

TESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of Teston Parish Council held on 16 July 2024 at
7.30pm in Teston Village Hall

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

Also Present - Borough Councillor Allison Sweetman

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.

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for Absence was received from Councillor Ms Tina Burgon and Borough Councillor Mrs Fay Gooch

2. 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 and Cllr Mrs Wheat declared an interest as members of Teston Village Hall Management Committee; and
- (f) Cllr Ms Burgon would have declared an interest as a member of Barming with Teston PCC if she had been present.

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

2. Welcome to Councillor Sweetman

The Council welcomed Borough Councillor Allison Sweetman to her first meeting and congratulated her on her recent election to Maidstone Borough Council.

3. Public Participation Session

There were no members of the public present.

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4.. Minutes of the Meetings held on 14 May and 25 June 2024

It was **Agreed** that the minutes of the meetings held on 14 May and 25 June 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman subject to Councillor Tina Burgon being added to the list of those present at the meeting on 25 June.

5. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

6. Ratification of Decisions

There were no decisions to report.

7. Ordering of the Agenda

The Chairman stated that he would take the items as proposed on the agenda.

8. Finance Report

The Council considered the report of the Clerk and received the spreadsheet on which the accounts were being collated and had the opportunity to examine and ask questions.

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

Expenditure For Approval and Cheques for signing

Name	Cheque No	Reason for Invoice	Net	VAT	Gross
TMBC	Tap 57	Costs for printing Tapestry – April - Paid	200.61	0.00	200.61
TMBC	Tap 58	Costs for printing Tapestry – May - Paid	181.34	0.00	181.34
TMBC	Tap 59	Costs for printing Tapestry – June - Paid	203.07	0.00	203.07
Water Plus	3458	Water – Allotments – May - Paid	34.51	0.00	34.51
BT	DD	Teston VH Broadband June– Direct Debit – Paid	65.77	13.15	78.92
Water Plus	3460	Water – Allotments – June -Paid	34.83	0.00	34.83

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BT	DD	Teston VH Broadband July– Direct Debit – Paid On 16 July	65.77	13.15	78.92
TMBC	Tap 60	Costs for printing Tapestry – July	159.36	0.00	159.36
Qualitree Services Ltd	3461	Tree Survey	355.00	71.00	426.00
April Skies Accounting	3462	Audit work for Interim Audit	225.00	0.00	225.00
April Skies Accounting	3462	Audit work for Final Audit	370.00	0.00	370.00
Neil Harris	3463	Salary – June Duty Hours	238.73	0.00	238.73
Neil Harris	3463	Salary – 9 Additional Hours in May	76.73	0.00	76.73
Neil Harris	3463	Salary – 12 Additional Hours in June	102.31	0.00	102.31
Neil Harris	3463	Salary – Mileage Allowance – January to April – 44 miles	19.80	0.00	19.80
Ripton Homes & Gardens	3464	Hedge Cutting at War Memorial	75.00	0.00	75.00

Income Received since last meeting

Name	Reason for Income	Net	VAT	Gross
MBC	PSS Grant Scheme 2024/25	771.91	0.00	771.91

9. Road Safety at The Street/A26 Junction

The Chairman informed the Council that KCC had informed him that the yellow lines proposal had gone to the Design team and would be going out to consultation shortly.

It was **Agreed** that an article appear in the next edition of Tapestry concerning the consultation on the yellow lines' proposal.

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10. Planning

The Council considered the report of the Clerk on Planning setting out details relating to applications where decisions were pending and new applications.

It was **Agreed** to note the report.

11. 24/502692/LBC – Barham Mews, Tonbridge Road, Teston – Listed Building Consent for Replacement of Modern Casement Windows/External Doors with the Timber Slim Double Glazes Substitutes

The Council received this application to which a response was required before the next meeting. It was **Agreed** that Maidstone Borough Council be notified of the following comment from the Council: -

Teston Parish Council would normally support the view of the Conservation Officer on this type of application but would request that he take into account in his assessment of this application the energy conservation benefits of this change and the views of residents. Additionally, could he also take into account that there appears to be no change in the external appearance and that timber is retained. If having taken these factors into account, the Conservation Officer is of the opinion that the application should be refused the Council would accept his view.

12. Knole Farm, Malling Road, Teston

The Chairman reported to the Council that a meeting had taken place at which he had been present with Planning Officers from MBC and TMBC and MBC Councillor Fay Gooch and TMBC Councillor Sarah Hudson on this matter and the Planning teams were aware of the issues and dealing with it.

It was **Agreed** to note the report.

13. Maidstone Local Plan Review

The Chairman updated the Council on the current position. He emphasized that in the next Local Plan there could be 35 Housing Units allocated to Teston Parish.

It was **Agreed** to note the report.

14. Teston Bridge Country Park

The Chairman updated the Council on the current position.

It was **Agreed** to note the report.

15. Tree, Hedge Work, and routine maintenance including Tree Survey

The Council considered the Arboricultural report commissioned by the Council from Qualitree Services. It was noted that there was significant damage to some trees caused by the strimming undertaken by the Contractors on the Green.

It was **Agreed**

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(1) That the Clerk write to the contractor responsible for work on the Green asking them to take more care when strimming and in light of the damage caused to the trees by strimming to seek a contribution to the cost of replacement

(2) That the Clerk obtain a quote from Qualitree services for the work set out in the Arboricultural report commissioned by the Council and that the works be authorised up to a cost of £750 excluding VAT

(3) That the Clerk write to KCC asking them to do a survey of the trees on the highway and their responsibility.

16. Allotments

Councillor Douglass reported that there were 2 vacant plots, and that the Council would be writing to the Teathers on Plot 18 about the condition of their plot. It was also noted that rent charges would be considered at the next meeting.

17. Play Area

Councillor Ayling reported that he had met up with two contractors namely Playdale and Kompan and their quotes were presented to the Council. He also indicated that there were grants available to the Council to help with funding this type of project.

The Council were pleased with the quotes and wishes to pursue this matter but before committing to a single contractor wished to find out more about the grants available.

It was **Agreed**

(1) That Councillor Ayling be thanked for all the work he has done on this project

(2) That it be agreed that the Council would replace the existing play equipment

(3) That the Council waive Financial Regulations in respect of the tender for the replacement of the play equipment to enable it to negotiate directly with its identified contractors to develop and implement the scheme for the replacement of the play equipment up to a cost in the region of £40k

(4) That the Council apply for appropriate grant funding including any scheme available via Maidstone Borough Council.

(5) That if no grants are available that a loan up to the sum of £40k be sought from the PWLB to be repaid over 10 years.

18. Bank Mandates

It was **Agreed** that the Bank Mandate for the Council will include all Councillors, and all Councillors shall complete the appropriate paperwork in accord with this instruction.

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19. Tapestry – Financial and Operational Status

The Chairman reported that Tapestry had lost 5 advertisers and had a deficit of £400. It was also in need of a new Joint Editor

It was **Agreed** that an article be placed in Tapestry seeking a new Joint Editor and an Advertising Manager.

20. Local PCSO

The Clerk reported that the Local PCSO was hoping to attend the Council's next meeting on 24 September.

21. Exceptional Delegated Authority

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

22. 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

The Chairman updated the Trust on the current position on the agreement.

Teston Village Stores CIC matters

The Chairman reported the position relating to the agreement on the use of credit and debit cards at the Shop which was coming to a close and put up a number of options for consideration. It was **Agreed** that the WorldPay 10.5% increase was the best option and agreed its introduction at the end of the current contract.

Friends of Teston Church

The Chairman reported that the Hatchments at the Church were going for conservation works.

23. Reopening of the Meeting

The Council recommenced its business following the adjournment to consider any confidential items.

24. Internal Audit

The Chairman reported that the Internal Auditor had resigned in accord with his view expressed in his recent internal audit. He had approached KALC to look for a replacement and was recommending to the Council the appointment of Lionel Robbins who would undertake 1 audit a year which could last in the

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region of 2 hours for a Council the size of Teston and that his charge was £70 an hour. The Chairman felt that it would be beneficial for Councillors Owens and Wheat to have a discussion with Mr Robbins.

It was **Agreed** that, subject to the outcome of the discussion with Councillors Owens and Wheat, that Mr Lionel Robbins be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor.

25. Resignation of Clerk

The Chairman reported that the Clerk had resigned having given 3 months' notice though had indicated that he could stay until the end of November if the Council wishes him to whilst they sought a replacement.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Date of next meeting: 7.30pm on 24 September at Teston Village Hall