

**MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL at 7.30 P.M. ON MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019**

**Present:** Cllr March (Chair)

Councillors Davis, Russell, Stevens, White, Sheppard and Richards.

**In attendance:** Lucy Noakes (Clerk and RFO)

1 member of the public

**Declarations of Interest:**

Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllrs Larkin & Cllr Jenkinson. It was proposed by Cllr Richards that the Cllrs' reasons for absence be accepted by the Council, seconded Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

**2. PUBLIC SESSION (no decisions): Members of the public have the right to speak for up to three minutes at the Chairpersons discretion on issues concerning the Parish providing the Clerk has prior notification.**

Mrs Mills, Proprietor of The Heath Stores, requested to speak for three minutes regarding the recent temporary traffic lights at the crossroads and potential traffic solutions/ parking problems.

Mrs Mills said there had been suggestions by residents of Horsmonden that a possible solution to the car crashes at the Crossroads would be to install traffic lights. This had also been mentioned to her during informal verbal discussions as a final option by representatives from KCC, if nothing else worked.

Mrs Mills requested that her following thoughts and observations regarding traffic lights be recorded as part of the minutes:

'The Village recently had four-way traffic lights in the centre for two weeks and this had the following impact on the village:

- 1.) Mrs Mills saw one car ignore a red light. Another witness also saw two cars jump a red light. Traffic lights will not therefore necessarily stop the crashes.
- 2.) The traffic lights caused an increase in the speed of vehicles at the centre of the village where most of the pedestrian traffic is. This is due to cars seeing a green light and speeding up so they don't miss it.
- 3.) There was a significant increase in traffic in the back roads caused by cars avoiding the traffic lights. This included increase in traffic outside the kindergarten and primary school.
- 4.) The amount of legal parking was reduced in the centre of the village which is a barrier to passing traffic using the village centre businesses.
- 5.) Traffic lights in the centre are themselves a barrier to passing trade stopping and using village centre businesses.
- 6.) At Heath Stores passing trade accounts for approximately 30% of our trade and the proprietors saw a significant reduction in trade during the period the traffic lights were there.
- 7.) Permanent traffic lights would impact the viability of the village shop and possibly other village centre businesses.

Mrs Mills also outlined a proposal put forward by KCC to improve the crossroads by widening the Lamberhurst Road and installing an island a number of metres back from the junction. This would

require double yellow lines on each corner of the crossroads and all the way down side of The Heath Stores building on the Lamberhurst road. This would also reduce the amount of legal parking available in the centre of the village. Mrs Mill said that there were already a number of concerns regarding parking in the centre of the village and losing more parking would only make the situation worse. She felt that lack of legal parking would also negatively impact the viability of village centre business.

She felt that if KCC's latest scheme was agreed as the best way forward, then appropriate provision of public parking for the centre of the village in addition to any parking spaces built on land belonging to Heath Stores, should form part of the discussions.

Mrs Mills went on to point out that Horsmonden currently has no off-road public parking, and like all villages Horsmonden will have more housing. She believes that sustainable growth is important for all villages to ensure they retain their facilities however she feels that a public car park would help support this extra growth and maintain the viability of all village centre businesses including the doctor's surgery. Currently there is often parking on the corner outside the doctor's surgery and a public car park would help to stop this.

Finally, Mrs Mills requested that if this scheme were to go ahead, the Parish Council and KCC look to provide a public car park for the village. She suggested that one possible place might be the area of grass in front of Fromandez drive.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

#### **Agree the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Planning Committee Meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and Finance Committee meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019.**

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were proposed for acceptance by Cllr Davis, seconded by Cllr Richards and carried.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were proposed for acceptance by Cllr Sheppard, seconded by Cllr Russell and voted for unanimously by those present.

The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019 were proposed for acceptance by Cllr Russell seconded by Cllr Richards and voted for unanimously by those present.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING (no decisions)**

#### **Public Rights of Way**

Clerk waiting to hear from KCC when all is complete.

#### **Parking area outside VH**

Dukes plan to start works on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March

#### **Fromandez Drive Posts**

Dukes contractors had commenced work on 4<sup>th</sup> March and planned to finish by Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March

#### **Risk assessment of parish-owned buildings**

Clerk awaiting a date from WW&B to carry out assessments.

#### **Installation of Rialtas Accountancy system**

The Clerk had just received an outline of the new accounting system from Rialtas and needed to check this with Cllr Russell.

#### **Data Protection and GDPR**

Arron Services had now set up the Councillors' laptops in addition to the new Parish Council email addresses. The Clerk would arrange a date for Arron Services to deliver the laptops and carry out basic training as soon as possible. It was suggested that a Friday afternoon in the Village Hall was the best time for this. Councillors White, Sheppard and Richards felt that they might be able to

manage without training as they would be unable to attend. There was more work to be carried out with sorting through paper files and digital files.

**Purchasing new Speedwatch equipment.**

The Clerk had ascertained that the new equipment would be ready to collect on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March.

**5. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE**

**5.1 Agree Parish Council accounts to 3rd March 2019 and settlement of invoices for this period (see appendix 1)**

Cllr Stevens proposed acceptance of the invoices and accounts for the period up to and including 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019 as set out below and circulated by the clerk at the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr White, unanimous.

**Horsmonden Parish Council Accounts as at 3rd March 2019**

	<b>Balances</b>
Current account with Co-operative Bank PLC b/fwd. 04.02.2019 (assuming all debits and credits have cleared the account)	£ 95,066.33
Deposit account with HSBC b/fwd. 04.02.2019 (assuming all credits and debits have cleared the account)	£ 291.01
interest on HSBC account	£ 0.35

Item	Ref	Receipts	Payments
Castle Water - supply of water parish toilets	D/D		£ 17.36
B&CE Holdings Pension L Noakes - Jan 2019	D/D		£ 31.02
Mrs L D Noakes - salary plus over time	S/O Flexi		£ 1,440.05
Ms J S Stanton - January Salary plus overtime	S/O Flexi		£ 630.00
HM Revenue and Taxes - Employee Tax and NI Feb	402185		£ 527.32
Mr C J Couchman - clock and play area Feb 2019	402186		£ 83.08
G Bridgland Ltd - Tree survey	402187		£ 300.00
Specialist Hygiene Service - toilet cleaning Feb	402188		£ 281.47
GovNet Communications - Annual Flooding Forum	402189		£ 426.60
Mr C H Noakes - reimbursement for HDMI amplifier	402190		£ 23.52
The Heath Stores - Batteries and hospitality- Dec & Jan	402191		£ 23.27
EDF Energy - Electricity Village Green- 07.06.18-08.02.2019	D/D		£ 44.65
PSR Lighting and Signs Ltd. Jan and Feb Street lights	402192		£ 178.01
Arron Services - service contract for laptops and councillor laptops	402193		£ 750.00
The Society of Local Council Clerks - LDN membership	402194		£ 209.00
The Society of Local Council Clerks - JS membership	402196		£ 146.00
Ms J Stanton - reimbursement of cleaning sticks for Public toilets	402197		£ 7.99

<b>Current Account with Co-operative Bank PLC as at 03.03.19</b> (assuming all credits and debits have cleared the account)	<b>£ 89,946.99</b>
All Accounts with HSBC as at 03.03.19 (assuming all credits and debits have cleared the account)	£ 291.36
	<u>TOTAL BANK: £ 90,238.35</u>

***Please note that in addition to this the Council holds a long-term investment of £70,000 with HSBC.***

**5.2 Chair to reconcile accounts with bank statement for period up to and including 3rd February 2019**

The Chair could not yet reconcile these as bank statement not yet received.

**5.3 Chair to reconcile accounts with bank statement for period up to and including 6th January 2019**

The Chair was able to reconcile these accounts and sign appropriately by checking against the bank statement.

**5.4 Change to Unity Trust bank account instead of Co-operative Bank.**

The Clerk had prepared the forms and documentation required to open a new account with Unity Trust bank and transfer all funds from the Co-operative Bank account. She asked the signatories to sign the mandate so that the forms could be sent to the bank.

**5.5 HoVEC Accounts- Discuss the discontinuation of monitoring HoVEC funds following the expiry of the three-year transition period.**

The Clerk had received the annual accounts from HoVEC and had circulated these to Councillors. She had sought advice from the Council's internal auditor and he had agreed that the Council could cease reviewing these accounts, assuming they were satisfied with the content. It was proposed by Cllr Davis and seconded by Cllr Richards, unanimous, that the Council now discontinue monitoring HoVEC's accounts as they were satisfied that the accounts were being managed in a satisfactory manner and funds were being used appropriately.

**5.6 Quotation for renegotiation of utility services for street lighting. (Electrical suppliers)**

E. On had informed the Council that their two-year contract for supply of energy was now ending and although they could continue to supply the electricity for street lighting, the prices would be increasing. The Assistant Clerk had been trying to obtain quotations from alternative companies but was unable to locate another company which would provide an unmetered supply at a cheaper price. She had managed to renegotiate a cheaper supply contract from E.On however.

It was suggested that the Assistant Clerk try Ecotricity to see if they could provide an unmetered supply as they provided sustainable energy, in accordance with the Council's sustainability policy. Assistant Clerk to pursue.

**5.7 Discuss/agree the adoption of the Parish Council Reserves Policy as recommended by the Finance Committee**

The Clerk had circulated the Council's draft Reserves Policy, which had been altered as recommended by the Finance Committee. It was proposed by Cllr Russell that the Reserves Policy be accepted, as previously circulated. Seconded Cllr Davis, unanimous.

**5.8 Discuss/agree the changes to the Finance Committee Terms of Reference, as recommended by the Finance Committee**

Further to the adoption of the Council's Reserves Policy, it was recommended by the Finance Committee that the Council alter the wording of their Finance Committee Terms of Reference, to include reference to the new Reserves Policy. Cllr Russell proposed acceptance of the altered wording as circulated to the Council, seconded Cllr Stevens, unanimous.

**5.9 Quotations for electrical works village Hall**

The Clerk had obtained a further quotation for two new sockets in the Parish office as the chosen contractor had decided he was unable to accept the works. Cllr Richards proposed that the Council accept the quotation offered by DAR services at a cost of £178 including VAT as the cheapest quote. Seconded Cllr Stevens, unanimous.

The Village Hall had recently undergone its electrical certification carried out by DAR Electrical Services and two outside lights had been identified as requiring attention. It was proposed by Cllr Richards that the outside lights were the responsibility of the Council as owner of the building and that the lights should be replaced in accordance with the quotation set out by DAR for a price of £312 as a matter of urgency and assuming the replacement lights to be LED, in accordance with the PC's sustainability policy. This was seconded by Cllr Russell. Unanimous.

The Clerk had obtained several quotes for replacing the main interior lights in the Village hall, however it was not clear from the lease document which party was responsible for internal lighting, although it was generally thought to be the Village Hall Committee as they had managed the internal lights in the past. It was suggested that the Village Hall committee therefore look at replacing the main lights in the Hall and in doing so overcome any need to increase the supply by replacing the mains electricity supply coming into the Hall.

## **6. HIGHWAYS AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

### **6.1 Highways issues – footpaths, trees, roads, signs, verges and markings**

The following items were mentioned by Cllrs for reporting on the KHS system:

- BT pole which had been replaced between the Old Chapel and Bassett's Farm on the Maidstone Road has been placed too close to the road.
- Gibbet Lane was still flooding when it rained, owing to blocked drains.

### **6.2 Grounds Maintenance**

The Clerk had received a quotation from Bournes to apply fertilizer and weed killer on the Green. It was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded Cllr Davis and voted for unanimously that the fertilizer and weed killer be applied with added seaweed at the cost of £380 plus VAT.

The Clerk was still awaiting costs for the tree works to be carried out by Bridglands, however they had supplied some costings for the planting of two new lime trees, which the Clerk now circulated to those present. It was proposed by Cllr Davis, seconded by Cllr White and voted for unanimously that the Council accept the quotation for the largest trees, which were 4m tall, at an estimated price of £712 plus VAT, provided they can be supplied and planted before 1st April.

### **6.3 Street lighting**

The Clerk was still trying to obtain alternative quotations for replacement street lights as a comparison, however, she asked the Council how they wished to proceed with the repainting of the street lighting columns as quite a lot of columns were obscured by overgrown trees and bushes which would need to be pruned back before painting could take place.

Owing to the time of year it was suggested that the Council would be best to delay the painting until the end of the summer as it was too near to nesting season to cut back bushes and trees at the current time. It was suggested that the Clerk write to Parishioners during the middle to end of August to ask them to cut their plants back before the first week of September otherwise the contractor would have to prune them back when they came to paint in the second week of September, advising the parishioners that it would not be possible to guarantee what sort of job the contractor would make when cutting back the bushes. Clerk to ask the contractor how much space is required to be cleared around each post prior to painting and ask the contractor to book the work for second week in September.

## **7. ADMINISTRATION**

### **7.1 Discuss minor change of wording to Clerk /Assistant Clerk Contracts of employment (clause 9.2) regarding notice period.**

Two minor points in the clerks' contracts of employment were raised, one regarding the timing of the annual review of salary and the other regarding the notice period. These were discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Russell that the contracts be revised to say that clerks' salaries should be revised prior to the Council's Finance Committee meeting each year, seconded Cllr Richards, unanimous. It was suggested that the notice period should be left unchanged as this clause was considered fairly standard.

### **7.2 Renewal of Clerk's membership for SLCC and new membership for Assistant Clerk.**

Members of the Council agreed that membership of SLCC was important for the clerks' continuous professional development as well as for keeping everyone informed about industry developments. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Russell that the Clerk's membership of SLCC be renewed and that

the Assistant Clerk be allowed to join SLCC at the Council's expense. Seconded Cllr Stevens, unanimous.

**7.3 Traffic Solutions. Feedback from the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> Feb for Greg Clarkes meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March. Which proposals do the Council give preference for?**

Cllrs Russell and Davis had met with members of KHS and the traffic solutions team to discuss further potential developments at the crossroads on 14<sup>th</sup> February. These proposals included putting in a narrow central reservation on the Lamberhurst approach to the crossroads and widening the road by using some of the garden from the triangular garden area, belonging to Heath Stores. This would preclude any parking at the side of the shop. The traffic solutions team were still conversing with the Mills' about this and trying to develop the plan.

The point was made that the village shop and chemist were both very reliant on parishioners being able to park in the village centre and that any restriction could adversely affect the viability of both businesses. It was considered that insufficient parking remains a problem in the village centre.

The Council confirmed their support for KCC's proposals to carry out a county-wide speed awareness campaign.

The Clerk had received a quotation from Capel Ground Care for moving and recharging the SID as well as downloading the data. It was proposed by Cllr White, seconded by Cllr Richards that the Council appoint Capel Ground Care to carry out these duties at a price of £1495 plus VAT per annum, for a period of three months initially, after which time the Council would review the situation to see if they wished to continue. Carried.

**7.4 Neighbourhood Planning. Plans and proposals moving forward.**

The Clerk was currently in the process of applying to Locality for Master Planning Technical Support for the group, as it was felt that this was necessary to carry the process forward.

The NH Planning group were setting up the next public meeting which would provide feedback for the public from the questionnaire and update everyone on how the plan was moving forward.

It was suggested that the group may like to do an update at the Annual Parish Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May and possibly invite Jim Boot, the consultant along to speak.

The subgroups were now up and running and it was possible that one group may put a map in the Village hall and other public spaces for parishioners to mark areas which they would like to see unaltered in the village.

**7.5 Re-discuss the PC's future involvement in the North East Quadrant Group and future financing, following recent developments.**

it was considered that Horsmonden may wish to review its membership of the NE Quadrant, following Brenchley and Matfield PC's decision not to pursue this membership. It was proposed by Cllr Stevens and seconded by Cllr Davis that Horsmonden should cease membership of the NE Quadrant group as its neighbouring parish had left and it was felt that the other member parishes were separated by some distance. Unanimous.

**7.6 Development of Sound system/conference system suggestion for Village Hall**

The Clerk asked for some clarity about the sort of system which the Council wished to pursue, as there were many options and add-ons available, but it was felt that some of these were more appropriate for the Village Hall committee to pursue rather than the PC.

It was suggested that the Council pursue the delegate only system and that the clerks try to arrange a demonstration of a wired delegates system prior to the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April. It was questioned as to whether the system would come with its own speaker which was portable- Clerk to find out.

**7.7 Public toilets**

The Council suggested that the posters with eyes on them, as suggested by the CSU, would be useful to try as a deterrent to vandalism. It was proposed by Cllr Richards seconded Cllr White that the Council install the Radar lock system in the disabled toilets as it was felt that this could deter some of the vandalism being experienced. Baby change facilities should also be installed in the men's and ladies' toilets. Carried.

**7.8 Development of potential plans for drinking fountain suggestion**

The Clerk showed the Council various designs of drinking fountain and asked which style they wished to pursue. It was suggested that the Clerk obtain further quotes for installing a wall mounted fountain, with bottle filler and drinking spout.

**7.9 Community Garden project (Horsmonden Youth Action) decision regarding positioning of water butts at the Village Hall.**

The Horsmonden Youth Action Group had requested to be allowed to install two water butts at the side of the Village Hall near to where the bins were situated, or alternatively on the opposite side of the hall in the same positioning. Council members suggested that the group could have two on each side if they wanted, however they asked that the group ensure that any overflow from the butts be directed back into the drains and also that the butts were positioned on sturdy concrete slabs so that they did not subside. This was proposed for agreement by Cllr White seconded Cllr Russell, Carried.

**7.10 Village Green booking for Crosses on the Green 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019 – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

The Clerk had received a Village Green Booking form for the Crosses on the Green Easter event run by St Margaret's Church. It was proposed by Cllr Stevens, seconded Cllr Sheppard that the Council allow the event to go ahead as planned, provided all the necessary documentation was received by the Clerk in plenty of time for the event. Unanimous.

**7.11 Discuss listing assets of community value.**

It had been suggested that the Council should revisit its decision to list the Gun and Spit Roast and Heath Stores as Assets of Community Value, following further information. It was proposed by Cllr Richards and seconded by Cllr Davis that the Council should not pursue the listing of these assets, unanimous. Clerk to inform the owners.

**8. UPDATES (no decisions)**

The Clerk had received a thank you letter from Paddock Wood Community Advice Centre for the donation made by the Council.

Cllr White advised that he was trying to find a suitable date to organise the Litter Pick, but this might now be mid to end of May.

The Clerk reported that the Council's investment with HSBC was now approaching an end and that she would be investigating alternative investments for the Council for next month's discussion. It was suggested she research Triodos Bank.

**The meeting ended at 10.25pm**