

Teston Parish Council

These Minutes were approved by the Council
at its meeting on 27th March 2023

Minutes of Meeting on 31st January 2023
7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

Cllr Peter Coulling (Chairman)
Cllr Christopher Douglass (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Ms Tina Burgon
Cllr Miss Dawn Page
Cllr Mrs Nina Wheat

Mrs Michelle Tatton (Clerk)
Members of the public - 2

The Chairman drew attention to the Parish Council's Standing Orders on the Photographing, Recording, Filming or Broadcasting of Teston Parish Council Meetings. No intention to record the meeting was declared.

22/170	Declarations of Interest: 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; (e) Cllr Douglass, Cllr Miss Page and Cllr Mrs Wheat declared an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee and (f) Cllr Ms Burgon and Cllr Miss Page declared an interest as members of Barming with Teston Parochial Church Council.
22/171	Apologies for Absence: were received from Cllr Owens and <u>agreed</u> . Cllr Mrs Gooch had sent her apologies.
Meeting adjourned to receive comments and questions from members of the public	
A resident raised a question about the TPO on the Silver Birch on the Village Green. This would be discussed under Agenda item 22/184a	
22/172	Minutes of Meeting on 29th November 2022: These were <u>approved</u> as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
22/173	Ratification of Decisions taken by Clerk since the last meeting: Decisions taken by the Clerk since the last meeting as set out at the end of these Minutes were <u>approved</u> .
22/174	Ordering of Agenda: It was <u>agreed</u> that item 22/184a) TPO on Village Green Silver Birch would be brought up the Agenda to be dealt with immediately but would be minuted in the order in which it appeared on the Agenda. No other changes were made.
	Administration and Finance
22/175	Statement of Accounts: A Financial Statement had been circulated within the Clerk's Report showing a balance of £30,565,89 in the main account from which the following payments were <u>approved</u> for payment:
	31.01.2023 3365 Water Plus - Allotments Water Bill 21.01.2023 41.92
	3366 Commercial Services Trading Ltd - Landscape Services 3rd
	31.01.2023 tranche 141.48
	31.01.2023 3367 ALCC Subscription 2023 50.00
	3368 Cllr Coulling: Total £163.79 Reimbursement for a) NYD
31.01.2023 refreshments £134.79 134.79	
	b) Cost for planting 2 Pandora Cherries on Teston Village Green 29.00

	£29 <table><tr><td>31.01.2023</td><td>3369</td><td>M Tatton Total £543.80</td><td>a) Clerk's Salary January 2023 £400.70</td><td>400.70</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>b) Expenses between November/January Meetings £23.12</td><td>23.12</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>c) Reimbursement of Cloud Next Web Hosting £119.98</td><td>119.98</td></tr><tr><td>31.01.2023</td><td>3370</td><td>M Tatton Salary February 2023</td><td></td><td>400.70</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>TOTAL</td><td></td><td>£1341.69</td></tr></table> In addition, the following payment was approved from the Tapestry Account, leaving a balance in the account of £3588.20 <table><tr><td>31.01.2023</td><td>46</td><td>TMBC Printing 79488</td><td></td><td>169.03</td></tr></table> The Clerk was authorised to reimburse Cllr Miss Page for the refreshments for the New Year's Day event subject to provision of a receipt.	31.01.2023	3369	M Tatton Total £543.80	a) Clerk's Salary January 2023 £400.70	400.70				b) Expenses between November/January Meetings £23.12	23.12				c) Reimbursement of Cloud Next Web Hosting £119.98	119.98	31.01.2023	3370	M Tatton Salary February 2023		400.70			TOTAL		£1341.69	31.01.2023	46	TMBC Printing 79488		169.03
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22/176	Budget 2023-24/Precept: A revised Budget has been circulated taking into account the changes indicated at the last meeting and including quotations received for grounds maintenance. The sum for audit fees had also been adjusted as there were indications that external audit fees could rise by as much as one hundred and fifty percent. With a 5% precept increase, expenditure in the next financial year would exceed income by £5,428. This would impact on reserves which at the year end reserves March 2024 would stand at £21,290. Even at 7.5% the deficit would be £4,732.19; at 10% £4037. The Clerk had noted that, in simple terms, if expenditure on traffic calming was excluded (£5,000 plus vat allowed) the budget would balance against a 5% increase. It was also noted that the last payment on the Parish Council's smaller PWLB loan (£1958 per annum) would fall due in December 2023. Details of the current Tax Base and Tax Base for 2023/24 were noted (314.10 and 322.60 respectively). A precept of £30,000 would imply a precept for a Band D property of £92.99. The Budget was considered to be an estimate only and it was noted some other items might come forward such as support for Teston Village Stores CIC and edging of verges on Tonbridge Road. It was noted that the Allotment rent still does not cover all the costs. There was a lengthy discussion regarding options before the Chairman recommended that the Precept be set at £30,000 which would represent a 4.98% increase on a Band D property. This was agreed unanimously. The Chairman and Clerk signed the Precept Request. An article would be placed in Tapestry to explain the position.																														
22/177	Annual Grounds Maintenance Contract: The annual contract for grass cutting was approved and would be signed by the Clerk and returned. A revised schedule for all of the Parish Council's maintenance requirements had been circulated. This had been updated to include the verge on the southern side of the A26 west of Teston Lane. Within this sheet the Clerk was given delegated authority to arrange work as required, including with a different contractor if required. The Clerk was requested to ask the contractor for the Courtlands hedge to gather up the twigs when on site.																														
22/178	Tapestry Advertising Rates: Printing costs would be increasing from April. A table showing existing advertisement prices and proposed increases was circulated. The proposed new rates were agreed.																														
22/179	Internal Auditor – Terms of Engagement: It was noted that the Clerk had some outstanding queries. The Clerk was given delegated authority to resolve these and sign the letter of engagement with discretion as to whether the appointment should be on site or remote.																														

22/180	Church Matters: The Chairman, Cllr Miss Page and Cllr Douglass reported upon the meeting with the Rev Wil North. Cllrs were comfortable with the Chairman facilitating, in a personal capacity, the setup of a Friends of Teston Church to include 3 members of the Parish Council as ex officio members i.e. similar to the position relating to Teston Village Hall. This would entail interaction with and the agreement of the Charity Commission and subsequently with HMRC for gift aid.
	Planning
22/181	Planning Decisions a) 21/00881/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) - Decision awaited b) 22/501491/TCA The Village Green Church Street Teston Kent Conservation area notification: Fell one Silver Birch and grind stump – TPO confirmed at Planning Committee without modification 19th January 2023 c) 22/501778/LBC 2 Hillside Cottage Malling Road Teston ME18 5AN Listed building consent for the renewal of the rear dormer, replacement windows and doors including internal and external repairs. install mechanical ventilation to bathroom and kitchen, 3no. external lights. Retrospective replacement ceiling works to the top bedroom – Approved at Planning Committee on 24th November 2022 d) 22/501777/FULL 2 Hillside Cottage Malling Road Teston ME18 5AN Renewal of the rear dormer, replacement windows and doors including external repairs and 3no. external lights. Retrospective replacement of ceiling works to the top bedroom – Approved at Planning Committee on 24th November 2022 e) TM/22/00907/FL Land North Of 351 Hermitage Lane Maidstone Kent Erection of 42No. residential dwellings including affordable housing. Enhancement of existing access from Hermitage Lane and provision of associated hardstanding, landscaping, open spaces and infrastructure including drainage and earthworks - Decision awaited f) 22/502027/FULL Land North Of 351 Hermitage Lane Maidstone Erection of 42 no. residential dwellings including affordable housing. Enhancement of existing access from Hermitage Lane and provision of associated hardstanding, landscaping, open spaces and infrastructure including drainage and earthworks – Decision awaited g) KCC/MA/0141/2022 Teston Bridge Country Park Car Park, Teston Lane Retrospective planning permission for engineering works related to the resurfacing of the overflow car park – Decision awaited – deferred at Planning Committee. It was <u>agreed</u> the Chairman would attend the deferred meeting. h) 22/504533/LBC The Old Post Office Church Street Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AH Listed Building Consent for creation of an opening fanlight above door to existing shopfront and installation of secondary glazing behind, internal alterations including creation of new door opening, installation of new partitions and widening of existing door opening – Permitted 23rd December 2022 i) 22/504916/SUB Becketts Croft Malling Road Teston Maidstone ME18 5AR Demolition of 2 storey & single storey rear extension. Erection of 2 storey & single storey rear extension with alteration to ground floor rooms – Permitted 7th December 2022 j) 22/505176/FULL The Cottage West Church Street Teston ME18 5AJ Erection of an outbuilding to form log store, shed and greenhouse – Permitted 5th January 2023 k) 22/505683/TCA Land Adjacent Court Lodge Farm The Street Teston Kent ME18 5AQ Conservation area notification: Pollard group of predominately sycamore trees down to height of 8ft – No objection 12th January 2023 The exhibition on 9th February at the Orchards Conference Centre regarding proposals for 1600 homes of East Malling Research Land between Hermitage Lane and Kiln Barn Road, with a through

	route to East Malling, was <u>noted</u> .
22/182	MBC and TMBC Local Plan Updates: The Chairman provided an update. MBC had passed the Duty to Cooperate test but the Plan had been found unsound on a number of matters and main modifications had been proposed. The next stage would begin in around March.
	Environment
22/183	Teston Bridge Country Park: The Chairman provided an update. KCC's Planning Committee had deferred its decision. The Chairman would attend when the matter returned to the Agenda.
22/184	Tree and Hedge Work: a) TPO on Village Green Silver Birch: The Chairman reported upon his attendance at Planning Committee when the TPO had been confirmed. The matter was discussed at length and options considered. It was agreed by a vote of 3 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention that MBC's Tree Officer should be asked to consider the two following 2 options: i) to lop off the bough ii) to fell to the ground and plant 3 specimen trees of the Tree Officer's choosing at places around the village b) Lime Tree at Courtlands and Catalpa on the Village Green: Work was due to take place imminently. c) Planting of Pandora Cherries and approval of planting costs: The trees had been planted and a small charge for planting was approved. Tree guards were required and it was agreed these would be ordered.
22/185	Allotments Report: Cllr Douglass provided an update. There had been a water issue over the last few months and with taps/stakes. This would be looked at once the water was turned back on. One plot had been vacated. One tenant had still not paid their rent and it was agreed that if this was not received imminently the Clerk would send a termination letter.
22/186	Play Area: February - Cllr Levett; March – Cllr Douglass; April – Cllr Miss Page It was agreed that an exchange box in the shop for depositing the inspection book, and post envelopes, would be useful. Chairman to investigate.
	Highways
22/187	Highway Improvement Plan and Highway Spreadsheet of Routine Items i) Feedback from Tapestry article regarding traffic speeds, and report from Chairman upon HIP meeting with Kent Highways, including upon possible Keep Clear box on The Street at Court Lodge Farm entrance, and request for Police to carry out surveys: Feedback from the Tapestry article was noted. The Chairman and Clerk had met with Kent Highways when the Parish Council Highway Improvement Plan was discussed. KCC expect Parishes to fund improvements. However, the Highway Officer would be investigating the possibility of a keep clear white box by Crown City extending c20 metres beyond Court Lodge Farm; and would look at the issue of the bend where cars are parking north of the crossroads. The Clerk reported upon the response received from the Police regarding the attendance of the radar van. The ongoing issue with parking at the southern end of Livesey Street was noted. ii) review regular items and agree further action, including any action in respect of salt bins It was noted in particular that some photographs of the pooling water at Livesey Street would be useful; Cllr Webb would be prompted regarding the water flowing over the pavement on the A26 below Court Lodge Farm; work to the drains near South Cottage remained outstanding; and siding of the verge west of the Farm Shop had not been done. A salt bin was required on the A26. The Clerk was asked to request one.
	Other
22/188	Screen and Projector for Teston Village Hall: The Village Hall had received a grant for £4,500

	towards the cost of a digital projector, speakers and related items. The total bill including vat would amount to almost £6,000. It was agreed that the Parish Council would make a grant to the Village Hall for up to £1300 including VAT. The Clerk/Chairman would liaise regarding placement of the order for the Parish Council's contribution.
22/189	Maidstone Community Governance Review (Parish Boundaries): A draft response had been circulated. This was agreed and would be submitted.
22/190	New Year's Day Event: The event was reported to have gone well with around 50 attendees.
22/191	Coronation Beacon Event 8th May 2023, and Commemorative Mugs: Deferred to March.
22/192	Annual Parish Meeting 9th May 2023: Clerk to chase attendance. Refreshments – it was agreed that Cllr Miss Page would arrange these with a budget of £25.
22/193	Emergency Plan: The existing Plan was readopted .
22/194	Clerk's Report for Noting: The Clerk reported on correspondence received regarding a request for an extension of the footway towards Barming, and consideration for reopening Teston Halt. It was noted that that Cllr Mrs Gooch had responded to the resident. The Parish Council felt that the chances of either being taken forward by KCC or Network Rail were minimal.
22/195	Exceptional Delegated Authority: It was agreed that EDA should continue until the next meeting.
Meeting Adjourned	
Teston Land Conservation Trust matters: - Accounts – the Trust was in a reasonable financial position - Fishing fees – it was agreed that rates should increase by 5% - Tree near the pavement – consideration would be given to this being removed Teston Village Stores CIC matters: - Accounts – a grant application had been made to KCF. Finances were tight. Prices to be reviewed. - Roof leak near the back fire door. The velux window needed to be stripped out and the roof re-felted. Financial support would be required to enable this work to go ahead. - Menzies – the deposit had been returned - Sponsors - it was hoped more sponsors would come forward	
	Confidential Items
22/196	It was resolved that the press and public to be excluded from the item 22/197 and 22/198 below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
22/197	Enforcement issues: An update was provided on current enforcement matters.
22/198	Complaint under the Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer: The Cllr who was the subject of the complaint left the meeting. The matter was discussed and noted.

Decisions Taken by Clerk Since 29th November Under Scheme of Delegation For ratification under Agenda item 22/173

Detail	Decision and background	Date Taken
Code of Conduct Complaint	The Clerk received notification from the Monitoring Officer of a Complaint made against a Teston Parish Councillor under the Code of Conduct. The matter was also reported to the Clerk by the Cllr concerned. Other Parish Councillors were notified of the complaint. The Clerk	20.01.2023

	prepared a response which was shared with all Parish Councillors for comment and approval prior to submission, save that the Cllr who was the subject of the complaint was not notified or included.	
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There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.40pm

Date of next Parish Council meeting – 7.30pm on 28th March 2023 at Teston Village Hall