



ACOL PARISH COUNCIL

The Village Hall
The Street
Acol
Kent CT7 0JA

e-mail: clerk@acolparishcouncil.org.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 19th December 2024 at 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors Richard Steel – Chairman [RS], Gavin Winpenny [GW], Wendy Winpenny [WW], Sarah Corby [SC]

In Attendance: KCC Cllr Linda Wright, plus Sara Archer – Clerk, and 2 members of the public.

52/24-25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Kate Ruranski, District Cllr Abi Smith, KCC Cllr Derek Crow-Brown, PC Andy Howe

53/24-25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests declared.

54/24-25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting held on 17th October 2024.

These were proposed by Cllr W Winpenny, seconded by Cllr Corby, all were in agreement and therefore signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

55/24-25 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman offered his thanks to Cllrs Winpenny for representing the Parish and attending the Remembrance Service at Birchington. Thanks were also extended to Cllr Gavin Winpenny for his assistance with the analysis of the household survey. The results of which, would be published on the Parish website in due course.

The monthly article for the Birchington Parish Magazine had been submitted by the Clerk and thanks given to Karen Ault for publishing it on the village facebook page.

Cllr Steel had met with Cllr Ransom from Monkton Parish Council, to discuss collaborative working on the Community Resilience Plan. Cllr Fentiman from St Nicholas with Sarre Parish Council had also expressed an interest in working on a joint Plan. Volunteers from the community were welcomed to join the working party which would continue to explore options for the Plan in the New Year.

56/24-25 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk advised she had applied for a grant of approx. £800 from the KCC Members Fund for funding towards the Village Planters. Thanks were extended to the KCC Councillors for their support with the project.

The Clerk and Chairman had met online with the KCC Community Engagement Officer to discuss the Highways Improvement Plan, in particular, the introduction of 20mph speed limits through the Village. This would be discussed further under item 59. The Clerk had liaised with KCC regarding the overgrown hedges at the pumping station at Crispe Road. It had been confirmed that this was the responsibility of Southern Water who had since trimmed back the overgrowth.

The Clerk and Chairman had attended the Parish Council Forum, which focussed primarily on the potential devolution of unitary authorities, consultation on new ward boundaries, and polling stations. The latter would not affect Acol Parish as no changes had been proposed.

Correspondence had been received with regard to the North Thanet Link Scheme. In January and February 2025, KCC will be commencing Archaeological Trial Trenching. This investigatory work will be conducted at various locations along the proposed route and will last for approximately two months. The work will involve excavating linear trenches in specific areas of farmland along the route to check for archaeological features, structures, deposits, or artefacts. These works are essential for informing our environmental impact studies and the future planning application for the scheme. In some locations, traffic management (temporary signals) may be implemented to facilitate access to land. These investigatory works do not mark the commencement of the scheme's construction. Instead, they are to support the ongoing design and Environmental Impact Assessment for the project.

Further information about the project, can be requested using the following email address norththanetlink@kent.gov.uk

The Clerk had received information regarding the Winter Support Scheme, and suggested a grant was applied for to be put towards the community coffee morning, which was being set up to tackle loneliness and isolation in the village.

This was supported, and the Clerk would make the necessary application.

57/24-25 COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Cllr G Winpenny confirmed the analysis of the household survey had now been completed with an encouraging response noted. Consideration on how to take the Neighbourhood Plan forward would be included on the next agenda.

Cllr W Winpenny advised the waste wheelie bins had been placed at the main entrance of the Recreation Ground during the inclement weather, and had been put out for collection accordingly. Cllr Winpenny had attended the Health & Wellbeing Group held in Birchington, and would be producing a media and communications policy for the Group. Funding options for the newly formed Group were also being explored.

Cllr Steel reported he had contacted Mr Curwen regarding the footpath to Quex, and introduced Cllr Ruranski, who would be following up on the project. No response had been received to date.

Cllr Corby had approached Mr Bill Yeoman with regard to the acceptance of the Freedom of Acol Award. Mr Yeoman had gracefully accepted the nomination, and would attend the New Years Eve Party to formally accept the award and certificate. The coffee morning for older and vulnerable residents had been arranged for the afternoon of 25th January in the Village Hall. Transportation support could be offered if required. The event would be publicised on the Facebook pages. The New Years Eve party had been confirmed, starting at 7:30pm in the Village Hall. All were welcome to attend. Cllr Corby would be making the necessary arrangements for entertainment etc...

58/24-25 INDIVIDUAL OFFICER REPORTS

- a) **County Cllr Linda Wright** advised she had attended the Remembrance Service in France, and had since been exploring the possibility of approaching the ferry and Eurotunnel companies, to enquire whether a concessionary could be offered to the veterans wishing to attend the French Service. Cllr Wright informed the meeting that a Health & Wellbeing Group was potentially being set up in Broadstairs, however, the location had not yet been decided. Cllr Wright would forward the details of the organiser of the Group to Cllr Winpenny, in order for the Groups to liaise. Discussion regarding the ward boundary changes took place, Cllr Wright would forward any further information to the Clerk in due course. The County elections may be affected by the devolution of the unitary authorities. This item would be included on the next agenda for any updates to be received.

County Cllr Derek Crow-Brown was unable to attend, however, he submitted the following report:

Government plans to revolutionise the council structure in Kent have been met with "pragmatic realism" by the county's 14 local authority leaders.

The leaders of the Kent authorities met in Ashford yesterday afternoon to discuss the English Devolution White Paper, unveiled by Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, on Monday. It represents the biggest change to local government in half a century.

The mayoral system would be similar to that already in place under Labour's Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester.

Ultimately, the decision on the future direction, under the options set out by the government, will be down to Kent County Council leader, Cllr Roger Gough, and Medway Council leader, Cllr Vince Maple.

The four new authorities would be split down into populations of roughly 500,000. It remains to be seen how this would be shaped. As a result, the expected KCC elections planned for next year could be cancelled. More will be known in the New Year.

There is very little detailed how the changes will affect parish councils.

I wish you all a merry Christmas.

- b) No District Councillors in attendance.
- c) **Ward Police Officer Andy Howe** was unable to attend, however, he submitted the following report which had been circulated to members for information:

Crime statistic for Nov 2024.

As you will see there is nothing that stands out to be concerning but this period is historically a low crime level spell for Policing and historically, we should expect increases across the Christmas period.

We are entering a phase where acquisitive crime is likely to rise and as such, I would ask that you spread the word to be extra vigilant regarding home security and vehicle security.

A few tips are:

1. Never leave valuables on show in your vehicle, or through windows in dwellings.
2. Ensure that if you have keyless entry/start vehicles, you keep your key fob inside a Faraday pouch to prevent cloning.
3. When shopping in busy towns/shopping centres, strap your handbags across your body and keep them closed and don't have mobile phones hanging out of pockets.
4. Avoid alcohol when driving, Kent Police will be running an operation for drink drivers, and I have highlighted numerous village locations where this may occur.
5. If you are intending to purchase an e scooter for yourselves or a child, remember they are still not legal unless used on private land, Kent Police are likely to seize them, and they will subsequently be crushed.

With regard to Acol:

There have only been 3 calls to Acol since the start of November with one being a vehicle alert from our ANPR cameras (automatic number plate reader). The remaining were a domesticated issue and a suspicious event which was nullified/cleared up.

Of interest:

You may be aware of a Cannabis Factory that was closed down on Tothill Street Minster in November. Kent Police conducted a warrant (which I was present on) and located a large number of cannabis plants and one male suspect. The Person was arrested and charged with numerous offences relating to the cultivation and sale of a Class B drug. We are very grateful for the assistance of local residents over this matter. The location was being rented and there is no suspicion that the owner was aware of how it was being used. This is a great example of where the Public and Police work together.

There was also a suspected burglary attempt at the Abbey in Minster. Whilst we are yet to identify the suspect, we have forensics and hope to gain a result in the next few weeks (the residents were not in the building at the time and no harm has come to anyone).

If residents suspect criminal activity is occurring in the area, they can either report this on the Kent Police Web Site, report through Crimestoppers or contact me directly.

59/24-25 HIGHWAYS

As previously mentioned, a meeting with the Community Engagement officer took place. The suggested locations for the 20mph speed reduction sites had been considered and all were in support of asking KCC to go ahead with the costings for the work to be undertaken.

Lorry watch concerns were also raised at the meeting. Cllr Wright suggested that the Chair wrote to PCC Matthew Scott to highlight the issue with regard to the CCTV images not being accepted as evidence for the scheme to be implemented effectively in Acol.

60/24-25 FINANCE

a) The Clerk presented the monthly bank reconciliation between the cash book and bank accounts.

RESOLVED: To approve the monthly bank reconciliation for October & November

(Proposed: Cllr Steel, seconded Cllr Corby).

b) The Clerk presented the monthly payment schedule which included the following payments:

Defib Machines Ltd	£501.95
Hugofox - Website hosting fee	£11.99
Defib Machines Ltd	£438.00
D. Hayfield - CCTV electricity donation	£60.00
Information Commissioner - Registration	£35.00
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£269.12
Ionos - Email hosting fee	£15.00
Unity Trust - Service charge	£5.40
Hugofox - Website hosting fee	£11.99
RBL - Poppy Appeal - Wreath	£28.50
Hughes & Son - Grass cutting	£360.00
Ionos - Email hosting fee	£3.00
ATS Accounting - Payroll admin	£60.00
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£356.52
WJ Sunstone Ltd - CCTV Upgrade	£1,841.75
Unity Trust - Service charge	£6.00

Receipts:

Acol Village Hall Committee – Defibrillator reimbursement £939.95

Acol Village Hall Committee – Donation towards Christmas Party £100.00

RESOLVED: To approve payment of invoices included in the monthly payment schedule for October.

(Proposed: Cllr Steel, Seconded: Cllr G Winpenny).

c) The Clerk presented the annual budget for 2025/26 which had been circulated to members and was noted with no comments. A raise of approx. 5% in the precept would be requested for the forthcoming year, in order to meet the raising costs of the Parish Council. This would have a very small financial impact on properties in the Parish.

RESOLVED: To approve the precept request of £10834 for 2025/26.

(Proposed: Cllr Steel, Seconded: Cllr Corby)

d) The annual Clerk's Salary Pay Award increase by the LGA had been noted accordingly.

61/24-25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- The decorations on the village gates at Minster were noted and it was suggested that Acol could introduce something similar for next year. The gates were also in need of repainting – This would be carried out in the new year.

- Compliments regarding the village Christmas tree had been expressed.

62/24-25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 20th February 2025, 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 20:25hrs