

# WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES 232

### Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024

The meeting started at 7.00 pm.

#### **In attendance:**

Cllrs Lucy Quinn (Chair), Rob Woods Roger Knight, Wendy Hookey, and Peter Ruddick.

Also in attendance were Ian Philo the Clerk, Borough Councillors Aline Hicks and 2 members of the public.

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Wade Nash, Gina McKay and Neil McKay sent their apologies which were approved. County Councillor David Robey sent his apologies.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

##### **2.1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None.

##### **2.2. Other Significant Interests**

None

##### **2.3. Other Interests**

Councillor Lucy Quinn declared an interest in items 4.5, 11 and 12.

#### **3. Acceptance of Minutes.**

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were agreed as a true record.

Proposed by Councillor Lucy Quinn and seconded by Councillor Rob Woods.

The council voted 5-0 in favour.

#### **Meeting adjourned for public participation 7.05 pm..**

Ashford Borough Councillor, Aline Hicks, outlined that there were 1,700 seeking homes in Ashford borough. There had been the possibility to create homes by developing Oakwood House, but that had been dashed by the fallout from Stodmarsh.

Ashford Borough Council has been looking into buying credits in conjunction with Canterbury Council.

The Environment Agency is struggling to recruit officers, due to a shortage of candidates with knowledge or the right skillset.

#### **Meeting reconvened at 7:10 pm.**

## 4. Planning applications

### 4.1. PA/2024/1859

Newlands, Redbrook Street, Woodchurch, TN26 3QR.

Proposed rear extension to include roof lights plus a proposed garage the demolition of the existing.

The Council voted 5-0 to support this application.

### 4.2. PA/2024/11795

Keepers End, Shadoxhurst Road, Woodchurch, TN26 3PW.

Change of use and conversion of an existing stable block into holiday let accommodation.

The Council voted 5-0 to support this planning application.

### 4.3. PA/2024/1788

Swallows Barn, Boldshaves Lane, Woodchurch, TN26 3QZ.

Change of use of land to residential and conversion of existing outbuilding to ancillary annexe accommodation.

Whereas the Council support in principle this application, it was felt that the applicant had not demonstrated sufficiently the change of use so far outside the village confines, and clarification of use would be useful.

Therefore the Council voted 5-0 to support this application pending clarification of the use.

### 4.4. Appeal AP-90702. Reference APP/E2205/W/24/3351385

Balcony Farm, Haycross Lane, Woodchurch, Ashford, TN26 3TF

Demolition of Agricultural buildings and erection of 5no detached single storey dwellings with associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

The Council noted that it had already objected to this application on several grounds and that there was no need to re-submit any comments as the objections were clearly visible.

The Council voted 5-0 to support this course of action.

### 4.5. PA/2024/1772

37 The Green, Woodchurch, Ashford, Kent TN26 3PF.

Variation of condition 14 (Hard and soft landscaping) of planning permission PA/2023/1048 for 1 new dwelling; to allow for an extended drive to side access road to provide an in and out drive and non reinstatement of hedge.

Councillor Rob Woods read out a comment that he recommended be submitted to the Ashford Borough Council Planning officer concerned (see Appendix 1).

The Council voted 4-0 to submit the comment with a minor alteration to the wording, and object to the application.

## 5. Hub License Agreement

Having reviewed the draft License Agreement returned from The Hub directors, there were some additional alterations to be made. The amended draft would then be sent

to the Hub directors for final agreement before being sent to the solicitor Wellers for a final document to be drawn up.

The council 5-0 to the amendments to be made.

## **6. Staffing Committee**

It was agreed that the Staffing Committee members remain the same, and that the next meeting be agreed on the return of Councillor Neil McKay.

The Council voted 5-0 on this action.

## **7. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)**

The Council reviewed the HIP. It was agreed to recommend keeping concern at speed of vehicles and safety of vulnerable road users along Front Road on the HIP and adding Susans Hill to those same concerns. In addition the dangers of accidents at the Shirkoak and Plurenden Roads crossroads. The dip in the road on the approach to the school was also recommended to be added.

The Council voted 5-0 to these recommendations.

## **8. Woodchurch Windmill**

Following the meeting held at Ashford Borough Council on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in which the committee responsible for the mill declared they will recommend to Cabinet meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 the sale of the mill (notes from the 16<sup>th</sup> October meeting can be found on the Woodchurch Parish Council website). Woodchurch Parish Council has made an application to have the Windmill designated as an Asset of Community Value.

As any prospective buyer will almost certainly be buying into negative equity given the work necessary to be carried out, it was agreed that the Clerk would obtain quotes for a survey of the windmill.

The Council voted 5-0 to this course of action.

## **9. Community Warden**

Having reviewed Kent County Council's (KCC) decision not to reinstate a community warden to cover Woodchurch, the Parish Council agreed explore the cost of arranging one. The Clerk would contact KCC to enquire the cost, also ascertain if those costs could be shared with other parishes, and if there was any source of funding available elsewhere.

The Council voted 5-0 in favour of this action.

## **10. Newsletter Article**

With the absence of Councillor Wade Nash this item was deferred to the next meeting.

## **11. Village Green Grass Cut Contract 2025-2026**

There were two contractors able to provide quotes for the village green mow for 2025-2026, Landscape Services and Aspire at £89.87 and £90.00 respectively plus VAT.

The Council voted 4-0 to renew next years contract with Landscape Services at £89.87 per cut under the Village Green Management Agreement.

## **12. Village Pump**

Listed consent has been approved for the pump to be restored. However the Council has been advised that the conservation officer is not happy with some of the materials that Black Forge were intending to use.

The Council agreed for Black Forge to proceed at £2,700 plus VAT provided that they were able to meet the conservation officer requirements at the same price.

### **13. Health and Wellbeing**

Councillor Wendy Hookey attended a Parish Forum at Ashford Borough Council on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024. Ashford Borough Council would like to improve health and wellbeing across the borough, however it is playing catch up since the pandemic. It was noted that many parishes in the borough appear to be behind what Woodchurch has to offer in this field. It was also noted that there are a number of grants that are open to local businesses and community groups. These are available on the Ashford Borough Council Website.

### **14. Portable Loos**

The Council agreed to fund 2 portable toilets up to £332 plus delivery, collection and VAT, on the car park while the refurbishment work to the public toilet is carried out. It was noted that at least one of the units should be accessible.

The Council voted 5-0 in favour of this action.

### **15. Finances**

#### **15.1. Debit Card Assigned to The Clerk/RFO**

The council agreed and voted 5-0 to issue a debit card be held by the Clerk and increase the £250 limit as stated in 6.18 of the Financial Regulations to £500. It was also noted and agreed that new beneficiaries are listed and endorsed by the Council.

#### **15.2. Second Quarter Report**

The Clerk presented the second quarter report to the council, see Appendix 2. The Clerk to consider appropriate metrics to evidence Village Plan performance targets.

#### **15.3. Items For Payment and Bank Reconciliation**

## Items for October Payment

Items For Payment October 2024				
<b>Payments Made since the last Meeting</b>				
			Amount	Vat
Direct Debit	EDF	Pavilion Electricity	£ 66.00	£ -
BACS	AHES	WC Refurb Deposit	£ 6,898.80	£ -
BACS	Winbloom	Grant	£ 250.00	£ -
BACS	Winbloom	Grant	£ 75.00	£ -
			£ -	£ -
Subtotal			£ 7,289.80	£ -
<b>Items for Approval</b>				
Payment Method	Payee	Description	Total payable	VAT
Bacs	I Philo (TBC)	Salary	£ 866.25	£ -
Bacs	D Jarvis (TBC)	Salary	£ 518.47	£ -
Bacs	D Jarvis (TBC)	Mower Petrol	£ 15.09	£ -
Bacs	I Philo	Petrol	£ 32.40	£ -
Bacs	HMRC (TBC)	PAYE	£ 144.74	£ -
Bacs	AMJ	MS Office Renewal	£ 814.80	£ 135.80
Bacs	Maiden Accountancy	PAYE Services	£ 36.00	£ 6.00
Bacs	RBLI	Wreath	£ 50.00	£ -
Bacs	AMJ	MS Licences + Domain	£ 814.80	£ 135.80
BACS	Roadware	8 x 120L Litterbins	£ 1,861.92	£ 310.32
Bacs	Black Forge Signs	Village Sign	£ 3,000.00	£ 500.00
Subtotal			£ 8,154.47	
<b>Total</b>			<b>£ 15,444.27</b>	<b>£ 1,087.92</b>

**Bank Reconciliation for Septemebr**

Cash Book Opening Balace		15600.45
	Receipts	Payments
Precept	£22,503.00	£0.00
Transfer	£0.00	£0.00
VAT Refund	£1,794.12	£0.00
Salary Including HMRC	£0.00	£1,277.77
Utilities	£0.00	£66.00
Projects	£0.00	£11,108.46
Running Costs	£0.00	£1,400.20
Income	£24,297.12	
Expenditure		£13,852.43
Cashbook Balance	£24,297.12	£26,045.14
Bank Statement Balance		£15,600.45
Income		£24,297.12
Expenditure		£13,852.43
Bank Closing Balance		£26,045.14
Difference		£0.00
Deposit Account		£76,035.15
Interest		£64.58
Transfer		£0.00
Total		£76,099.73
Total Funds		£102,144.87

**16. Correspondence.**

There was a request from The Acres if the Council is aware of any land available for use as an enclosed dog field. This will be advertised on the website.

There was a request to place a memorial bench along with some planters on the village green. The Clerk responded that the permission from The Village Green Charity would be required unless the bench was to be situated on the Village Green Extension. It was suggested that this be added to the next agenda.

**17. Items for Information or Agenda for Next Meeting**

Newsletter 4 page article.  
Hub License Agreement

Memorial bench and planting on the green including happy to talk bench.

### 18. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024 in the Memorial Hall Annexe.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 1

New Chalet bungalow 37, The Green

Variation of Condition 2 and 14 of PA/2023/1048

First, WPC notes the applicant would like a fast turn-around on this application but It would appear from the amended application that a Certificate B notice has not been served on the owner of the Place Farm Lane. It is unclear why one adjoining owner has been notified and the other hasn't. As far as we aware this renders the application invalid and cannot be determined by the Local Planning Authority until the Cert B is served

Woodchurch Parish Council (WPC) has consistently advised that legal action could be taken by the legal owner of the Village Green if the current access is used for both premises.

Whilst WPC is pleased the developer appears to have considered the advice, the alternative access/egress arrangement submitted for approval under this variation application is not acceptable for several reasons.

- 1) The last Conservation Area review in 2016 described this area as "Fronting the Green on the northern edge, a number of 2-storey houses are set behind a wide grass verge, hedged boundary and front garden" The review concluded that "vehicle parking has encroached into some front gardens, resulting in the loss of front gardens and traditional boundaries" The inference being that doing nothing to address the issue would result in greater harm to the look and feel of the Conservation Area vis-a-vis the benefit of providing new homes in this area
- 2) The extended hardstanding which forms the proposed access on the front and side of the new dwelling will be visible to the public. It will replace a garden area enclosed by mature hedging and would be out of keeping with the desired and traditional form in this part of the Conservation Area.
- 3) In this case, the developer also proposes to remove a significant length of hedging on the Place Farm side of the property to accommodate the proposed new access/egress. That will have the effect of opening up a view of a domestic car parking area which is incongruous with the open, grassy feel of Place Farm and The Green itself. The car parking area will be one of the first things people see after entering the Conservation Area from Place Lane and Lower Road.

- 4) The necessary removal of the hedging as a prerequisite for a variation consent places a question mark over the value of the, already agreed, biodiversity plan which should now be re- visited.

WPC considers this variation, if approved, would tilt the close balance between harm and benefit in favour of harm. WPC would urge you to refuse this variation application and keep the original condition.

## **Appendix 2**

### **QUARTERLY REPORT TO 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024 BY THE CLERK**

This report is designed not only to show how the Parish Council's spending is tracking the budget, but also report on progress on delivering the Village Plan.

Second quarter receipts totalled £32,354, which was made up of £22,503 precept, £11,027 grant from ABC and £1,794 VAT refund.

Running costs remain broadly around budget. The new website is now up and running, the overall cost came in 30% over budget, as an alternative provider had to be sought following 2Commune ceasing to exist. Contingency maintenance expenditure shows an 8% overspend, however this does not reflect the £425 contribution from a resident towards the cost of removing the tree at the rear of the sports pavilion.

Whereas overall payments increased to £18,057, this was largely due to the £11,108 payment in New Projects to engage UKPN concerning the supply upgrade to the Hub building.

Total funds held at the end of September were £102,144.

After deducting earmarked reserves £42,942 on New Projects, then the remaining budgeted funds on Village Green Maintenance Agreement (£5,686), Running Costs (£9,822), and £7,890 in salaries, we are left with a general reserve of around £34,803.



	Budget	Earmarked	Payments	Remaining
Salaries	£ 16,970		£ 9,079	£ 7,891
Councillor Costs	£ 1,000		£ -	£ 1,000
Running Costs	£ 16,090		£ 6,268	£ 9,822
Village Green	£ 7,040		£ 1,354	£ 5,686
<b>Power Upgrade to The Hub &amp; Power to VG</b>		£ 20,000	£ 9,257	£ 10,743
Bird and Bat Boxes		£ 500	£ -	£ 500
Toilet Revamp		£ 8,000	£ -	£ 8,000
Traffic		£ 3,000	£ -	£ 3,000
Environment		£ 500	£ -	£ 500
Pavilion Project, Play Area and Multi Surface Court		£ 9,600	£ -	£ 9,600
CCTV		£ 6,000	£ -	£ 6,000
Village Pump Restoration		£ 2,700	£ -	£ 2,700
Village Sign Restoration		£ 1,900	£ -	£ 1,900
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>£ 41,100</b>	<b>£ 52,200</b>	<b>£ 25,958</b>	<b>£ 67,342</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure for 2024-2025</b>	<b>£ 93,300</b>			
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditure for 2024-2025 less Payments (A)</b>				<b>£ 67,342</b>
<b>Cash in Bank at 31st Sept 2024 (B)</b>				<b>£ 102,145</b>
<b>General Reserves (A-B)</b>				<b>£ 34,803</b>

However, Salaries are likely to overshoot by £730 following uplift in the Clerk's pay scale and back pay for 2023-2024.

There is the possibility of the work on the power upgrade and toilet refurb going over budget due to the time lapsed when obtaining the original estimates for budget purposes and the quotes to commence the projects.

Trenchwork across the car park should start shortly following the site visit from UKPN contractor to determine the precise location and direction of the ducting.

It should be noted that there has been a slight timeline slippage to delivering work to the power upgrade and WC refurbishment on the Hub. The Parish Council decided in May to apply for grant funding towards the combined overall costs involved in upgrading the power, supplying electricity to the village green and refurbishing the toilet. Quotes were obtained and a final estimate for the whole project were estimated to be around £32,000. There was subsequent delay until Ashford Borough Council had reached a decision, and in August the Council was awarded £11,027 towards the project.

The electricity supply to the Village Green has already been completed. .

The refurbishment of the toilet was agreed at the September meeting and is anticipated to start the first week in December.

These works should be completed by the end of the third quarter 2024.

	BUDGET	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL	% of Budget
<b>Employee costs</b>							
<b>Total Employee Costs</b>	<b>£ 16,970.00</b>	4270.43	4809.02			9079.45	53.50%
<b>Councillor Costs</b>							
Chair's Expenses	£ 150.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Councillor Training	£ 850.00	0	0			0	0.00%
	<b>£ 1,000.00</b>	0	0			0	0.00%
<b>Running Costs</b>							
Accountant PAYE Fees	£ 120.00	30	30			60	50.00%
Audit Fees	£ 350.00	236.05	315			551.05	157.44%
Data Protection Controller	£ 250.00	150	35			185	74.00%
Registration with Information Commissioner	£ 35.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Legal Advice	£ 1,500.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Environment	£ 500.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Insurance	£ 2,000.00	1240.33	0			1240.33	62.02%
Maintenance of Laptop Computer and Data inc 365 for cllrs/clerk	£ 1,500.00	0	669			669	44.60%
Website	£ 590.00	0	774			774	131.19%
Cilca	£ 670.00	0	0			0	0.00%
KALC Subscription	£ 750.00	755.39	0			755.39	100.72%
SLCC Subscription	£ 125.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Hire of Hall and Heating Tokens	£ 150.00	28	60			88	58.67%
<b>Subtotal A</b>	<b>£ 8,540.00</b>	2439.77	1883			4322.77	50.62%
<b>Other Running Costs</b>							
Public Convenience Running Cost	£ 250.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Council Building Maintenance	£ 1,000.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Notice Board Repairs/Replacement	£ 1,600.00	0	199			199	12.44%
Green Extension (hedges, tree work and wildflower meadow)	£ 600.00	0	460			460	76.67%
Footpath width restriction Bollards (paint only)	£ 50.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Grass Cutting - War Memorial	£ 500.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Waste Bins	£ 1,700.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Flag maintenance/Flagpole Replacement**	£ 150.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Beacon Costs**	£ 200.00	0	0			0	0.00%
Defibrillator Batteries and Pads	£ 500.00	0	196.8			196.8	39.36%
Contingency (maintenance) **	£ 1,000.00	950	139.39			1089.39	108.94%
<b>Subtotal B</b>	<b>£ 7,550.00</b>	950	995.19			1945.19	25.76%
<b>Total Running Costs A+B)</b>	<b>£ 16,090.00</b>	<b>3389.77</b>	<b>2878.19</b>			<b>6267.96</b>	<b>38.96%</b>
Village Green Charity Incl Maintenance Agreement	£ 6,490.00	240.6	1113.26			1353.86	20.86%
Annual Wreath	£ 50.00					0	0.00%
Discretionary Grants to Other Organisations	£ 500.00					0	0.00%
<b>Total Grants/Donations</b>	<b>£ 7,040.00</b>	<b>£ 240.60</b>	<b>£ 1,113.26</b>			<b>£ 1,353.86</b>	<b>19.23%</b>
<b>PROJECTS IDENTIFIED BY VILLAGE SURVEY GROUP</b>							
<b>Power Upgrade to The Hub &amp; Power to VG</b>	<b>£20,000.00</b>		9257.05			9257.05	46.29%
<b>Bird and Bat Boxes</b>	<b>£ 500.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Toilet Revamp</b>	<b>£ 8,000.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Traffic</b>	<b>£ 3,000.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Environment</b>	<b>£ 500.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Pavilion Project, Play Area and Multi Surface Court</b>	<b>£ 9,600.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>CCTV</b>	<b>£ 6,000.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Village Pump Restoration</b>	<b>£ 2,700.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Village Sign Restoration</b>	<b>£ 1,900.00</b>					0	0.00%
<b>Total Projects</b>	<b>£52,200.00</b>	0	9257.05			9257.05	17.73%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 93,300.00</b>	<b>£7,900.80</b>	<b>£18,057.52</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ -</b>	<b>£ 25,958.32</b>	<b>27.82%</b>
<b>VILLAGE GREEN GRANT &amp; MAINTENACE AGREEMENT</b>							
Pavilion Cleaner	£ 200.00					0	0.00%
Verges Strimming	£ 570.00					0	0.00%
Pavilion Maintenance	£ 200.00					0	0.00%
Pavilion Utilities	£ 1,500.00	211.51	198			409.51	27.30%
Insurance Grant)	£ 1,800.00		891.01			891.01	49.50%
Green Maintenance gang mow	£ 1,100.00					0	0.00%
Play Area Repairs and Maintenance	£ 1,000.00	29.09	24.25			53.34	5.33%
Play Area Inspection	£ 120.00					0	0.00%
	<b>£ 6,490.00</b>	<b>£ 240.60</b>	<b>£ 1,113.26</b>			<b>£ 1,353.86</b>	<b>20.86%</b>

Regarding other aspects of the Village Plan:

Parish Council Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024

The Parish Council is achieving many of the aims as set out in the Village Plan.

The Council continues to work hard to ensure that where it can the village is maintained in good order. The litter picker employed by the Parish Council continues to do a good job in keeping the litter down around the village and in addition works hard to maintain the fringes of the village green.

There has been much communication surrounding Ashford Borough Council's Local Plan, and the Parish Council has started to look into the cost and benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan. These are costly and normally require external consultants to be involved. Despite there being grant funding available, at this stage the council would like to see more details from the new government before embarking on this type of project.

The Parish Council has been seeking advice from Neighbourhood Watch liaison officer and Police Volunteer Peter New, on the benefits of or alternatives to installing CCTV across the car park and village green. If it possible to deliver a more cost-effective method of preventing crime then the council must explore those alternatives. This remains an ongoing project.

The Parish Council stands ready to work in conjunction with the Village Green Charity in improving the sports pavilion.

The Parish Council has attended the two meetings held at Ashford Borough Council, working hard in conjunction with the Friends of Woodchurch Windmill, to try to influence a positive resolution to the windmill.

Improved communication through the Newsletter and on the new Parish Council Website has seen some positive feedback, in particular the four page quarterly pull out.

The Parish Council has begun exploring ways to better engage with the younger members of the community, including the option of a youth council. This remains a project in progress.

Continue to explore need for allotments. Have received demand for 4 but there has been no offer of land from landowners.

The Council Remains on track to deliver most of the objectives as laid out in the Village Plan.