given authority to spend up to £150 plus vat on wildflower seed which would be ordered by Cllr Levett. It was noted that the plaque for Mrs Oxley's memorial bench was now in situ. With regard to the Church, it was noted that the Church Commissioners would be meeting on 27th January 2021. The Parish Council had submitted extensive further comments and the Commissioners felt that no further input was required. A report from the Commissioners was expected from mid-February. Once the decision had been received a report would be placed in Tapestry. Cllr Ms Burgon suggested that in due course a meeting could be arranged outside of the Parish Council to enable wider discussion. The play area rota would be circulated.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 9.30pm

The meeting was followed by a meeting of Teston Village Stores CIC

1. There were no apologies for absence.
2. The Accounts to 31st May 2020 had been circulated. Cllr Mrs Wheat was thanked for checking the figures. The accounts were ready to be submitted to HMRC and to the CIC regulator. Directors **agreed** the accounts to 31st May 2020 and these would be submitted to the relevant parties.
3. At 31st May 2020 turnover for 2019-20 stood at £67,000 compared with £59,000 the previous year i.e. an uptick in turnover of c12-13%.
4. A £10,000 business grant had been obtained from Maidstone Borough Council, £3,000 from the Kent Community Foundation, and £600 from Cllr Mrs Gooch. £2,500 had been repaid to the float.
5. The Current Account was at time of this meeting showing a c£1000 surplus, allowing for estimated accrued costs. The Sponsorship Scheme had been a success and would secure contributions of £2340 in its first year of operation.
6. The immediate threat of closure had passed for now.
7. A synopsis of the accounts for the last year would be shared in Tapestry. Cllr Coulling would draft an article noting the improvement but the need to remain alert.

Teston Village Stores CIC AGM

- a. There were no apologies. All were notified by email.
- b. It was proposed by Cllr Coulling, seconded by Cllr Douglass, and **agreed** that Cllr Owens be reappointed as Chairman.
- c. It was **agreed** that Cllr Coulling be reappointed as Secretary.
- d. The Accounts were approved.
- e. The Directors' remuneration for the year was **nil**.
- f. It was resolved that the dividend should be **nil**.
- g. No other business.

Meeting of Teston Village Stores CIC - reconvened

8. Staff – Understandably a number of volunteers are currently isolating. It would be useful to have some more volunteers and so another article would be placed in Tapestry.
9. Pricing – product prices had been reviewed, except for stationery, and several have been increased. Prices are now generating margins that are sustainable.
10. Sale of alcohol – Cllr Coulling would circulate a report to Directors. It would be necessary to obtain a licence, the cost of which would be confirmed. The margin that could be made would be confirmed by email. Someone would have to attend a training course and it was proposed this should be a Director. It was noted that alcohol could not be sold by staff who are under 18 and that it may not be convenient for people working to buy during the week.
11. CCTV – None of the volunteers were worried about CCTV being active. It was noted that the use of CCTV has governance requirements in relation to GDPR. Capturing images of individuals requires the correct signage and a licence. The quality of the current CCTV would be checked. It was noted

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that the insurance for the shop would most likely increase with the selling of alcohol but might go down with CCTV. Cllr Coulling would research alcohol and CCTV but asked others to consider the financial implications.

12. Staff use of PPE – Staff did not want a screen Provision of screens was not in the regulations. There was concern expressed that some staff were not always wearing their masks. It was suggested that letters should be sent to staff setting out the Store's guidelines stipulated that it is compulsory to wear a mask. Cllr Levett suggested they could wear visors. Cllr Coulling would look at this.

The meeting closed at 10.05pm

The meeting was followed by a meeting of Teston Land Conservation Trust

- Apologies for absence – Chairman.
- The Charity Commission Return had been submitted and a summary could be viewed on the Charity Commission's website;
- Income for the last year was £3303 with expenditure of £674.
- The bank account stood at c£8,500 with a legacy payment due shortly;
- There were no objections raised to a 1 metre by 40 metre strip being made available along the roadside of Ripton Wood for the benefit of the village to enable a refuge to be provided, but the Chairman's view would be sought;
- Network Rail had sent a draft licence agreement to work on the railway below Ripton Farm and a neighbour's land. Access would be required via the track by Ripton Wood. The sum of £250 per week had been suggested for the Licence fee. The adequacy of this fee was being considered. If any damage is caused, Network Rail would reinstate, and they would meet any lawyer's costs if required.
- Last year's angling fees were £1,725. As a goodwill gesture it was agreed fees be held at the same as last year with a review next year.
- Last year there were sheep in Upper Boathouse Meadow cattle in Lower Boathouse Meadow. The kissing gate in Lower Boathouse Meadow had been damaged. If the current grazier did not continue the Young Farmers would be approached
- It was agreed that Cllr Levett approach one of the bat societies as the pill boxes might provide a suitable habitat.

The meeting closed at 22.15pm

List of Decisions Taken by the Clerk Since 24th November 2020 Under the Agreed Scheme of Delegation During COVID-19

These decisions are for ratification at the Parish Council meeting on 26th January 2021
– see Agenda item 20/031

Detail	Decision and background	Date Taken
Defibrillator supplies	It was noted on 27 th December that the defibrillator had been used. The equipment was subsequently returned. The pads had been used, and it was the recommendation of the supplier that the batteries also be replaced. The Clerk placed an order with First Rescue for replacement pads and batteries to ensure that the equipment could come back to use as soon as possible.	04.01.2021

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Tree Work	It was noted by the Chairman on 1 st January that the Prunus on the Village Green had a damaged bough that was hanging towards the ground. A quotation was obtained from £85 to make safe by removing the damaged part of the bough and dress the wound and this was accepted by the Clerk on 5 th January.	05.01.2021
Planning Application	TM/20/02749/OA - Land South of Barming Station and East of Hermitage Lane, Aylesford - Outline Application: erection of up to 330 dwellings The Parish Council has consistently responded to application in the Hermitage Lane area over the last several years. In view of the Clerk's association with TMBC, a draft response was prepared by the Chairman and circulated for comment to all Cllrs prior to submission to MBC, raising objection on highway grounds including the potential impact on the A26 and Wateringbury crossroads.	14.01.2021
Website	Over some period of time the Parish Council has been investigating options for a new website as a result of the pending closure of the existing website by KCC. The Cantium offer was looked at carefully but was not felt to be acceptable. Other options were explored including the development of a new website by Eyelid Productions at a cost of £650 plus £100 yearly support costs. Hosting would be via Cloud Next at £79.99 plus £110 every 2 years for a gov.uk web domain. Views were sought from all Cllrs following which the decision was taken to proceed.	15.01.2021

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