

Minutes of General Meeting at 7pm on Wednesday 10th July 2024 at Sturry Social Centre.

Present:

Cllr John Hogben (Vice Chairman), Cllr Ann Davies, Cllr Peter Wenham, Cllr Heather Taylor, Cllr Steve Birch, Cllr Alan Mitchell, Cllr Gill Betts and Cllr Karen Isaac.

Ken Dekker Clerk, Alan Webster Caretaker, Roger Lithgow Community Warden and KCC Cllr Alan Marsh. CCC Cllr Moses arrived at 19:20

7 residents in attendance.

Cllr Hogben thanked everybody for attending.

147-24: Apologies for absence

Cllr. Ashley Bubb, CCC Cllrs Keji Moses and Harry McKenzie and Ken Bullock Cemetery Superintendent.

Public questions.

There were no questions from the public.

148-24: To receive Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests and Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests on any agenda items and a reminder to think of any changes to the DPI register held at CCC, such as change of job or home.

Cllr's Davies and Wenham stated that they had an interest in several of the invoices for Sturry Social Centre.

149-24: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 12th June 2024.

Proposed by Cllr Mitchell and seconded by Cllr Wenham. All in agreement

150-24: Matters arising from minutes of the Parish meeting on Wednesday 12th June 2024.

Cllr Davies asked about the plot in the Cemetery for the Gurkhas, this will be discussed later in the agenda.

Cllr Taylor asked if there was any update on the ownership of the Social Centre from the solicitors.

The Clerk stated that he was searching for another document dating back to 1948 that was required.

Centenary Woodland requires some strimming to make it accessible.

151-24: Chairman and Councillors' reports.

No report from the Chairman.

Cllr Davies report that she and Cllr Wenham attended the NALC AGM. The new Parish Charter has been finalised and will be sent out to Clerks. She outlined the advantages of having a Neighbourhood plan. The inspection of the Draft Local Plan will not be until late summer of 2025.

Cllr Birch reported that the playpark group had met with the four contractors, and they are hoping to get plans together mid Aug to end Aug so that all the council can review them in the office before a decision is made on which to go with. He also reported that several of the gates require self-closing devices fitted.

Cllr Betts reported that she had been had attended the Hope Café where she was approached by a lady and asked was it possible to hold a dementia choir along with the Hope Café. She asked if the council would be willing to finance the setup of the choir. It was decided to put this on the agenda for the next meeting. It was suggested to give them a grant form.

152-24: County and District Councillors' reports.

KCC Cllr Marsh stated that he would forward to the clerk a report regarding the green effort from KCC for this to be passed on to the Councillors.

He congratulated Cllr J Brabham for becoming Vice Chair on the KALC committee.

He stated that our MP was getting in touch with Stagecoach regarding the No 7 bus.

CCC Cllrs Report.

Keji managed to get replacements for two benches on each end of Hillbrow Avenue.

Harry dealt with an issue regarding polluted tarmac and an illegally parked roller on Popes Lane. KCCs cabinet member for highways provided formal correspondence.

We are currently dealing with several cases in Sturry regarding housing which we are making progress on.

We received a high volume of responses to our survey regarding the number 7 bus (especially from Broad Oak residents). We are going to arrange a follow-up meeting with Stagecoach, and we'd be delighted if a representative from SPC could join us (let us know who and we will contact them directly to arrange).

Harry is liaising with the Environment Agency regarding foul water runoff from the Woodlands development in Broad Oak into Bluebell Woods.

We are delighted to announce that 67 of the houses built on the Woodlands site in Broad Oak as part of the 30% requirement of affordable housing have been purchased by CCC to be used as council housing. The rents will be affordable rents (80% of market rate) and will be covered by housing benefit. The cost of buying them was £9.45million and will be paid for through capital receipts, selling unsuitable homes, and borrowing (debt to be paid back by rent income). Having been on a site visit earlier this year, we've seen the homes firsthand and they are of great quality - they will provide secure, cosy, and affordable accommodation to more people in our district and lower the waiting list. More information here:

<https://news.canterbury.gov.uk/news/main-item/lives-to-be-transformed-in-9-45-million-deal-for-67-affordable-homes/>

Please let us know of any matters arising for us in the meeting or any questions regarding our report.

153-24: Community Warden report.

I have been undertaking Visible Presence within the village this month on set days as I cover: Greenhill, Sturry, Hersden and Hoath. For one week this month I was on leave.

I am continuing to network with organizations for dealing community needs including Positive Well-being issues to reduce isolation and loneliness with a view to connecting residents with community groups across the Canterbury District.

I have been attending St Nicholas Church Coffee Mornings on Wednesdays between 1030-1230 on alternate weeks.

I received a call from a local resident about the Island Road Sturry and the dangers for vulnerable elderly residents crossing the busy road between Island Rd, Sturry Hill and the Railway Station. I signposted the person to the correct organisations and their KCC Councillor.

I have had a meeting with the local Police Officer, and we will continue to discuss local issues. We are looking at having a drop-in-point where residents can speak to their local police officer and/or their community warden.

I have been popping in periodically to the Sturry Council Office to see if there are any community issues being raised by residents.

I have reported fly tipping to CCC about rubbish dumped in the garage block area on Riverview near to Bournes Close. I have further reported fly tipping in the areas of wasteland between Hillbrow and Riverview. I checked the wasteland again on 03/07/2024 to see if it had been removed, it had not. I checked on CCC webpage for fly tipping to see if it was registered for collecting, and it is. Since my first check more fly tipping has appeared consisting of household and garden waste.

I have been liaising with KCC Highways Officer to get the hedgerow cut back from the pavement outside the disused Greenfield Shooting Range on Sturry Hill. KCC Highways are now dealing with the owners of the site.

I am still working with multiple agencies in Canterbury to support a vulnerable male who's tenanted property has water damage, where he is facing eviction and possible rehousing. Predominantly, I will be attending the online safeguarding meetings about him.

I attend the online NHS Canterbury North Hub weekly meetings where possible, to offer welfare visits to vulnerable people -- and while there to assess any other needs they may have. I have dealt with a referral to check on an elderly lady in Blean

Due to an enquiry, I received, I contacted Kent County Council's Household Support Fund to find out if money available can be used to partly go towards purchasing two School Bus Passes for a family who cannot afford them. I was informed the fund can only be used for food and energy. I informed the person who enquired.

154-24: Village Caretaker's report.

Very quick and brief tonight, there have not been any major issues in the village.

I have rerouted the down pipe on the side of the office to accommodate the new notice board.

155-24: Cemetery Superintendent's Report.

Admin Work:

We have dealt with numerous enquiries as business as usual.

Cemetery Database:

Work has continued on adding the interment records from Burial Register 1 (7th June 1933 to 15th Jan 1987) to the database. So far, I have completed 165 (100) Deeds and the associated Interments 223 (136).

Cemetery Other:

Since my last report, we have had 1 burial of cremated remains.

I currently have one burial booked for July and one burial of cremated remains pending.

I require the approval of four items in the cemetery see attached addendums.

I have dealt with three complaints regarding the cemetery this last month. One where a small plaque disappeared, and the family were unable to locate the grave plot (resolved). One where the family were distressed because the grave had sunk considerably (resolved). One where the grave flowers had apparently been mown (ongoing).

Due to other commitments, we have been unable to carry out any further safety surveys of the monuments.

We have now changed the Cemetery Access Code.

Approval of allocation of Cemetery space for the Canterbury Gurkha Nepalese Community:

As agreed in principle by Council, at the May full Council meeting, I now require the Council to formally agree the permanent allocation of an area of the Cemetery for this purpose.

There is an area on the Western boarder of the Cemetery, which has never been allocated for Burials. By pacing this area, I have estimated that 56 plots could be allocated for the community. I have met with the community who would be very happy to have this area set aside for burials of members of the Canterbury Gurkha Nepalese Community. The community are happy to adhere to standard cemetery regulations and financial arrangements.

Approval of this proposal would simply enable a specific area to be set aside for future use.

Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial and all other applications will be carried out as business as usual when required.

Once approved, I will update records and maps accordingly.

Proposed by Cllr Hogben and seconded by Cllr Mitchell all in agreement. Cllr Taylor stated that it is to be used only for Canterbury area.

156-24: Clerks Report.

We have dealt with general enquiries from residents.

I have completed the first quarter accounts in Rialtas

I have filed the first quarter VAT return of this year.

Our Concurrent Funding paperwork has been submitted to CCC; this should be paid shortly.

The old storeroom at the back of the office is going to be turned into our archive, files that are no longer needed in the two filing cabinets will be transferred to box files and stored in the new archive store.

Unity Trust Bank have paid our interest on our savings account for this quarter £1770.89.

I have received our internal audit report which I will now read out to you and attach to the end of my report.

I reviewed the new model Financial Regs which are to be adopted later on in the agenda.

ROSPA have completed the Safety Inspection of the play park, and I received the report yesterday, I have still to go through them, I have had a quick look and there are no RED signals which is a good thing, but that is not to say there is nothing that needs attention.

I had a week's holiday and have spent time going through the backlog of emails with regards to invoices that required attention.

Internal Audit Report

I am pleased to report to Members of the Parish Council that I have completed my internal audit of the Parish Council's records for 2023-24 and have been able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report for the 2023-24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return

Members should be aware that the audit tests that I undertook during the audit cannot be relied on to identify the occasional omission or insignificant error, nor to disclose breaches of trust or statute, neglect or fraud which may have taken place and which it is the responsibility of the Members of the Council to guard against through the Parish Council's internal control procedures.

As a result of my audit and my discussions with your Clerk I was able to answer, 'YES' to the relevant questions contained in the Annual Internal Audit Report apart from question M (public rights) where I have answered "No".

I would like to take this opportunity to thank your Clerk for the assistance given to me in the conduct of the audit that took place on 4 June 2024.

PREVIOUS AUDITS:

External Audit 2022-23 and earlier years:

Audit certificates have now been received for previous years.

Mazars, the new auditor, issued their certificate in respect of 2022-23 on 20 November 2023. It includes qualifications for public rights dates because of previous year issues and answering "Yes" to the Governance Statement assertion about matters raised by auditors despite taking no action over audit concerns in respect of risk management. The certificate also bears comments concerning risk management and public rights. In addition, Mazars covering letter has "Minor Scope for Improvement" items for variance explanations, scope of internal audit work and inconsistency between the internal audit report and the Governance Statement over risk.

I discussed with the Clerk that the Council must consider and address all items raised by the auditor per Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 and because of assertion 7 on the Governance Statement.

Internal Audit 2022-23:

I had previously reported that the Council's budget and precept setting process for 2023-24 did not comply with statute. As minuted, the process for 2024-25 also failed to comply with statute. I reiterate that the two are one process and that once the budget has been agreed there can be no discussion about the precept. S41 Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the precept is the result of the budget calculations made under s49A of the same Act.

FINDINGS THIS VISIT:

During the audit I carried out sufficient work to enable me to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report. I concentrated on the trail from the annual accounting statement back to the receipts & payments A/c and bank statements.

I have also reviewed the Council's minutes for compliance with legal obligations, its general functioning and for mutual consistency with the accounts.

My "No" answer to question M on the Annual Internal Audit Report is because of the errors with the public rights period during summer 2023. These are that the period cannot start on the day the notice is published (it must be the next

(working) day) and that the period given was too short at 15 days (must be exactly 30 working days and must include the first ten working days in July).

In reviewing minutes, I noted examples where the minute is vague [Refer Appendix]. Fundamentally the minutes are a record of decisions made so need to state clearly what is the decision. The principle is that minutes should be understood by a person who was not present at the meeting. Councils should also note that minutes may be given in evidence to a court.

The 2022-23 Annual Governance and Accountability Statements were considered together at the meeting on 27 June 2023. Regulation 6 Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 requires that the Governance Statement is approved before the Accounting Statement. This requirement means that the two statements must be considered in the correct order and minuted separately.

I have nothing further to report.

157-24: Outside Bodies members reports.

Cllr Birch stated that he had attended the Broad Oak Village Hall meeting, and several items came up, They asked if the Council could help with the purchase of a new cooker, fridge and 50 chairs. He suggested that they should apply for a grant from the Council.

Broad Oak green the hedges need attention and also the sign and bench need repainting.

Cllr Taylor stated that she could not attend the meeting at SSC as she was working.

158-24: Finance

(a) Payments for approval. Proposed by Cllr Betts and seconded by Cllr Mitchell and all in agreement.

£132.85	Westerlyhire	Cemetery toilet hire and cleaning for May
£128.57	Westerlyhire	Cemetery toilet hire and cleaning for June
£286.11	Amazon	Office equipment, poop bags, litter pickers
£28.51	Mustang washrooms	Toilet fresheners
£2065.02	Kent Wildlife Trust	Management Plan Centenary Woodland
£1176	Canterbury Sheet Metal	S/S Sink top unit and worktop SSC.
£636	Coombs Brothers	SSC Additional works
£6186	Coombs Brothers	SSC Kitchen fitting
£5616	Coombs Brothers	SSC Additional works
£280	Lionel Robbins	Internal Audit
£1250.89	John Caddick	Grounds maintenance

(b) Accounts for approval and signature. Two Councillors signed.

(c) Council permission to make payments next month by email as there is no meeting.

This was proposed by Cllr Birch and seconded by Cllr Hogben and all in agreement.

The Clerk stated that he had sourced notice boards as instructed by the Council at last meeting.

It was decided that this will have to be brought back to the next meeting as this is not an item on the agenda.

159-24: To discuss and agree new Financial Regulations for 2024/25

Proposed by Cllr Betts and seconded by Cllr Davies

Cllrs Taylor and Birch abstained all other Cllr's Agreed.

These are now adopted.

160-24: To discuss and agree arrangements for the next Joint Parish Group Meeting to be held in the first week of September.

It was decided that arrangements would be agreed by email once the Clerk has researched when other Councils meetings are.

161-24: To meet and have Q & A with the co-option candidate.

The candidate Chris Gartland was asked several questions by the Cllrs.

He stated that he has lived in the village for 4 years and he is very good at gathering information. His children are at local schools, and he wants to get involved in local matters and try to make a difference.

162-24: To discuss and agree on the Funfair in the playpark.

Cllr Hogben started the proceedings of by stating that the Funfair is a good idea, but he thinks that the playpark is the wrong location, he also stated that several residents had said they did not want it in the playpark.

Cllr Betts asked the Clerk if he had received any of the documents that were requested at the last meeting, he stated that he had email the organisers and had not received an answer.

There was a discussion on the viability for visitors to park and then there was a discussion on the possibility of using the farmers field off Popes Lane.

It was stated that it would be best to seek another venue.

It was then decided to take vote on the use of the playpark for the venue.

Votes for: Cllrs Taylor and Birch.

Votes against: Cllrs Hogben, Davies, Wenham, Isaac, Betts and Mitchell.

163-24: To discuss and agree on the quotes for work to be done in the Cemetery.

The work to be done is the landscaping and the removal of the Yew tree.

The councillors have all reviewed the quotes for the landscaping.

The quote from Haywoods was proposed by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Betts, Cllr Taylor Abstained all other Cllrs in agreement.

The quote for cutting down the Yew tree was proposed by Cllr Davies

and seconded by Cllr Wenham, Cllr Taylor abstained all other Cllr in agreement.

164-24: To discuss and agree on the purchase of signs for the Post Office.
The Clerk stated that KCC Highways are looking into posting two signs, one on Island Road and the other on Babs Oak Hill.

165-24: To discuss and agree on trimming of overhanging branches of trees in Centenary Woodland.
Cllr Davies stated that the new management plan for Centenary Woodland says that we are to coppice 1/10 of the boundary every 10 years a 10-metre wide strip around the boundary of the woodland, so this would take in the overhanging trees.

166-24: To discuss planning application. CA/24/01054
There were no objections raised.

Date for next meeting.

11th September 2024 at Sturry Social Centre.

Exclusion of the press and public pursuant of section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

167-24: Staffing Committee report to include discussion and agreement on yearly increase of wages.

Cllr Betts gave her report from the staffing committee Which include that the committee had separate meetings with Sandra Stannard and Alan Webster, these reports will be attached to the minutes of the staffing committee meeting.

It was decided at the staffing meeting that as the staff are all Council employees they should all be on the NJC SPC pay scales.

It was proposed by the committee that the following be brought to full Council for agreement.

S Stannard SPC 9 £13.02 plus .70p/hr increase from 1st April is £13.72

A Webster SPC 15 £14.41 plus .70p/hr increase from 1st April is £15.11

K Bullock SPC 17 £14.91 plus .70p/hr increase from 1st April is £15.61

K Dekker SPC 31 £20.30 plus .70p/hr increase from 1st April is £21.03

Proposed by Cllr Betts and seconded by Cllr Mitchell all in agreement.

The Clerk is to check that there is money in the budget.

168-24: To discuss and agree Co-Option.

The question was asked of the Councillors whether to co-opt

Mr Chris Gartland onto the Council and all Councillors agreed to ask him to join the Council.

The Clerk was asked to inform him of the result.

169-24: Report on breach of Financial Regulations and lack of terms of

reference for working groups. For discussion and for decisions as the council finds appropriate.

Cllr Davies proceeded to explain to the Council the report that she circulated to the Council before last months meeting regarding the breach in Financial Regulations and Terms of Reference for workgroups.

There was a heated discussion between Cllr Davies and Cllr Taylor and Cllr Taylor then left the meeting.

Cllr Davies asked the remaining Cllrs that there would not be any more breaches of the Financial Regulations in the future.

The Councillors all agreed that there would not be.

Meeting closed at 21:15

DRAFT