

HAWKHURST PARISH COUNCIL

To all Members of the Strategy, Administration and Policy Committee
Cllr Anderson, Cllr Blake, Cllr Eccles, Cllr Faulkner, Cllr Green and Cllr Veal.



You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **STRATEGY, ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY COMMITTEE** at the Copt Hall, Copt Hall Avenue, Hawkhurst on Monday 24th February 2022 at 7.15pm

Locum Clerk

Date of Issue: 18th April 2023

Agenda

1. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

Vale Road – residents’ proposal for traffic reduction and speed calming.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:** To receive notice of personal interests, whether of a prejudicial nature or otherwise, in respect of items on this agenda, in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct. If a Member has a prejudicial interest, this should be declared at the start of the meeting. Personal interests may be declared at this point or alternatively can be declared at the time when the specific item is being discussed, if a Member wishes to speak on an item in which s/he has a personal interest. Members in doubt about such a declaration are advised to contact the Monitoring Officer before the date of the meeting. This may also be used by Members to advise the Council of any relevant changes that may have occurred since they first completed the register of interests.

4. **To approve MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING:** the minutes from the 12th December 2022 meeting were approved at the last Full Council meeting.

5. Matters arising

- **Internal auditor** – Roger Taylor has been appointed and has started his pre-audit work. This may result in recommendations for the Committee and Council to improve processes at a future meeting.
- **Website** – has passed an independent Disability Discrimination Act assessment.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

6. Asset valuation & insurance

The Council's insurance with Zurich was extended for £3k. The Committee is asked to confirm that it remains the intention of the Council to undertake a valuation of Council assets (having previously agreed to use the services of Barrett Corp & Harrington Ltd), and use a NLAC-approved insurance broker to obtain insurance quotation for the next renewal. The Committee is asked to instruct the clerk to ensure the valuation is done before the end of the year ready to obtain competitive quotes is done before the end of the financial year.

7. Victoria Hall

The Committee is asked to note that the next rent review will be for the period from 1st January 2024. The increase will be based on the CPI between 1st January 2019 and the 31st December 2023. It is then set for the following five years. For information the ONS CPI index was 106.3 in January 2019 and for February 2023 was 127.9 – this is already just over 20% higher, roughly equivalent to £2,500. The Committee resolves to instruct the clerk to write to the Kino to remind them of the process and to put this on the agenda in the New Year when the CPI for December is known.

The Kino have been asked to note our interest as freeholder on their insurance policy, which they indicated was not a problem, and they were going to raise with their insurer. We are awaiting confirmation of this, and resolve that the Clerk should confirm that this action has been taken and report that to the Committees.

8. Parish Notice Board

The fabric of the notice board in the village needs to be restored and include scratch resistant material. The Committee are asked to instruct the clerk to approach Croft Glass to seek options for the replacement of the current scratched Perspex, and to make recommendations for the restoration and preservation of the wooden structure.

9. Parish Office – listing, hot water & IT

The full condition survey cost £1,200 (under the estimate £1,500), and the inspection to confirm the cause of and corner repair, gutter clearance and removal or redundant aerials at £440 was less than the £500 estimate and included protective wrap of tarpaulin. The clarification of listed status of the front part of the office is key to how the repair can be carried out. To this end we have engaged with TWBC planners and are awaiting their decision. Once the planners have responded the Committee and Council will be told and the next steps considered.

Separately, the Council received a report condemning the office water heater and alerting us to a potential legionella risk. Clearly, this was unacceptable and then clerk under emergency powers approved the replacement of the current water heater. The Committee are asked to commend the clerk for her action.

In order for the Parish Office to operate effectively we need to provide our people with appropriate tools. This includes IT hardware and software. The Committee resolves to instruct the clerk to review the provision and made recommendations. The Committee notes that the 2023/24 budget includes a sum of £3,000 for investment in IT and resolves that if proposals are within this sum they can be agreed betwixt the SAP chairman and

clerk / RFO. If sums are in excess of this amount the excess will need approval of the Full Council.

10. Openreach / fibre

The provision of fibre services to the village was first thought to require the establishment of a public interest company. But in practice KCC and Openreach agreements have enabled the village to be, for the most part, given access to high-speed fibre. Investment is also backed by the move to VOIP telephone calls. Therefore, there is no longer a need to have this as a future agenda item for the Parish unless there are exceptional issues.

11. Section 137 expenditure

The Government permit local Parishes to spend money for the direct benefit of its area or inhabitants, not otherwise authorised under statute. This is subject to per elector maximum based on the 1st April electoral roll. The 2023/24 maximum permitted spend is £9.93 per elector. This implies a maximum of circa £40,000.

The sort of expenditure that can be considered s.137 expenditure include: the community grants, support for the Coronation and hanging baskets. The Committee resolve that planning for the next financial year should bring together s137 expenditure under one budget heading.

12. Transparency

The Council has a legal duty to be open and transparent and publish a range of information about its activities. There are incidences where some of these requirements have not been met as they ought. To address these matters and for the avoidance of doubt the Committee are asked to resolve that the Council will abide by the Transparency Code in full. In terms of publishing data on our website this means means:

Hawkhurst Parish Council will publish meeting agendas, which are as full and informative as possible, and associated meeting papers not later than three clear days before the meeting to which they relate is taking place.

Draft minutes from all formal meetings (i.e. full council or committee) must be published no later than one month after the meeting has taken place. This may mean that draft minutes are published on our website, and then are changed to approved minutes after the meeting that approves them.

13. Community Centre

In November 2022 the Full Council resolved: "To undertake a process of public consultation to determine whether residents want HPC to proceed with the proposed new community centre as per the planning permission, or to focus on developing and enhancing our existing facilities to meet the village's needs. The Council will state its view and make a recommendation as part of the consultation. The SAP Committee will consider the practicalities of such a consultation and bring back proposals to the Full Council in the New Year."

At the November meeting no councillor spoke in favour of continuing with the plans approved by the TWBC planning committee, the same was so at the January Full Council.

Councillors may have a variety of reasons from an in-principal objection that the development does not align with the wishes of the donor of the land to question about its size, location and cost to local taxpayers.

In order to consider and thence recommend what type of consultation might be appropriate the Full Council needs to resolve whether it wishes to proceed with the development plans or not. The SAP Committee is therefore asked to resolve to bring the following to the Full Council for debate and decision:

“This Council does not support continuing with the development of a larger community centre at the King George V Playing Fields as set out in the planning application approved in July 2022 by TWBC.”

14. Three parcels of land – proposed adoption

There were three triangles of land that the Council expressed an interest in adopting (two along the High Road out to the A21 (including the one with the old pub sign used as a village sign), and one at Horns Road. Although these are unregistered parcels of land it was suggested that KCC Highways might be the owners. We had previously reached out to the KCC Highways via our country councilor, but the Highways Team have not responded. We will try once more and if a response is forthcoming it will be circulated. If not, the Committee may wish to decide to pause or abandon our previously expressed interest in adopting these parcels of land and take on their proper maintenance.

15. Land registry and ownership

There were two parcels of land that the council owned, but were not registered with Land Registry – one being the War Memorial and there was also land at Heartenoak which we own, but cannot register as our previous clerk (Richard) could not find evidence for this. The solicitors Cripps Pemberton Greenish were engaged to complete the registration and to conduct investigations in the ownership at Heartenoak. Richard took them original documents to examine from the office, and more that were found in the Lloyds vault box. However, nothing more has been heard from them. Before she went off sick Anita had contacted them again, but there was no one in at that time who knew about these matters. The Committee is asked to resolve to instruct the Locum Clerk to take up this matter with the solicitors and report back to the Committee. We can then decide whether proceed with all, some or none of the originally scoped work. Securing the safe return original Council documents is also a priority.

16. Community Grant

A request for a Community Grant from the Fete Committee has been received. The request does not indicate the amount being sought. The Fete Committee will be contacted and asked if they wish to attend in person to make a request and/or provide details of the sum required. The budget for Community Grants for 2023/24 is £6,000 and £4,700 remains available.

17. The Moor

It has been highlighted that the land legal searches reported that The Moor was not on the register of village greens and that it looks like an administrative error at KCC. Indeed, the Moor is not on the official KCC register of Village Greens. However, it is shown on the

Register map, but the archives are described by KCC as 'frustratingly' not complete. The Parish Council holds detailed records including official documents (previously shared) for the provisional registration in 1967 and final registration 1970, which is sufficient to show that not including it in the written list an error of omission by KCC as the Commons Registration Authority. A charity, The Open Spaces Society have spoken with the KCC team and it has been suggested an application be made to correct this omission. It is open to the Parish Council, or indeed any person, to make an application under s.19(4)(b) of the Commons Act 2006, for the purposes of s.19(2)(a), to rectify the mistake, by re-registering the land as town or village green. So, the Committee are asked to resolve that in conjunction with the Open Spaces Society an application will be made. It's a simple process, but I expect it to be a slow one. As soon as there is any news it will be circulated to all councilors.

18. Questions and Comments from Councillors

19. Next meeting

20. Close