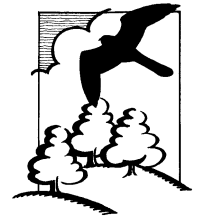


# HAWKHURST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the STRAGERY, ADMINISTRATION and POLICY COMMITTEE  
held at Copt Hall on Monday 22nd August 2022 at 7.15pm.



**Committee Members Present:**

Cllr Green, Cllr Blake & Cllr Veale

**Staff Present;** Deputy Clerk, Ms A Maxwell

**Public:** none

- 1. No members of the public spoke.
- 2. Apologies for absence from Cllr Anderson, Cllr Eccles & Cllr Faulkner
- 3. No declaration of interests
- 4. **Approval of minutes from meeting** of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 deferred to next meeting as insufficient Members present who attended the meeting to approve.

**5. OUTSTANDING ITEMS FROM LAST MEETING**

**6. MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

**6.1 Appointment of internal auditor**

Verbal report given by Deputy Clerk outlining the progress in finding an internal auditor.

**The Committee resolved** that subject to agreement between the clerk, SAP chairman and SAP vice-chairman a recommendation is put to the next Full Council to appoint an Internal auditor from the list of providers given by Kent association of Local Councils (KALC)

**6.2 Parish Office update**

The Council has now bought the Parish Office for £65,000. This saves the annual rent of c£6k and secures longer-term office space for the Council. We had previously occupied the building on a full repairing lease, although only limited repairs had been undertaken during the previous 15 years. A situation that could have given rise to an immediate and significant cost had we been asked to leave. Now we have acquired the building, we now have an opportunity to ensure that the building is cared for properly and invest in this community asset in a way that maximises its utility for the Parish.

But, first we need to know everything there is to know about the building's condition. To understand this the Council needs to have a detailed and full condition report from an independent and professional surveyor. Given his experience with listed buildings Cllr Anderson, was tasked by Cllrs Green and Escombe with investigating who could assist the Council.

Cllr Anderson spoke with a number of surveyors and consulted those he worked with from his time responsible for historic MOD properties in London.

Mark Michel from surveyors MMA came highly recommended and has a particular interest in listed properties. Although Cllr Anderson has not previously worked with Mr Michel, he was viewed as the best of those with whom Michael spoke.

A link to the MMA website is below.

<https://mmacharteredsurveyors.co.uk/about-us.html>

Cllr Anderson's recommendation is that we engage MMA for this initial independent and thorough examination of the building. At £150 per hour the cost is likely to be between £1,000 to £1,500 and is within the budgeted £6,000 for office repairs and maintenance.

The clearing and cleaning of the office - welcomed by the public as a sign that the office is open and welcoming, has revealed dilapidations that in the opinion of the acting clerk should be urgently investigated. The clerk having consulted with Cllr Escombe and Cllr Green asked the surveyor to attend as soon as practicable, which will be early September

It was **resolved** to confirm the appointment of MMA for the full condition survey of The Office at the Moor at a cost of up to £1,500.

### 6.3 Cemetery Restoration Update

The project to restore section C identified 43 graves for which we found named kerbs. All the graves for which all four kerbs were recorded have been restored. The remaining 17 graves where only a partial set was found are in phase 3 of the restoration. It is hoped to complete this work by the Spring. Whilst the aim will be to reuse as many of the kerbs without names inscribed thereon, it is likely that new stone will need to be ordered to ensure a proper match for the remaining graves. We have already received positive feedback from the relatives of those graves which have been restored. The spreadsheet highlights progress with graves highlighted green having been restored.

An issue was raised by a resident to one of the Councillors and a letter sent to the office concerning damage to a headstone in section A and was it vandalism. It was thought not to be vandalism after inspection and response had been sent to resident explain the situation.

### 6.4 Scribe

Scribe is the system that the Council's uses for its accounts and budgeting. Councillors can have read-only access to Scribe. Given SAP's remit for financial scrutiny the Committee are invited to discuss whether it would be appropriate for members to becoming familiar with the system so they can monitor the Council budget in real time as well as at Committee.

It was **resolved** to ask the Deputy Clerk to provide log-in details for all SAP members. To ask other councillors if they too would like access.

### 6.5 Financial authorisations

Committee members to discussed whether all councillors should be cheque signatories.

It was **resolved** that the Deputy Clerk will send SAP members not yet able to sign cheques with the appropriate authorisation forms.

**6.6 Insurance update** deferred to next meeting as Cllr Faulkner had given apologies

### **6.7 Victoria Hall**

The importance of the Victoria Hall and understanding the current lease terms and obligations was discussed.

The Committee **resolved** to ask Cllr Green and Cllr Faulkner to review, understand the current lease at the Victoria Hall, and report back on its terms and obligations.

### **6.8 Website update**

The web provider has been assisting with updating the website and has promptly made a large number of minor amends. The initial aim has been to simplify content, identify dead links to reset or delete, and correct wrong information. This process is iterative and continuing as the site is methodically reviewed. If members are looking at the site and spot something awry, please alert the clerk and SAP chairman. Once we have the base right, we can consider how to build on that to create content that is interesting and sustainable for us to refresh.

The Committee **resolved** to agree with the current approach and aim for a more significant refresh in the New Year.

Councillors with an interest in experience of websites are asked to consider leading the consideration of what would make our site stand out (and still be manageable).

### **6.9 Grants Policy**

A future review of the scope and application of the Council's s.137 grants policy was discussed. Cllr Green and Cllr Faulkner to examine the current use of the grants policy and also other spending that we undertake that might be considered typical/suitable s.137 spend.

### **6.10 Risk Register**

A future review, the corporate risk register was discussed. When should it be reviewed and is the latest version on website? Deputy Clerk to check and report back to the committee.

### **6.11 Openreach / fibre**

The progress of the fibre roll-out across the parish and any further assistance we may be able to give or pressure that needs to be applied to ensure that the maximum number of homes benefits from modern connectivity was discussed. It was mentioned previous Clerk had a meeting with KCC and openreach.

The Committee felt we should reconnect with these contacts to get an update and see if there is anything the Parish Council can do. Deputy Clerk to action and report back to the committee

### **6.12 Roads**

KCC Highways Improvement Plan for Hawkhurst, do we have one? Deputy Clerk to check.

Issues discussed lorry rate increased since end of covid, and drains in the pavement along the colonnade are blocked this has been raised with TWBC who are believed to be responsible but is yet to be resolved.

### 6.13 Health & Safety, maintenance and budget/funding

Health and safety to be review and a proper system put in place.

Cllr Veal volunteered to advise Deputy Clerk with this task.

Priority areas are soil contamination KGV, both playgrounds, KGV pavilion and the office.

**The Committee resolved** to urge the Full Council to consider the report and agree with the conclusions in the paper sent to councillors by Cllr Green in June.

**The Committee resolved** that neglect and inaction is not acceptable and the proper care of public assets requires them to be safe and properly maintained. Striving for adequacy cannot take second place to other considerations, and we need to demonstrate that we can be a trusted to be the guardian of public assets and facilities for which we are currently accountable.

**The Committee resolved** that the matters identified in the report along with other emerging health and safety matters, such as the foul water at the KGV, take priority when allocating budgeted spend and reserve monies; and that a prioritised plan is developed for restoration and renewal to be delivered as soon as is practicable and not later than Q3 2023.

**6.14 Reserves & budget position** - verbal report from Deputy Clerk as at 20.08.22 the Council had £263k in the bank, £124k second tranche & final part of the precept (council tax monies) is due end of September. Report to be given at full council to end of August.

**7 No further questions or comments from Councillors**

**8 Date of next meeting 24<sup>th</sup> October.**

**9 Meeting closed at 9.03pm**

Signed Chairman.....Date.....

Initialed.....