



Minutes of the Full Council meeting of Bearsted Parish Council held at King George V Memorial Hall, Manor Rise on Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7.30pm

Present:	Cllr David Hall (Chairman)	Cllr Alan Rowe
	Cllr Richard Ash MBE	Cllr Carolyn Smith
	Cllr Pat Catt	Cllr Sean Turner
	Cllr Clive English	Cllr Chris Waters
	Cllr Frank Jagger	

Also, in attendance were the Clerk Joanne Upton, the Deputy Clerk Amy Bush, 2 members of the public.

Reports from members of the public

There were no reports from members of the public.

1. Declarations of intention to record.

The Deputy Clerk declared the meeting would be recorded for minuting purposes.

2. Apologies and absences.

Apologies were received and noted for Cllr James Day, Cllr Mike Harris, Cllr Martha Monday, Cllr Denis Spooner and Cllr Val Springett.

3. Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying.

Cllr English declared an interest in any planning items, as a Borough Cllr on the MBC Planning Committee and any items relating to the Madginford Hall Committee.

4. Signing of the Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the 14th November 2023 meeting were signed as a true record of the meeting.

5. Reports:

- a) Borough Councillors: No queries raised on the reports from Cllr Springett and Cllr Spooner. Cllr English noted that the May elections now coincide with the Borough elections, which makes it easier and more cost effective for MBC and residents.
- b) Community Warden: The Community Warden had nothing to report but will be working between Christmas and New Year and is available for any help needed in the Parish.
- c) Police: The Clerk advised that no report had been received.
- d) Clerk: The Clerk advised that Lauren White the Administrator is now a permanent member of staff from the 1st of December and is an excellent addition to the office staff.
The Clerk advised the Council the office staff are taking annual leave between Christmas and New Year and the office will be closed but the Clerk will be contactable by email.
The Clerk informed the Council that Government have decided not to extend Council Tax referendum principles to local councils. Cllr English explained these principles in more detail.
The costs of the Christmas Market were discussed, it was in budget except for the last minute expense of matting that was agreed to assist vehicles entering and leaving the Green in wet weather conditions.
Evans & Langford have now provided their report on the car park drainage, and it confirms that it is mostly clay and therefore does not soakaway particularly well. The next step is to reconfirm the quotes for the drainage design and specification so that this can go out to tender.

ACTION: CLERK

The Clerk also confirmed a new contract has been signed with OPUS Energy to reduce the cost of electricity on the Green.

- e) Chairman: The Chairman explained that the Market Manager and himself made the decision to go ahead with the Christmas market. This decision was made when the weather forecast was looking mostly dry, the stall holders would require reasonable notice of cancellation, so the decision was made before the forecast changed. Warnings have confirmed the Green is repairable and will be sending over a quote for the works. Cllr English advised he had received good feedback about the market and believes the right decision was made. Cllr Hall also confirmed the stall holders had had a successful day and the number of visitors was still high even in the bad weather.
Cllr Jagger questioned whether the January market should go ahead on the Green, Cllr Hall explained that the Market Manager is already looking at alternative options.

6. The appointment of Councillors to Committees

- a) Cllr Hall explained that at a previous meeting Cllr English's request to step down from Finance and join another meeting was refused as the Committees were all quorate. Cllr Turner explained that family commitments prevent him from regularly attending Planning Committee meetings but would be able to attend the Finance meetings. Cllr Jagger noted that it is not long until the May elections and it might be best to leave the committees as they are until then. The proposal for Cllr Turner to move from Planning to Finance was voted with four in favour, four against and one abstention. This was resolved with the Chairman's casting vote, against the change.
- b) Cllr Hall suggested that any Councillor requesting items to be added to the agenda should provide background papers or attend the meeting in person. Cllr English proposed this should be made clearer in our policies, he will write a policy memorandum for how Councillors request agenda items and submit papers or attend meetings. This was seconded by Cllr Ash and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLLR ENGLISH

7. Committee Meeting and Working Group Reports

- a) Environment Committee: Cllr Ash stated he chaired the meeting in the absence of Cllr's Harris and Smith. The Community Pay Back Scheme is starting on the 21st January and will attend work days in the village on the 3rd Sunday of every month. Medway Valley Countryside Partnership are yet to confirm dates for workdays for the pond and Meadowbank. The Clerk had requested approval to extend the Grounds Maintenance contract for one year, as further details are needed to write a substantive specification for tender. Cllr Ash proposed to extend the contract, this was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: OFFICE

A request had been received to install a barrier at the car park and the office are looking into potential solutions.

ACTION: OFFICE

The Committee are considering removing the old broken steps at the Church Lane car park, it was suggested an accessible ramp be installed but the office had researched, and this option is not viable to meet regulations. Cllr Jagger noted that if left as a mud bank could pose a safety risk. This will be referred back to Environment to consider other options.

The Cricket Club have requested approval to plant another tree in the location of the recently felled Larch tree, Cllr Ash proposed to approve this with the conditions that it is a native species, preferably an evergreen, with a plaque to commemorate 275 years of cricket on the Green. This was seconded by Cllr Jagger and resolved with all in favour.

The Committee approved continued use of the Green for football, but to limit it to U10 and younger teams only.

The Cricket Club has asked for a contribution of £1500 towards a £3000 cost for a feasibility study to build a new cricket pavilion, the Environment Committee had asked that proof of ownership of the pavilion is established first. Cllr Hall suggested a vote on this is deferred until leases are discussed under item 11.

Cllr Ash proposed to accept the quote for £423 for a new bench near the Ashford Road bus stop, this was seconded by Cllr Rowe and resolved with all in favour. Cllr Turner asked if the bench could be donated and the Council agreed a plaque could be added, that the bench was donated to the residents from BPC. Cllr Jagger thanked the Administrator Lauren for the incredible work undertaken in presenting the price comparisons for the Council.

ACTION: OFFICE

The Church Lane Allotment Association have requested the compost area that they originally requested and built up be turned back into an allotment plot. Cllr Ash proposed BPC contribute half of the £720 cost and the CLAA pay the remaining 50%. This was seconded by Cllr Rowe and resolved with all in favour.

Cllr Jagger noted that the ground level inside the allotment site has grown higher on the car park side and this will be a major job when the fence needs replacing.

ACTION: OFFICE

A resident has requested a diversion to a footpath near Sutton Street, which the Committee refused to support. The office has already contacted Sir Paul Carter regarding this.

Cllr Ash stated that the Committee had asked the Cricket Club to secure down the cricket covers following an accident. Cllr Hall advised that he has discussed this issue with Cllr Harris, Chair of Environment, who suggested a risk assessment should be carried out, details of how they will be secured and proof of public liability insurance. Cllr Hall proposed that the Cricket Club provides a risk assessment, proof of public liability insurance, details on securing the covers and only when BPC are satisfied with the mitigation procedures, they can vote on allowing the covers to be used on the Green. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

Cllr Jagger stated he believed the covers would be removed after the season but are being stored behind the pavilion. The member of public, from the cricket club advised they are trying to make space for them inside the pavilion.

- b) Planning Committee: Cllr Ash confirmed the Planning Committee did not meet as they had no applications to review.
- c) Traffic Committee: Cllr Ash reported KCC will be relocating the lamppost in Tower Lane next year. Cllr's Ash and Springett attended a meeting with KCC to discuss the Highways Improvement Plan and seven new items have been added for review. KCC are also looking to relocate the bus stop outside the Tudor Park hotel and install a traffic island which will aid the slowing of traffic. They are also looking to extend the cycle path to Majors Lake.
- d) Reports from members of the Council for outside bodies: Cllr Ash advised that parish council must go through the Department for Levelling Up if they wish to apply for a loan, this can be done through KALC, who can offer advice and support through the process. Roger Gough advised that the demise of KCC is overly exaggerated. Cllr English confirmed that local councils do not actually go bankrupt but that KCC will look at essential spending only. The Communities & Health department advised overweight, loneliness, suicide and self-harm are major concerns and anything parish councils can do to help alleviate these issues should be considered.

8. Finance (Accounts and Audit Regulation 2011/817)

- a) Resolution to approve/ratify quotations or payments.
 - i. Cllr Ash proposed to accept the cost of £480 per year for a maintenance contract for the CCTV cameras. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.
 - ii. Cllr Hall proposed to ratify the £1000 cost for the matting installed on the Green for the Christmas market, this was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour.
 - iii. Cllr Jagger proposed to accept the renewal fee for The Countryside Charity, this was seconded by Cllr Hall and resolved with all in favour.
- b) Grants and Donations requests: None received.
- c) Authorise November payments: Cllr Hall proposed to accept the payments, this was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with all in favour. Cllr Jagger said he would like to see more information on the payment list to explain what the payments are for.
- d) Finance Reports: Cllr English proposed to accept the reports, this was seconded by Cllr Rowe and resolved with all in favour.
- e) Balances of accounts: The balances were duly noted.

9. Budgets

Cllr Jagger requested that the reserves are included on the summary page and queried the £10,000 special project budget for tree works, should this be under Environment. Cllr Jagger suggested raising the budget allocation for the pond water charges. The Clerk will look into this and report back. Cllr Hall proposed to accept the budget, this was seconded by Cllr English and

resolved with all in favour. Cllr Hall proposed to accept moving £35,000 from Community projects to the Church Lane car park drainage project, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLERK

10. Policies

Scheme of Delegation: Cllr Ash requested the wording be amended to 'committee Clerk'. Cllr Hall requested to add the word 'transport' under the Traffic Committee delegation. Cllr English proposed to adopt the updated policy subject to the two amendments, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved with all in favour.

ACTION: CLLR ENGLISH

11. Leases

Cllr Hall advised the report has now been received from Outset but further work is required so this will go back to the Finance Committee to progress.

Cllr English stated that ownership of the pavilion is irrelevant to BPC deciding to contribute to the feasibility study. The lease states the pavilion must be removed by the Cricket Club at the end of the lease, therefore it is not an asset. Even if BPC own the pavilion the Council have no responsibility to improve, maintain or repair the pavilion. A member of the public advised that the request for contribution arose from talks with the Parish Council and potential for the pavilion to provide a meeting room/office for the Council in a newly built pavilion. Cllr Waters proposed the Cricket Club approach BPC for a grant through the normal process with more detailed information on what the Parish would be contributing too. This was seconded by Cllr English and resolved with eight in favour and one abstention.

12. Court Farm Planning Application

Cllr Waters confirmed the planning application was refused but will likely be appealed.

13. Ashford Road Post Office

Cllr Rowe confirmed that the application by the Newsagents on the Ashford Road was successful.

14. Rural England Grant Bid

The Clerk advised that the maximum grant is £50,000 and the quotes were in excess of £100,000 to replace the older equipment at the Bearsted Woodland Trust play area, which is the only area we could apply for the grant for. This has not been accounted for in the budget. The Council agreed BPC should apply for the grant and potentially replace the play equipment over a period of time.

ACTION: CLERK

16. Future Agenda Items

- GDPR Training.
- Legal Matter.
- Policies.
- Precept.
- Events.
- Leases.

17. Date of the next meeting: Tuesday 16th January 2024

There being no further business to transact, the meeting closed at 21.23 hrs

Signed..... Date.....