

Teston Parish Council

These Minutes were approved by the Council
at its meeting on 25th July 2023

Minutes of Meeting on 30th May 2023
7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

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

Cllr Mrs Fay Gooch - MBC

Mrs Michelle Tatton (Clerk)
Members of the public - none

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.

23/001	Election of Chairman and Chairman's Declaration of Office: Cllr Douglass proposed that Cllr Coulling be re-elected to the office of Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Levett and <u>agreed unanimously</u> .
23/002	Election of Vice-Chairman: Cllr Levett nominated Cllr Douglass to be reappointed as Vice-Chairman, which was seconded by Cllr Mrs Wheat and <u>agreed unanimously</u> .
23/003	Declarations of Interest: In the interests of transparency, all Parish Councillors declare 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; d) Cllr Douglass, Cllr Miss Page and Cllr Mrs Wheat have an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee; and Cllr Ms Burgon and Cllr Dawn Page have an interest as members of Barming with Teston PCC. No other interests were declared.
23/004	Apologies for Absence: Cllr Miss Page had sent apologies and these were <u>accepted</u> . Apologies had been received from Cllr Webb.
Meeting adjourned to receive comments and questions from members of the public	
Public session: There were no members of the public present.	
23/005	Minutes of Meeting on 28th March 2023: These were <u>approved</u> as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
23/006	Ratification of Decisions: Decisions taken by the Clerk since the last meeting as set out at the end of these Minutes were <u>ratified</u> .
23/007	Ordering of Agenda: No changes to the order were proposed.
<u>Administration and Finance</u>	
23/008	Review of Standing Orders, Policies and Procedures: No required changes had been identified nor any new model from NALC, and so it was <u>agreed</u> that the SOs should remain unaltered. It was noted that the updated Risk Assessment had been approved at the last meeting.
23/009	Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies: a) Kent Association of Local Councils: Cllr Coulling and Cllr Douglass were prepared to continue as representatives and this was <u>agreed</u> . b) Teston Village Hall Management Committee: The Chairman proposed that Cllr Douglass and Cllr Mrs Wheat be reappointed, together with Cllr Ms Burgon as the third representative.

	This was <u>agreed</u> on the basis that Cllr Ms Burgon would step down from as the Parish Council’s representative to the Committee at such time as Cllr Miss Page wished to resume.																																																																
23/010	Insurance: Following consultation with the Chairman, Cllr Owens and Cllr Mrs Wheat the Clerk had renewed the existing policy, the premium being £362.07, and this action was <u>ratified</u> .																																																																
23/011	Renewal of Subscriptions: These were agreed as follows: a) Local Councils Update - £110 (including web library option) b) CPRE – £36 c) KALC - £289.10 plus vat d) Local Council Review – tbc (£17 in 2022-23) e) Kent Men of the Trees - tbc (expected to be £25)																																																																
23/012	Dates and times of Parish Council meetings to the end of March 2024: These were <u>confirmed</u> : - 25th July, 26th September, 28th November. The following dates in 2024 would be booked: 30 th January, 26 th March.																																																																
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23/013	Statement of accounts: i) A Financial Statement had been circulated by the Clerk showing a balance of £51,759.57 from which the following main account payments were approved : <table><tr><td>Date</td><td>Cheque</td><td>Detail</td><td>Amount</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3386</td><td>CPRE Subscription</td><td>36.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3387</td><td>KALC Subscription</td><td>346.92</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3388</td><td>Communicorp - Local Councils Update / Clerks & Councils Direct Subscription</td><td>80.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3389</td><td>Paul Maitland - War Memorial Hedge reduction</td><td>210.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3390</td><td>NEJ Plumbing & Heating - Allotments tap and pipework repair</td><td>110.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3391</td><td>Peter Coulling - total £287.99 i) Flowers for Cllrs Ms Page</td><td>79.00</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>ii) Coronation Beacon Event 6th May 2023 expenses</td><td>245.94</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3392</td><td>Teston Parochial Church Council - total £375 i) Grant for Pioneers 2022-23</td><td>125.00</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>ii) Grant towards Churchyard grounds maintenance 2022-23</td><td>250.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3393</td><td>M Tatton - total £436.06 i) Clerk’s Salary May 2023</td><td>400.70</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>ii) Clerk’s Expenses between March and May Meetings 2023</td><td>35.36</td></tr><tr><td>30.06.2023</td><td>3394</td><td>M Tatton i) Clerk’s Salary June 2023</td><td>400.70</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>ii) Clerk’s Office Allowance April - June 2023</td><td>150.00</td></tr><tr><td>30.05.2023</td><td>3395</td><td>Teston Village Hall</td><td>500.00</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>TOTAL</td><td>£2969.62</td></tr></table> Regarding Tapestry, the Chairman noted that most of the renewals had been received. It was hoped that printing costs would be covered in the current financial year. It was noted that there had been no recent suggestions regarding projects to be funded from the Tapestry account. ii) Parish Services Scheme and year end PSS Certificate: The first PSS tranche was awaited. MBC had not yet requested a year end Certificate as yet.	Date	Cheque	Detail	Amount	30.05.2023	3386	CPRE Subscription	36.00	30.05.2023	3387	KALC Subscription	346.92	30.05.2023	3388	Communicorp - Local Councils Update / Clerks & Councils Direct Subscription	80.00	30.05.2023	3389	Paul Maitland - War Memorial Hedge reduction	210.00	30.05.2023	3390	NEJ Plumbing & Heating - Allotments tap and pipework repair	110.00	30.05.2023	3391	Peter Coulling - total £287.99 i) Flowers for Cllrs Ms Page	79.00			ii) Coronation Beacon Event 6th May 2023 expenses	245.94	30.05.2023	3392	Teston Parochial Church Council - total £375 i) Grant for Pioneers 2022-23	125.00			ii) Grant towards Churchyard grounds maintenance 2022-23	250.00	30.05.2023	3393	M Tatton - total £436.06 i) Clerk’s Salary May 2023	400.70			ii) Clerk’s Expenses between March and May Meetings 2023	35.36	30.06.2023	3394	M Tatton i) Clerk’s Salary June 2023	400.70			ii) Clerk’s Office Allowance April - June 2023	150.00	30.05.2023	3395	Teston Village Hall	500.00			TOTAL	£2969.62
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23/014	Annual Return for the Year ending 31st March 2023: a) Outcome of Governance Review undertaken by Cllr Owens and to agree any recommendations: Cllrs Owens and Cllrs Mrs Wheat had met with the Clerk to discuss the accounts and systems. They were content with all current arrangements but recommended that in the very few instances when online payments are required these should be approved, made and then checked afterwards by another Councillor. This was <u>agreed</u>. b) Asset Register: This was presented and <u>approved</u>. It was noted that for the purposes of reinstatement values a 20% uplift had been applied, mirroring the approach taken by insurers. It was noted that the smaller of the two PWLB loans would be maturing in the autumn.
23/015	Grant to for Churchyard Maintenance for 2022-23: Evidence for the grass cutting during 2022-23 had now been received. It was <u>agreed</u> that the grant of £250 for that period should be paid. It was noted that the person who had been helping with churchyard maintenance had retired. The Church was in the process of making new arrangements.
23/016	Grants to Village Organisations for 2023-24 a) Pioneers (previously £125): It was <u>agreed</u> to pay the grant for 2022-23 which had not yet been claimed. Regarding any grant for the current financial year, it was agreed to <u>defer</u> to the next meeting. b) TVHMC: Previously it had been proposed that the grant of £750 be increased to £1000 in this current financial year given the issue with the roof leak and this was <u>agreed</u> subject to evidence of expenditure. The payment of £500 for the previous financial year had now been evidenced and it was <u>agreed</u> this could now be paid. c) St Peter and St Paul – £250 for assistance with Churchyard maintenance: It was agreed that the matter be <u>deferred</u> to the next meeting until the Church had provided further detail on cost and the Parish Council would then be prepared consider a modest increase.
23/017	Church Matters: The Chairman had approached a charity to see whether it might be prepared to assist with a grant for internal decoration but this had not been successful. The Chairman reported upon further communications with the Charity Commission. Helen Grant MP was seeking to know from the Charity Commission what power they had to deny the request to set up a charity.
23/018	Rural England Prosperity Fund: A grant application for £45,000 had been submitted via the Parish Council in close collaboration with the Village Hall. The outcome was awaited. Guidance had been sought from MBC regarding solar panels in view of the location within the Conservation Area. The matter was being pursued.
	Planning
23/019	a) New/Pending 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) 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 c) 22/502027/FULL Land North Of 351 Hermitage Lane Maidstone Consultation by Maidstone Borough Council - 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 d) 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 e) 23/500443/FULL Court Lodge Farm 2 The Street Teston Kent ME18 5RB Insertion of replacement conservation roof lights – Permitted 31.03.2023

	f) 23/500446/FULL Court Lodge Farm 4 The Street Teston Kent ME18 5RB Insertion of replacement conservation roof lights – Permitted 03.04.2023 g) 23/500930/SUB Woodlands Cottage Livesey Street Teston Kent ME18 5AY Submission of details to discharge condition 6 (biodiversity enhancement) of planning application – Permitted 23.03.2023 b) New Applications – none received
23/020	MBC and TMBC Local Plan Updates: Chairman to report The Chairman reported upon the Maidstone Local Plan Review hearings and the Countryside Policy and Smaller Villages Policy. Smaller villages would be assigned 30 dwellings over the next 5 years. However, if any applications came forward and the Parish or the community did not agree the scheme would not progress. The Chairman had pushed for Parish Councils to have the final say. The detail/wording within the Inspector's report on this would be important. In terms of TMBC's Local Plan timetable, they were now looking at 2025/26 for having a Local Plan in place.
	Environment
23/021	Teston Bridge Country Park a) Update upon Environment Agency work and KCC application relating to the overflow car park: Regarding the crane pad and road, it seemed that the EA's internal vetting unit had put a block on the project going ahead, despite contractors being on standby for work this summer. A number of questions had been raised with the EA seeking further detail and data. There was concern that the gantry had been declared to be unsafe. It was agreed that the matter should be strongly pursued, with an FOI request submitted if necessary. The Chairman provided an update regarding the overflow car park. It was agreed that the Chairman should attend the next KCC Planning Committee. b) Other Country Park matters: None.
23/022	Tree, Hedge Work and routine maintenance: a) TPO on Village Green Silver Birch: Options had been sent to the Tree Officer who had not favoured any of the options. He had sent through a photograph showing what he would accept. This was noted. It was agreed that an application for works (not felling) would now be made. b) Adding the War Memorial hedge to the Maintenance Schedule: Work had been undertaken recently. It was agreed that the site be added to the Maintenance Schedule with a minor trim required in 2024. c) Update from Clerk upon work authorised under delegated authority: The hedge on the Courtlands verge was in need of a trim. This would be booked for the autumn.
23/023	Allotments Report: Cllr Douglass had inspected twice during the last month and had found it to be in good order save that one plot which was in need of attention. A standpipe had broken. A repair would be arranged. An item would be placed on the Agenda for the July meeting to consider a possible 15% and 30% increase.
23/024	War Memorial a) Quote for cleaning; This had not yet been received. The Clerk was given delegated authority to arrange the work provided the quote did not exceed £750 plus vat. b) Ratification of Clerk's action to arrange for the War Memorial hedge to be cut: This was agreed.
23/025	Train Horns: A resident had raised an issue regarding train horns. The Clerk had responded. This is a matter that the Parish Council had pursued previously and while Network Rail had indicated that they would not support the removal of the whistle boards they had noted that, in the longer term, they intended to seek closure of the footpath, requiring users to cross the railway at the protected CCTV crossing. As it was now a little while since the last communication it is was agreed that the matter be chased with Network Rail and the matter reported back to the next meeting.
23/026	Play Area: No issues had been noted. Cllr Levett suggested that the Parish Council should consider updating the play equipment. This was noted. Any play improvements would be very costly.

	In terms of inspection records, Cllrs were asked to send comments to the Clerk who would keep these. Cllr Owens; June – Cllr Mrs Wheat; July – Cllr Coulling
	Highways
23/027	Highway Improvement Plan and Highway Spreadsheet of Routine Items: to i) Update upon discussions with Kent Highways, including upon a Keep Clear box on The Street at Court Lodge Farm entrance. No progress had been made. ii) Review regular items: It was noted that the damaged bus stop sign near Valley Court had now been removed. The Clerk would contact KCC regarding a new bus stop sign. Water was still flowing over the pavement below Court Lodge Farm. A different Drainage Engineer had looked at the issue and appeared to have identified the cause but needed to liaise with the adjacent landowner. The area near South Cottage was considered to represent a trip hazard. The Clerk was asked to pursue this with Highways. It was noted that the verge towards Wateringbury had been restored in width. The Clerk was asked to chase Lord Falmouth's agent regarding the access track. The surface of Livesey Street remained very rough. The Clerk was requested to ask Highways what lasting solution they proposed including what binding method are they recommending as the surface soon fails after repairs are made. It was noted vehicles continued to park at the southern end of Livesey Street but unless they were causing a hazard there was nothing further the Parish Council could do. The Police should be notified in the event of hazardous parking.
	Other
23/028	Possible Film Club at Teston Village Hall: <u>Deferred</u> to next meeting.
23/029	To consider collaboration with Teston Village Hall Management Committee on repairing the roof leak above the shop and replacing the side gate with a “chicane”, including any funding: The roof repairs were noted to be in progress with interior plastering needed. Regarding the gate, the Chairman felt that a self-closing gate would be significantly costly. <u>Deferred</u> to the next meeting.
23/030	Coronation Beacon Event 8th May 2023, and Commemorative Mugs: The Chairman reported that the event had gone well. All but one of the mugs had either been donated or sold. Thanks was expressed to those who rang the Church bells beforehand. The logs had burnt wonderfully at the Beacon event. These had been donated by a villager which was very much appreciated.
23/031	Village Hall: Cllr Douglass reported upon anti-social behaviour that had taken place in Teston and Wateringbury, including at Teston Village Hall. The Hall was looking at the possibility of security cameras. The matter would be brought back to the next meeting.
23/032	Kent Men of the Trees: Teston had been entered into the competition. Cllr Levett would meet with the judge.
23/033	Village Green – Use for Events: It was noted that the Village Fete would be taking place on 17 th June and the Preschool planned to hold its sports day on 30 th June. As usual, the Clerk would seek assurance that all relevant regulations were observed, with risk assessments undertaken by the organisers and insurance arranged by them. Any disturbance to the ground would need to be made good, and vehicles should not be parked on or along the edge of the Village Green. Organisers would be reminded that no one could be excluded from the Village Green, including people walking their dogs, although it was hoped residents would be accommodating.
23/034	Clerk's Report for Noting: Nothing to report.

23/035	Exceptional Delegated Authority: It was <u>agreed</u> that EDA should continue until the next meeting.
Meeting Adjourned	
Teston Land Conservation Trust matters - Upper Boathouse Meadow had a lot of weeds. These needed topping. - To enable permissive access to Ripton Wood some paths and gates would be required. A quotation had been received and this was noted. A second quote would be obtained. A Trust meeting would be arranged. Advice would be sought from Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. Teston Village Stores CIC matters: finances, drinks machine, roof leak - An update was provided on finance and staffing issues. - The shop had been asked to open during the Village Fete. The margins would be monitored. - Arrangements for a stock take and a review of prices was discussed.	
Confidential Items	
23/036	It was <u>resolved</u> that the press and public to be excluded from item 23/037 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
23/037	Enforcement issues: The Chairman provided an update regarding an enforcement matter.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.35pm

Date of next meeting: 25th July 2023 at 7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

End

Detail	Decision and background	Date Taken
Insurance renewal	The renewal premium was noted to represent an increase of 7.5% on the previous year's figure. This was felt to be reasonable in the current economic climate. Following consultation with the Chairman, Cllr Owens and Cllr Mrs Wheat it was agreed that payment should be made.	11.04.2023
Coronation Commemorative Mugs	Due to an oversight, no discussion took place at the last meeting regarding the price of mugs. The cost price per unit was £8.20 including VAT. Seventeen were donated to children in Teston. In consultation with Cllrs, it was agreed that the remaining mugs should be offered at cost price of £8.20.	09.05.2023
Flowers for Cllr Miss Page	Flowers were ordered following discussion between the Chairman and Clerk, the cost to be met from the Chairman's Allowance.	15.05.2023
Teston Bridge Country Park overflow car park landscaping design	Following the deferral of the application by KCC's Planning Applications Committee, revised landscaping details were received. These were reviewed and a draft response was circulated to Cllrs for consideration. This was subsequently submitted to KCC, seeking that: a) The landscaping items for the central expanse are swapped for evergreen, so that they continue to provide screening throughout the year; b) No thorny / prickly items are included; c) Items used are of a significant size when planted to present an evergreen screen as soon as possible up to about 1.5 metres high; d) The hard-surfacing between that central expanse and the main park is reinstated to grass; e) Commitment is confirmed to maintain the various plantings and to replace any that do not survive.	16.05.2023
War Memorial Hedge	It was noted that the War Memorial hedge was in need of attention. Details of proposed work and the cost were obtained and shared with Cllrs for	21.05.2023

	comment prior to authorisation. The matter is on the Agenda for May 2023 to add to the agreed maintenance schedule.	
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