

ACOL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Acol Parish Council held in Acol Village Hall on Thursday 22nd June 2023 at 7.30pm.

Present: Councillors Richard Steel (Chair), Wendy Winpenny, Gavin Winpenny, Chenice Butterworth and Sarah Corby

Also Present: K. Ault, L. Godfrey, M. Sherred, Cllr Abi Smith, D. Hayfield, S. Bransfield, D. Coulson & P. Fraser Webb

1. Cllr Steel lead the Councillors in introducing themselves to the members of public present.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting which took place on 12/05/23 were approved by all Councillors.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence. Cllr Steel informed those present that he did contact all TDC councillors as well as our new Beat Officer but had received no response.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

5. CO-OPTION

Cllr Steel confirmed that an application has been received from Sarah Corby to join the Council. All Councillors are happy to co-opt Sarah and passed on their congratulations.

6. APPOINTMENT OF CLERK

Cllr Steel confirmed that Roy Wade is committed to assisting until a replacement is found. Cllr Steel informed those present that a job description for the role has been reviewed and approved, including appropriate remuneration. The role will be advertised following the meeting, and will be available on the APC website, Facebook Page, in the Village Voice and on the KALC website. Cllr Steel confirmed that the closing date for applications for the role will be the end of July.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Steel confirmed that the items on the agenda were his main priority.

He proposed that the BT telephone box in the village be decommissioned and repurposed as a Free Library, Book Exchange, or something similar. He explained that while he had shared this within comments of another Facebook post, the Council would be gathering opinions of villagers in the form of a survey prior to making a final decision. A member of the public, Mr P. Fraser Webb, stated that the phone box was a "lifeline" for many villagers, and Cllr G Winpenny informed the public that the telephone box has not been used in two years apart from one call to a Freephone number in 2020. Cllr G Winpenny also wanted to note that BT have been incredibly responsive and for that, we are grateful. Mr Hayfield and Ms Bransfield informed the room that during Lockdown the telephone box was used as a lavatory and expressed their concerns that this will be repeated should the decision to decommission the telephone box be made. Cllr Steel asked that any further comments be made at the end of the meeting or in the survey when released but gave assurance that the decision will be led by the public.

8. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

In the Clerk's absence, Cllr Steel explained that the accounts have been approved by the audit commission, and that he had signed the accounts before they were submitted. Cllr Steel explained they will be available on the website as public information, and asked if there were any objections from his fellow councillors. No objections were noted.

9. HIGHWAYS

Cllr Steel explained that this will always be on the agenda to cover a wide variety of issues and projects.

Cllr Steel explained that in regards to SpeedWatch, L.Godfrey was now an active volunteer and that all councillors will be participating in sessions at least once a month. Cllr Steel explained that more volunteers were needed, and that he would issue a further plea in the next issue of the newsletter, as this will help secure the support of the police in order to proceed with Auto Speed Watch equipment. A member of the public, D.Coulson, issued a plea for the Speed Watch team to broaden their area and it was explained where Speed Watch sessions are carried out and his area was covered. However, with limited numbers of volunteers it was difficult to cover all areas.

Cllr W. Winpenny stated that we have data on the 20mph campaign which Cllr Steel explained involves following a formal process which can become costly. Cllr W.Winpenny elaborated on the scheme and stated that the overall plan was for the entirety of Kent and all residential areas to have the 20mph speed limit, and explained the process of the HIP (Highway Improvement Plan) which is a live document.

Cllr. G Winpenny assures those present that the village needs to be safe and recognises the hard work and dedication of D.Hayfield and S.Bransfield in past efforts to ensure this happened.

Cllr Steel discussed the 7.5 tonne weight limit which had been implemented, as per the erection of the sign, at the beginning of this year in a bid to deter larger vehicles from using the village as a short cut. D. Hayfield has kindly agreed to monitor the CCTV as long as the time, vehicle description and registration plate are noted. He would then check the CCTV to allow the Parish Council to report the violation of this new limit. Cllr Steel explained he has contacted the village's new Beat Officer, Beth Nimim, as we would like to ensure collaboration, but has yet to receive a response. Thus far, any report of a violation to the police has resulted in the police stating they don't have the time or resources to explore the issue.

Cllr Steel advised that Cllr Butterworth would be leading on the Footpath to Quex. He explained that we were in the process of arranging meetings with Quex and KCC, and that we were aware the footpath needs to extend to the South of the village. P. Fraser Webb informed the Council that Quex may not be the landowner as previously believed, and Cllr Steel thanked him for this information.

Cllr Steel informed those present that he has contacted TDC for information on Street Cleaning, specifically when the last street cleaning took place and where, and asked if there was scope for us to secure our own contractors but has yet to receive a response. He asked Cllr Abi Smith if she could provide an update. Cllr Smith stated that she has no feedback now but would chase this.

The Parish Council thank K. Ault for litter picking, and welcome more volunteers to help make the village look more presentable. Cllr Steel informed those present that the North Thanet Link consultation has now closed, and that the PC has submitted its own response which will be available to view on the website shortly. Cllr Steel attended a Walking and Cycling pre-consultation meeting in Minster today, but explained the group managing the consultation

were mainly gathering opinions and are working in conjunction with a cycling charity and TDC. D. Coulson informed the PC that the “Give Way, This Way” sign on Acol Hill has been moved, and Cllr G. Winpenny assured him that he would look into correcting this. D. Hayfield stated that he felt the speedbumps on The Street had been a positive addition.

10 VILLAGE DECORATION

Cllr Butterworth shares that the PC is looking to brighten up the village in the form of planters filled with wildlife friendly, and easy-to-manage, flowers. She explains she is looking to collaborate with the owner of The Darling Buds of Wade who has offered their support free of charge on this. Cllr Steel informs those present that we will be looking into funding for these improvements.

11 SERVICE OF FORMER COUNCILLORS

Cllr W. Winpenny stated that the PC would like to honour and recognise the service of former councillors, and made a few suggestions, including a virtual list of previous councillors on the website. Cllr W. Winpenny asked for the feedback from two former PC members, D.Hayfield and S.Bransfield, and they said they would think about it and report back. S.Bransfield stated that she believed she had a list of all previous councillors, and Cllr G.Winpenny thanked her for being willing to share this information.

12 CLERK’S REPORT

In the absence of Roy Wade, Cllr Steel stated that we currently have £17,424 in the bank but explains that the new PC will be looking to use some of that money for training as they are new to the roles although this would not have been accounted for when the original budget was made. Cllr Steel informed those present that a review of the budget would be made going forward. D.Hayfield advised that the figure of £17,424 was accurate, but payments to Zurich insurance and for grass cutting leaving the balance of £16,876.62. Cllr Steel asked D.Hayfield to choose a date which is convenient for the handover of the financial responsibility and admin.

13 REPORTS OF KCC/TDC COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Abi Smith of the Green Party outlined current projects including training and many of the changes within TDC. She explained there is a new senior leadership team and was encouraged that the Adopted Local Plan could be a way to slow down future developments within a Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr W.Winpenny suggested she would like to speak with the Chair of Birchington PC to initiate a collaborative approach to the Neighbourhood Plan & Local Plan going forward. Cllr Steel expressed disappointment that no other TDC councillors had attended the meeting.

The date of the next meeting would be on Thursday 24th August at 7.30pm.

Cllr Steel closed of the meeting at 8.30pm.