



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 20th January 2025 at 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall

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

In Attendance: KCC Cllr Derek Crow-Brown, District Cllr Abi Smith, PC Andy Howe, plus Sara Archer – Clerk, and 3 members of the public.

63/24-25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies received.

64/24-25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests declared.

65/24-25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting held on 19th December 2024.

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

66/24-25 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman advised he had been contacted with regard to speeding traffic using Minster Road. The email had been referred to Monkton Parish Council, as the location was in Monkton Parish, however, Acol Parish Council fully supported the concerns raised. The Clerk updated members and confirmed that the issue had been raised with KCC Highways, who had stated that the HADMS data does not endorse the request for a speed reduction to be implemented on the road. The highway does not lend itself to a reduced speed limit, mainly being open, not built-up road. Highways would find a suitable site to conduct a traffic speed survey to gain additional speed data to be considered. The Highways Manager would also visit the site to ensure the chevron signage is not obstructed from overgrown hedges and report any necessary works accordingly.

Cllr Steel had attended the TRRG meeting and discussed the Community Resilience Plan. Representatives from neighbouring Parishes were in attendance and shared their views on the proposal to collaborate and develop a joint Plan. A further meeting was being arranged with representatives from the Resilience Team and TDC, to discuss the development of the Plan. This matter was also discussed at the Parish Council Forum meeting at TDC which was attended by the Chair and Clerk.

Cllr Steel confirmed that after some initial teething problems, the CCTV was now running as it should be. The installation of an ANPR unit would be considered at the next meeting.

The Chair touched on the recent decision made by Government to not include Kent in the fast track process of the devolution of local authorities. This would mean the KCC elections would go ahead as planned in May. Cllr Crow-Brown would expand on this during his report.

The progression of the Neighbourhood Plan was considered, in view of the devolution process. It was proposed to continue with the development of the Plan, as the devolution would currently have little impact on the Parish. The Clerk would make enquiries with regard to consultancy for the next stages in the process.

67/24-25 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk advised she had made enquiries with regard to the Winter Support Scheme grant funding, however, it appeared that the criteria for funding could not be met. The Clerk had contacted KCC for clarification, with no response received. A further round of the funding opportunity had been noted, this would therefore be followed up once more.

The Clerk and Chairman had attended the Parish Council Forum, which focussed primarily on the recent decision by Government regarding the devolution of unitary authorities, the Local Plan and Emergency Planning.

The Clerk had met the newly appointed Community Warden, Gary Groombridge, who was currently undergoing training, but would attend meetings as soon as this had been completed.

The Clerk informed members of the eligibility to adopt the General Power of Competence and gave a short explanation of the process. This would be considered and decided upon at the next meeting.

As previously mentioned, the Clerk had met with the Community Engagement Officer to discuss the speeding concerns along Minster Road.

A planning application – TCA/TH/25/0071 – for tree works had been received. It was considered and agreed to refer to the Tree Officer at TDC. No objections were raised.

68/24-25 COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Cllr G Winpenny confirmed the village planters were in hand and would be constructed when the weather improved. Locations at Nursery Fields and the Village Hall would be confirmed. The Horticultural Society had kindly offered to advise on the planting scheme. It was also suggested that planting at the village entrance signs could be considered.

Cllr Ruranski advised a meeting had been arranged with Cllr W Winpenny and Quex Farm Manager – David Whitehead, on 12th March, to discuss the implementation of the footpath between Acol and Quex. An update would be reported at the next meeting.

Cllr W Winpenny enquired about the provision of larger traffic mirrors to replace the existing ones, to be more effective. The repair/replacement of the basketball hoop was also to be considered.

Cllr Corby was pleased to report that the coffee morning for older and vulnerable residents held on 25th January in the Village Hall, had been very well received. The next coffee morning had been arranged for 29th March. Flyers would be circulated to homes in the village to encourage more residents to attend.

69/24-25 INDIVIDUAL OFFICER REPORTS

a) **County Cllr Derek Crow-Brown** was in attendance and submitted the following report:

Devolution

Kent has missed out being part of the government fast-tracked devolution programme.

The sweeping change to local government, the biggest in half a century, would have seen the abolition of all 14 councils in Kent and the creation of a directly elected mayor. As a result, the local elections will take place in May.

Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council leaders, Roger Gough (Con) and Vince Maple (Lab) were hopeful to be put on the government's "devolution priority programme" (DPP) as it may have resulted in more powers and better financial rewards for the county.

We felt we had a very strong case to offer and had unanimous support across all 14 councils for our proposal and had made it clear to government that we were ready and willing to meet its ambitious timeline and work towards a mayoral election in Kent in 2026.

Many of us feel the rationale for the decision by government needs further explanation and clarity.

b) **Cllr Abi Smith** was in attendance and reported as follows:

- KCC Consultation: Local Nature Recovery Strategy www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk Online briefings for community groups and members of the public, drop in events, where people can find out about the strategy, and speak to members of KCC's Making Space for Nature team. The next drop-in event is at Broadstairs Library, The Broadway, Broadstairs CT10 2BS tomorrow, Wednesday 12 February, from 10am also Cliftonville Farmers' Market, date TBC. Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway website: <https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk>.
- Draft TDC budget and consultation <https://yourvoice.thanet.gov.uk/en-GB/projects> Overall, the council is proposing to spend £27.5m in 2025/26 to fund services and running costs. This is an increase of £4m compared to 2024/25 but it's largely due to inflation, rising costs such as salaries and contributions, temporary accommodation and housing benefit administration. A consultation is open to all residents on Your Voice Thanet – an opportunity for local people to comment on proposals in the budget draft. This follows the annual Residents' Survey which asked for more general feedback on top priorities for key council services. Link & details of closing date will be In the Loop (Your Voice Thanet?).
- In happier news, Minster PC was delighted to hear that the Foxborough Lane planning appeal was dismissed this week! This offers hope that sometimes developers *can* be defeated when a plan is inappropriate and threatens harm to the community

c) **Ward Police Officer Andy Howe** submitted the following report which had been circulated to members for information: **Thanet Villages stats January:**

The rolling year shows that the two areas of concern would be the sexual offences and the violence against the person. I have dug into both statistics and as I may have communicated before, the sexual offences were attributable to some accosting incidents that have been dealt with and some historical reports.

The VAP (Violence Against the Person) seems to be a trend though and whilst most are domesticated incidents, it is something that I will monitor over the next few months. Unfortunately, VAP in the home is very difficult to reduce as you can imagine. I will see if there is any Domestic Violence/VAWG related media (violence against women and girls) that we can put out to the residents.

Crime in February:

This month has seen 9 recorded offences of which 7 were domesticated or related offences such as stalking reports or harassment. I have been made aware of a couple of burglaries at the Birchington Vale Caravan Park which are not yet showing on the stats. I will be speaking with staff to see if there is some connection with these and two more which have occurred there over the last year,

Acol related info:

There has been one reported crime in Acol which relates to an offence that did not occur in Acol. Obviously you will understand that because Acol is such a small location, I am often unable to provide any specific crime issues as the persons involved are likely to be known to the attendees.

Other Work:

You may be aware of a high-profile arrest of a male hare coursing around the Never hale Farm area. My colleague Police Constable England (Birchington) detained and arrested the male with myself assisting. This offence is very difficult to prove and prosecute, so we are very pleased that we have done the hard work.

I have been conducting numerous speed checks focused on issues around Minster and Monkton due to concerns raised by both residents and councillors, these relate to the closure of Tothill St and its impact upon the surrounding roads. At this stage I can only say that my findings do not show any major issues with speeding but do highlight an increase to traffic volume and therefore noise in the affected roads. Please avoid Laundry Road and drive carefully through Minster and Monkton (Monkton St/Monkton Rd).

Over the next month, I will be undertaking taskings relating to the remainder of the hare coursing season and traffic work around the Villages.

70/24-25 HIGHWAYS

a) Cllr Steel advised that based on the Speedwatch results for Acol, the Police would not support the 20-mph zone endorsed by KCC Highways, therefore, in his capacity as Speedwatch Co-Ordinator, he had suspended participation in the scheme. He expressed his disappointment and proposed to write to PCC Matthew Scott to complain about the manner in which this data has been used. All were in agreement for the letter to be sent on behalf of the Parish Council. (Copy appended to the minutes)

Cllr Steel had been in contact with a Parish Council participating in the Lorry Watch Scheme. It was confirmed that personal observations were required for the scheme, and although they had a team appointed, they had not been deployed. They adopted the more pro-active approach of using the data obtained through their own observations and CCTV, and wrote directly to the offending haulage companies.

b) HIP – Awaiting results of traffic survey from KCC.

71/24-25 FINANCE

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

RESOLVED: To approve the monthly bank reconciliation for December & January.

(Proposed: Cllr Steel, seconded Cllr W Winpenny).

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

Hugofox - Website hosting fee	£11.99
Birchington PCC - Village Hall Land lease	£200.00
KALC - Training	£60.00
S. Archer - Clerk's salary & expenses	£279.97
HMRC - Employee PAYE	£103.80
Ionos - Email hosting fee	£3.00
Unity Trust - Service charge	£6.00
Hugofox - Website hosting fee	£11.99
Ionos - Email hosting fee	£3.00
Unity Trust - Service charge	£6.00

Receipts:

KCC - Grant towards Village planters	£828.00
Acol VH - Repayment for Land lease	£200.00
Unity Trust - Interest	£130.71

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

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

72/24-25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- The blocked drain at Plumstone Road would be reported online, along with any additional blocked drains in the village.

73/24-25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 17th April 2025, 7:30pm, Acol Village Hall.

74/24-25 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

Under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public will be excluded by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted during this item.

The proposal discussed during this item was considered and approved as outlined by the Clerk with the supporting documentation.

Proposed: Cllr G Winpenny, Seconded: Cllr Steel.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 20:40hrs