

Teston Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting of Teston Parish Council held on 30 January 2024 at
7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

Present: Cllr Peter Coulling (Chairman) and Councillors Christopher Douglass (Vice-Chairman), Robert Ayling, Ms Tina Burgon, Robin Owens and Mrs Nina Wheat

Also Present - Borough Councillor Mrs Fay Gooch

In Attendance – Neil Harris (Clerk)

Members of the Public Present - 0

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.

138. **Declarations of Interest**

In the interests of transparency, all Parish Councillors declared an interest in any items referring to
(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 Mrs Wheat, and Cllr Ms Burgon declared an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee; and
(f) Cllr Ms Burgon declared an interest as a member of Barming with Teston PCC.

Dispensations having been granted in respect of (a) to (e)

139. **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for Absence were received from County Councillor Simon Webb

140. **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Councilor Ayling to his first Council meeting.

141. **Vote of Thanks**

The Chairman reported that Michelle Tatton had now officially left the Council though she was continuing to give assistance as the role of Clerk was passed on to Neil Harris.

It was **Agreed** that a vote of thanks of the Council be given to Michelle Tatton for her 17+ years' exemplary service to the Council.

The new Clerk Neil Harris was welcomed to the Council meeting.

142. Code of Conduct

The Chairman reminded Members that a copy of the latest draft Code of Conduct had been sent out to all Councillors for their comments. If they had any comments, could they get them to him as soon as possible.

143. Public Participation Session

There were no members of the public present, and the meeting did not adjourn

144. Minutes

It was **Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

145. Ratification of Decisions

There were no decisions to report.

146. Ordering of the Agenda

The Chairman proposed that the items relating to Grants to Village Organisations, the Rural England Prosperity Fund and Collaboration with Teston Village Hall be considered together.

147. Statement of Accounts

The Council considered the Statement of Accounts showing the current balance of £55750.51 and a balance less outstanding cheques of £43308.85 which had been circulated at the meeting. The Council also received the latest position relating to the Tapestry account and the allotments.

The Council were informed of the payments scheduled to be made and it was **Agreed** that the following payments be approved; -

30.01.2024	3432	Barming PCC – Churchyard Maintenance Grant	350.00
30.01.2024	3433	Teston Village Stores CIC – New Years Day Drinks	180.35
30.01.2024	3434	Mr C Douglass – New Years Day	48.50
30.01.2024	3435	Michelle Tatton Clerk's Salary January 2024	431.04
30.01.2024	3435	Michelle Tatton Clerk's Expenses – Memory Stick	19.98
30.01.2024	3436	Neil Harris Clerks Salary – January 2024	320.00
		TOTAL	£1349.87

148. Parish Services Scheme Grant 2024/25

It was noted that the grant for 2024/25 would be £1544.

149. Budget 2023-23 / Precept:

Following consideration of the precept at the last meeting when it was provisionally agreed to increase the precept to £32250, an increase of 7.5%, the Chairman asked the Council if it was still in agreement on this increase.

It was **Agreed** that the precept be increased to £32250, a 7.5% increase on last year.

150. Grants to Village Organisations for 2023-24:

This item was considered with the items relating to the Rural England Prosperity Fund and Collaboration with the Teston Village Hall Management Committee later in the Agenda.

151. Internal Audit Interim Report

The Council considered the interim report of the Internal Auditor and the recommendations therein.

It was **Agreed** that the Council response to the recommendations of the Internal Auditor as attached to the Minutes be approved.

152. Rural England Prosperity Fund - Village Hall Solar Panels and Associated Works

This item was considered with the items relating to the Grants to Village Organisations 2023-24 and Collaboration with the Teston Village Hall Management Committee later in the agenda.

153. SLCC Membership

The Clerk reported that SLCC Membership would cost £120 a year with the benefits being access to additional information which could support and benefit the Council. The Membership would be in the name of the Clerk and not the Council.

It was **Agreed** that the Council would fund the membership of the Clerk to the Society of Local Council Clerks at a cost of £120 per annum.

154. Tapestry Advertising Rates

The Chairman reported that the Council needed to consider whether it wished to increase the Tapestry Advertising rates.

It was **Agreed** that the Tapestry Advertising Rates be increased by an average of 5% but with the increases being on a rounded basis and with more emphasis on raising additional revenue through the smaller advertisements.

155. Risk Assessment Review

The Chairman indicated that he would look at the Council's Risk Assessment with the Clerk and review it for circulation to the Members for consideration at the March meeting of the Council.

156. Dates for Future Meetings

It was **Agreed** that the dates for the meetings in March and July be changed to 12 March and 16 July.

157. Current Position on Pending Planning Applications

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) 23/503475/SUB 2 Hillside Cottage Malling Road Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AN

Submission of details pursuant to condition 3 (External Lighting Details) of applications 22/501778/LBC – **Approved**

e) 23/504669/FULL Teston Village Hall Church Street Teston Kent ME18 5AH

Removal and blocking up of 4no. rear windows. Installation of 29no. solar panels to rear with batteries and associated equipment installed internally within a storeroom. Installation of external units for 2no. air-to-air heat-pumps on rear flat roof with associated equipment installed internally – **Approved**

f) 23/505022/TCA The Village Green Church Street Teston Kent

Conservation area notification to crown lift 8 Prunus Pandora (T1-T8), 1 Catalpa (T12), 2 Prunus Avium (T13 and T14) and 1 Prunus Cerasifera (T15) to 3m above ground level. Crown lift three Crataegus Monogyna (T9-T11) to 2.1m above ground level and reduce to a height of 8 metres and spread of 2.75m. All works to be maintained on an ongoing basis – **No objection**

g) 23/50271/FULL The Granary Court Lodge Farm The Street Teston Kent ME18 5AQ

Erection of a single storey side extension to existing annex Refused

h) 23/505269/FULL Tamarix 2 Malling Road Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AR

Erection of a ground floor enclosed front porch to replace existing. Installation of side ground floor window to stairwell **Approved**

i) 23/505150/FULL Tamesis Malling Road Teston Maidstone Kent ME18 5AR

Erection of a single storey side/front extension incorporating replacement garage **Approved**

158. New Planning Applications

There were no new applications for consideration by the Council

159. Maidstone Local Plan Review

The Chairman updated the Council on the latest position on the Local Plan and that it was not clear whether the Plan would be finalised by the Inspector and adopted by the Borough Council before the election. Borough Councillor Fay Gooch indicated that it was the intention of the Borough Council to adopt the Local Plan before the election if everything goes according to plan.

160. Teston Bridge Country Park

The Chairman reported that the Environment Agency were coming out with a revised project shortly.

161. Tree, Hedge Work, and routine maintenance

The Clerk reported that he had received 2 quotes from Qualitree as follows

Teston Village Green – Works to Silver Birch - £210

Teston Village Green – Works to various trees as per Decision Notice dated 20 December 2023 - £680

It was **Agreed** that the above quotes from Qualitree be approved.

162. Allotments

The Clerk indicated that he would liaise with Councillor Douglass regarding the current non payees for allotment rents, the waiting list and the position re tree raised by an allotment holder.

163. Tree Survey

The Clerk reported that no quote had been received but recent weather conditions may be the reason for that.

164. Play Area

The Chairman reported that the recent Inspection report had raised concerns about the condition of the play area and that the Council will need to look at a substantial refurbishment including considering replacing all of the existing play equipment.

Councillor Ayling indicated that the play area should be replaced, and that the Council should provide a new play area targeting the up to 7-year-olds.

The issue of whether to have a fence could be considered in detail as part of the overall proposal.

It was **Agreed** that the Council pursue the option of a new play area and that Councillor Ayling will follow up with Mereworth Parish Council and that this matter be revisited at the next Council meeting.

165. Annual Grounds Maintenance Contract

It was **Agreed** that the quote from Landscape Services for the Annual Maintenance contract at a total cost of £1907.39 as detailed below be approved: -

Mow Ash Tree Corner on 14 occasions - £254.31

Carry out mowing of the Village Green on 14 occasions - £508.64

Mow the verges on The Street south of Teston CC on 14 occasions - £508.64

Mow the verges at the entrance to Courtlands on northern side on 14 occasions - £254.31

Mow the verges between the allotments and Valley Court on 14 occasions - £381.49

166. Teston Highways Spreadsheet

The Council considered the Teston Highways spreadsheet.

167. **New Years Day Event**

The Council considered that the event had been a success.

168. **Possible Film Club at Teston Village Hall**

The Chairman reported that the Village Hall had an Entertainments licence for the Film Club granted by Maidstone Borough Council. The licence would also allow the selling of alcohol during the event.

169. **Teston Village Hall – Solar Panel Scheme and Roof**

The Chairman reported that on average the solar panels had been able to supply a third of the electricity needed by the Village Hall which at this time of year was a significant achievement and an endorsement of the approach to go for this scheme. During a recent power cut the battery had enabled the Preschool and the shop to continue in operation.

The Chairman also sought the endorsement of the Council to an approach of using the remaining funds from the MBC grant to complete the scheme by repairing the roof and providing 1 heat pump together with resolving the loss of heat through the extractor fan. The Chairman indicated that if this approach was adopted that he would seek the support of the Council to the exact details of the proposal as it goes forward.

It was **Agreed** that the approach outlined by the Chairman above be adopted.

170. **Annual Parish Meeting**

Discussion ensued on the format of the Annual Parish Meeting including having a speaker and allowing Village Groups to have a small presentation on what they were doing. This was generally thought to be a good idea.

It was **Agreed** that the Annual Parish Meeting be held on 30 April and that the Chairman see if the Environment Agency could be able to provide a speaker.

171. **Exceptional Delegated Authority**

It was **Agreed** that EDA should continue until the next meeting.

172. **To Consider Parish Council Membership & Candidates for Co-option to the Parish Council and Co-option**

The Chairman reported that Roger Levett had resigned and that a vacancy to the Parish Council existed. The relevant notices had been displayed. The previous candidate for co-option confirmed that he was still interested, and no further nominations had come forward.

The Council **Agreed** that Mr Ben Merchant be co-opted onto the Council to serve the remainder of the term of office until the next election in May 2024.

The Clerk would make contact with him and arrange for him to sign his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and complete his Register of Interests.

173. Adjournment of the Meeting

It was **Agreed** that the meeting adjourn to enable consideration to be given to the following: -

Teston Land Conservation Trust matters

Nothing to report

Teston Village Stores CIC matters

The Chairman reported the position with regard to the financing of the Shop and it was accepted that the Directors would need to consider this matter in the near future.

Friends of Teston Church

Nothing to report

174. Reopening of the Meeting

The Council recommenced its business following the adjournment to consider the above matters.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 10.16pm

Date of next meeting: 7.30pm on 12 March at Teston Village Hall