

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on
22nd June 2023 in Shorne Village Hall**

PRESENT

Mr R Lane
Mr R Theobald
Mr J Bugg
Ms Clifton
Mrs S Lindley
Mrs L Williams
Mr R Hardy

APOLOGIES

Mr C Rea
Cllr Jordan Meade
Cllr Helen Ashenden

In attendance:

Mrs Liz Jeffery (Vice Chair Higham Parish Council)
Mr Tom Rochard-Pullen

Not in Attendance:

Mrs S Poole

17. To receive any declarations of interest for any items on the agenda

Mrs Williams declared a pecuniary interest in connection with item 13b on the agenda as her husband's company has submitted an estimate for the works.

18. Vacancy for Parish Councillor

Mr Rochard-Pullen's application was circulated to Members prior to the meeting, and he was invited to introduce himself. He gave a verbal background to his experience, skills, and interests, and Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Mr Rochard-Pullen was then asked to leave the room whilst Members deliberated.

After discussions, it was agreed to invite Mr Rochard-Pullen to join the Parish Council.

Mr Rochard-Pullen returned to the meeting, signed the declaration of acceptance of office, and was co-opted to the Parish Council with immediate effect. Mr Lane handed him a copy of the register of interests form for completion. Mr Lane will inform GBC of Mr Rochard-Pullen's co-option to the Parish Council.

19. Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 11th May 2023

The minutes were approved.

20. Any items raised by Parishioners in attendance at Chairman's discretion

No matters raised.

21. **Finance**

(a) **Review of Finance Report and payments made**

In the absence of the Clerk, no Finance Report was available. Mr Theobald reported on invoices paid by cheque during June, along with outstanding invoices waiting for payment. Income Tax payments are outstanding but this should not be a problem.

(b) **Comments by the Internal Auditor and actions to be taken**

Ms Clifton and Mr Theobald have reviewed the comments made by the Internal Auditor and a report prepared by Ms Clifton was issued to Members in advance of the meeting. The principal comments were reviewed by Members and actions agreed.

(c) **Review and Approval of Annual Governance & Accountability Report (AGAR)**

The AGAR Form 3 was distributed to Members in advance of the meeting.

Members reviewed the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1). Mr Lane proposed that we should respond 'No' to question 4, as last year's public notice and AGAR had not been correctly displayed on the website, and he has produced a response and actions document for inclusion with the Governance Statement. This was **approved**, and the Annual Governance Statement was signed by Mr Lane and Ms Clifton.

Members reviewed The Accounting Statements (Section 2). The figures included have previously been agreed by The Clerk and the Internal Auditor. The Accounting Statements were **approved**, and were duly signed by Ms Clifton and Mr Lane.

Mr Lane will post the Notice of Public Rights complete with Sections 1 & 2 on the website. It was agreed that, in the absence of the Clerk, Ms Clifton would submit the AGAR to the External Auditor Mazars LLP.

22. **To review payment authorisations and administrative processes**

The absence of the Clerk has highlighted a number of issues not previously identified in our risk register. For example, only the Clerk has the facility to raise BACS payments, and no-one else has sight of the bank accounts or incoming invoices. Mr Lane advised that although he is an authorised signatory, he does not have a PINsentry at present so he is unable to authorise online payments. These issues need to be addressed.

Mr Lane mentioned that he is unable to access the email domain control panel to add email addresses. Although he has admin access to the website, he has no visibility of the account or support facilities. He is also conscious that the facebook page is in his name, and although he has shared the information, only he deals with the CCTV system and the AED. It is essential that the Parish Council can continue to conduct its business in the event of the sudden absence of any individual councillor or officer.

It was agreed that additional members should be made authorised bank account signatories to ensure payments could continue to be made in unexpected circumstances.

Mr Rochard-Pullen suggested having a generic email address to which all members would have shared access. This would help to improve visibility, continuity, and reduce reliance on individuals.

23. To receive an update from the Planning & Highways Committee

Mrs Lindley reported that all Planning Applications have been dealt with.

The proposed 20mph zone is being processed by KCC, and they are expected to publish the public notice for consultation on 30th June.

With regards to the Lower Thames Crossing, Mrs Lindley reported that she had attended (virtually) the DCO Programming Meeting on 16th May and the Preliminary Meeting on 6th June.

A response to the Minor Refinements Consultation has been submitted, the main issue affecting Shorne being the proposal to use a single tunnel boring machine. This was discussed at a Specific Hearing 1 meeting held on 21st June as it involves changes to environmental assessments.

The next deadline will be 18th July, when there will be comments from meetings and written representations. Any written submissions need to be supported by hard evidence, such as the impact on actual traffic numbers, etc.

24. Update from the Footpaths, Properties & Greens Committee

Ms Clifton reported that she had received information from the KCC Footpaths Officer that work on the new footbridge at Shornemead level crossing is expected to be carried out from November 2023 to March 2024.

The second cut of the orchard at Crabbles Bottom is due to be carried out in the next few days.

The laurel tree at the corner of Tanyard Hill and Swillers Lane which had been encroaching on the footways has now been cut back. Mr Lane reported that this had been carried out by the resident of a neighbouring property.

25. To receive a report from Borough Councillors

Cllr Jordan Meade has reported that at a meeting of full council on Tuesday 20th June, members voted unanimously to reaffirm the authority's opposition to the siting of the Lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend, endorsed a number of key mitigation measures they want to see for the Borough should the project go ahead, and confirmed their objection to the loss of land to the project at Cascades leisure centre.

At the Council meeting, the Leader confirmed that work on the Charter development has temporarily stopped after the main construction contractor, Henry Construction, went into administration. He affirmed that the council's investment in the project is protected by the terms of the development agreement in place with GBC's development partners Reef Group and Rosherville Ltd. Reef and Rosherville are working on viable options to complete work at the Charter. A number have been identified which are being examined in detail ahead of any decision being made.

26. To receive any report from County Councillor B Sweetland

No report received.

27. Correspondence requiring action

Mr Lane apologised that he has not contacted Mr Riddick regarding his land swap suggestion. No other outstanding correspondence requiring action was identified.

28. General matters raised by Members for discussion

Mrs Lindley advised that two reports for the Annual Report had to be re-sent and this has caused a delay. The cover photo just needs to be selected.

Ms Clifton reported that requests for Coronation coins had been found in the mail box and the coins had now been delivered to the children.

29. Matters to be considered in private under Item 14 of the Council's Standing Orders

(a) Cllr Theobald communications with the Clerk

Mr Theobald reported that he had collected the cheque book from the clerk in order to make payments for invoices as well as the Clerk's salary, and reported on conversations that had taken place.

A discussion was held regarding the Clerk's agreed terms of employment which have been in place since June 2019, but which she now considers are incorrect. These issues can be discussed in more detail with the Clerk when she has recovered from her illness and returned to work.

(b) To consider quotations for bus shelter upgrading

Due to the lateness of the hour, this item on the agenda was deferred to a later date.

Date of next meeting. The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held at 19.30 on Thursday 14th September.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10:00pm

Signed Mr Lane:.....

Dated:.....