

**MINUTES OF TROTTISCLIFFE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2024 at 7.45pm IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:**

David Gaunt - Chairman (DG), Louise Leyden (LL), Ian Mills (IM), Alison Prounzos (AP),  
Richard Vallance (RV)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs. Louise Goldsmith (Clerk), 2 members of the public  
Borough Councillors Martin Coffin and Robin Betts

*Administration: No intention to record the meeting received.*

**121/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from County Councilor Sarah Hohler and Councillor Alan Palmer (ALP) and the reasons for absence were accepted.

**122/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None received.

**123/23 APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was **resolved** that DG sign the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 5 December 2023 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**124/23 OPEN SESSION:** There were no comments.

**125/23 REPORTS**

**a) County Councillor:** County Councillor Sarah Hohler sent the following report. KCC continues to work hard to present a balanced budget for the next financial year which remains a challenge. The bus industry in Kent, (as in most parts of the UK), remains privatised. Since the start of 2022 Government and other support has enabled KCC to protect around 50 school services that were at risk of withdrawal. These services continue to be funded using Government funding. The cost of these services is estimated at around £3m a year which includes the contribution made towards them from passenger revenue. Unfortunately, KCC is starting to see bus service cancellations presented again and KCC is not in a position to protect them and if other possible operators do not view them as commercially sustainable then they will stop. These cancellations will include school buses. There has, during 2022, been a recovery of Kent's tourism and the hospitality sector which has meant more jobs which is good news for Kent. The University of Kent, with a group of staff and student volunteers, have collected 5,500kgs of surplus fruit and vegetables from local farms and distributed them via FARESHARE UK to charities, food banks and community initiatives. The Business Investment Team has been processing over 100 pre-applications from small and medium sized businesses in Kent and Medway for grants from £26,000 to £600,000 to grow and innovate. Hundreds of patients across Kent are now receiving care at home when they would normally have had to stay in hospitals thanks to Home First, the long-awaited integration of health and social care. Childrens Services in Kent have recently been awarded an outstanding rating. The Port of Dover and the surrounding area could be hit by major disruption later this year when the EU Entry-Exit system launches. KCC has made the Government aware of their concerns that it is likely to cause long traffic queues. Dog owners in Kent are being urged to keep control of their pets in the countryside, following a rise in attacks on sheep. KCC trading standards officers have been working very hard to stop the huge imports of illegal vapes. KCC had asked the Government to ban them, which they have now done. However, they remain a problem as

teenagers are attracted by their bright designs and different sweet and fruity, flavours. As a result of KCC's concerns about sand blowing on to local roads, and even in to houses, the Ferns quarry has been very active in working on dust suppression. There is now a methodology agreed as part of planning and KCC have had no complaints in the past six weeks. KCC is using the traditional method of saw cut dig out and inlay for potholes.

b) **Borough Councillors:** Borough Councillors Robin Betts and Martin Coffin attended the meeting and gave the following report.

**Local Plan.** The Regulation 18 consultation has now been largely analysed and results are being drawn from that excellent response. It is quite clear that there needs to be a distributed approach to housing needs. Further consultation will follow soon.

**Car Parking:** The results of this consultation are being analysed and will be presented to Cabinet in the next two months in two tranches (on street and off-street parking).

**Enforcement** Borough Councillors Robin Betts and Marting Coffin are keeping a close eye on the actions by both KCC and T&MBC regarding Ferns quarry. Further concerns have been raised with the site operator about possible breaches of planning permissions. A site meeting took place in December 2023 and illegal hard surfaces were identified. The agent has since confirmed that a planning application will be forthcoming. Concerns have also been raised regarding the current use and this is being investigated by Enforcement. The Borough Councillors have also noted the proposed actions of the Parish Council in respect of Big Motoring World and agree that a full statement on the case should be provided by the senior Planning Officer involved.

**Planning Staff:** T&MBC have had serious issues with the level and quality of staffing within the planning department. The team has been running on very few members of staff as pay and conditions were falling short of the private employer opportunities. T&MBC took the decision to enhance pay by using 'market supplement'. This has had the effect of filling most of the vacant posts and it is hoped that there will be an improvement in performance in the next month or two. The planning team include enforcement. The issues have been further compounded by the somewhat difficult introduction of new software required to run the service. This situation is also now largely resolved.

**2023/24:** Since the election the conservatives have formed a minority administration with the support of the independents in Borough Green. This has made decision making more political as the opposition groups seek to establish their authority. It means in practical terms that some of the decisions needed to run the Council take longer to achieve. The balance of power can sometimes rest with the casting vote of the Mayor.

**Chief Executive.** Julie Beilby announced her retirement from the council after many years of dedicated service. She will be greatly missed, but in the interim the deputy CEO, Adrian Stanfield, has been promoted to acting CEO. Borough Councillor Martin Coffin and Matt Boughton and Anita Oakley are the small initial selection team to choose the new Head of Service. After the initial shortlisting the candidates will be asked to present to several internal and external groups to secure their final selection. T&MBC have over ten applicants for the role.

**Carbon Neutral Leisure Centres:** It has been decided to replace the ageing Angel Centre in Tonbridge with a new state of the art, carbon neutral leisure centre. This will be built in a different position and once that has been built the existing centre will be demolished. T&MBC also has a plan to decarbonise all existing leisure centres to provide a carbon neutral status by 2027. Significant grants have been applied for both Larkfield and Tonbridge swimming pools and the notification on whether T&MBC have been successful with these applications is imminent.

**Grants:** West Kent Rural grant is open for applications with match funding available up to £25,000. This is a very wide scheme for rural businesses and Parish Council projects that

support the community or reduce carbon emissions. Green Business Grants, tailored at reducing carbon emissions and helping business be more efficient with energy, are also available..

**Tonbridge Town Centre:** A report is due to be published in the next few weeks on the options of exciting redevelopment plans in the area surrounding the Angel Centre. Questions were asked about the feasibility of the junction 5 slip road attracting funding. The Borough Councillors were also asked to provide an update on enforcement issues regarding Darrens Meadow.

7.31pm Borough Councillors Robin Betts and Martin Coffin left the meeting.

c) **Kent Police:** There was no reported crime in Trottiscliffe in January 2024.

### **126/23] CLERKS REPORT/PAST MATTERS (Information purposes only)**

1] The Clerk has checked the defibrillator and has reported this on The Circuit.

2] The Clerk will be attending a First Aid Course on the 14 March 2024.

3] The 58 shopper bus service continues to be well used. Most of the fares are concessionary. Borough Councillor Mike Taylor is looking into grant funding options to retain the service for the next financial year.

4] Ford Lane: South East Water have been carrying out emergency works for over two weeks. The Clerk has received a number of complaints about the number of Ferns lorries travelling through the village. The Clerk has advised each complainant of the issue. Hopefully the works will be completed this week.

5] Outdoor Gym: T&MBC has approved the quote from HAGS, the chosen supplier. A pre-installation site meeting is due to take place next week with HAGS.

### **127/23 PLANNING**

#### **a) Applications:**

1] 23/03328: The Little Cottage, Pilgrims Way, Trottiscliffe

Two storey and part single storey rear extension. Hip to gable loft conversion with barn hips and new dormers to front and rear elevations.

*Resolved: To ratify a decision between meeting of No objection.*

2] 24/00022/PA: Downlands, Taylors Lane, Trottiscliffe

3x multistemmed Leyland Cypress (circled green on sketch plan) - section fell to ground level (approx 25ft high, overgrown and leggy). Proposed replanting of new ornamental trees and shrubs along fence line.

*Resolved: No objection.*

3] 23/03459/HH: Farriers, Pinesfield Lane, Trottiscliffe

Removal of rear conservatory, single storey rear extension, entrance porch, new roof covering and general alterations.

*Resolved: No objection.*

4] 24/00063/PA: Cuttings Cottage, Green Lane, Trottiscliffe

T1 cherry standing upon the front lawn of the applicant's garden. Proposed is the crown reduction/shaping, from 7m (height) x 6m (lateral spread) to 5m x 5m respectively, with a crown raise to 2m. 10% int thinning & removal of deadwood as found.

*Resolved: No objection.*

5] 24/00061/PA: Long Gore Cottage, Green Lane, Trottiscliffe

T1, copper beech. To have crown reduction of approx 30% from current height/lateral spread of 12m and 5m to 8m & 4m respectively. Internal thinning of 10% & removal of deadwood as found.

*Resolved: No objection.*

- b) Approvals: None to consider.
- c) Refusals: None to consider.
- d) Withdrawals: None to consider.
- e) **Other Planning Issues:**

1] 23/00219/WORKH: Darrens Meadow Farm, Green Lane:

It was noted that Enforcement has opened a further case regarding alleged works not being in accordance with TM/20/02653/FL. An update is awaited.

2] 23/00146/WORKM: Hillside, Pilgrims Way:

The Clerk was asked for an update on when formal enforcement action will be taken regarding an unauthorised stable building which has been erected along with the creation of a sand school in lieu of refused planning application TM/22/00314/FL.

3] 23/00190/WORKH: Works to land on Pilgrims Way:

There was no update.

## **128/23 RESOLUTIONS**

### **1. Trottiscliffe Tennis Club**

Members considered a draft management agreement for the maintenance of the tennis club prepared by Tony Piper from the tennis club. The Clerk advised that the Tennis Club Committee appear to no longer require a lease and wish to formalise the current maintenance arrangements which were outlined in a document named 'official responsibilities' which was signed by the tennis club and the Parish Council in 2008. Members noted that the tennis club continue to not be happy with the arrangements for the after-school tennis coaching in that the school coach has free use of the courts. It was agreed that there are certain ambiguities in the agreement. Members would also like to understand why a lease is now not been sought.

**RESOLVED: RV to meet with Tony Piper to discuss the agreement in more detail and ascertain what the club is trying to achieve.**

### **2. Financial:**

To approve the Financial Statement and make arrangements for authorisation:

**RESOLVED: IM and DG to authorise the payments below online.**

**The accounts summary and bank reconciliation were also noted.**

### **Balances as at the 6 February 2024**

National Savings Account	£10,087.20
Unity Trust Account:	£10,955.36

**Receipts:** NS&I Interest: £77.45

### **Electronic Payments**

<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Louise Goldsmith	Salary	£ 528.12
HMRC	Tax	£ 132.20
Louise Goldsmith	Expenses	£ 165.47
Gel Creative	Website maintenance x 2 months	£ 200.00
MI Payroll	Payroll quarterly charge	£ 45.00
Four Seasons Gardens	Hedge cutting	£ 862.44
Caloo	Playground repairs	£1,740.00
Capel Groundcare	Grounds Maintenance	£ 690.44
Google	Email Accounts DD	£ 73.60
<b>Total</b>		<b>£4,437.27</b>

## **129/23] PARISH MATTERS:**

### **1. Highways**

#### **a) Outstanding Faults:**

Enquiry 767508: Potholes reported. It was noted that some remedial works have been completed and that a further 5 days of work are planned to carry out more carriageway patching.

Enquiry 781796: Vigo Hill: Tree stump leaning dangerously into road.

Enquiry 782041: Pilgrims Way: Tree leaning dangerously towards power line.

#### **b) New Faults to be reported:**

Drain covers on Taylors Lane and Vigo Hill.

Leak on junction of Green Lane and Taylors Lane

School sign down on floor by Church Lane.

Taylors Lane speed hump deteriorating

#### **c) Highways Improvement Plan:**

There was no update. The Clerk suggested arranging a site meeting with the Community Engagement Officer at KCC to carry out an annual walkabout.

### **2. Recreation and Playground:**

It was noted that Caloo have completed the remedial works to the playground. The new grounds maintenance contractor, Capel Groundcare, has carried out the first monthly inspection. Members considered the report and noted that the Clerk is obtaining a quote for a couple of repairs.

### **3. Allotments:**

The Clerk reported that all the allotment holders have renewed their tenancy and paid in full. Members discussed the fact that some of the allotments are not particularly well tendered. It was agreed to carry out an annual inspection on the 5 April 2024. The Clerk will advise the allotment holders. Members also noted that the recent spell of cold weather had damaged the connections and tap for the water supply to both the allotments and the community farm which led to a water leak. The water had to be turned off which left the farm with no water. One of the allotment holders very kindly carried out a repair and also installed an additional stopcock at the mid position which, if needed, will enable the water supply to be turned off in more than one area in the future. Members asked the Clerk to pass on their gratitude to this allotment holder and agreed, by way of a thank you, to not charge them rent for one year when the allotments are due for renewal in January 2025. The Clerk will investigate and arrange for the removal of some fence and posts left to the side of the allotments.

### **4. Community Farm:**

AP gave the following report:

- Charitable status is still pending. The Trustees are exploring how the farm will actually achieve charitable status and are considering all the benefits.
- The Trustees have compiled medium and long term plans together with safeguarding policies and risk assessments.
- Two local lads are working at the farm as part of their volunteering accreditation for the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- The Grange Park School headmistress has asked to meet the Trustees as the school would like to become more involved with the farm.
- Meetings with the Shelby Newsted Charity are ongoing. The Charity would like to help with providing a log cabin for the children visiting the farm along with installing dry pathways. It was noted that planning permission will be required for the log cabin.

- The new donkey shelter has been delivered so the donkeys have now been moved up to the top field to rest the ground at the front which will hopefully mean the grass will eventually come back. The old donkey shelter is now being used for dry storage.
  - Romeo the Alpaca has been castrated and Juno confirmed by the vet as pregnant, due in April.
  - The Selfe family have kindly made a donation to the farm in memory of Alan Selfe, Landlord of The George who sadly died last year. £700 was raised and donated from the panto and Jean Mills raised £250 for the farm from a Christmas wreath workshop.
  - Additional Trustees are been sought.
5. **Assets of Community Value:**  
The Clerk advised that T&MBC has now assessed all the nominations for the village pond, tennis courts, village green, village hall and The George as Assets of Community Value and have confirmed that these have been agreed.
6. **Trottscliffe School:**  
ALP sent a report advising Members that there has been a full governor meeting and also a governor monitoring visit. Again, no major issues to report, but some funding bids are being looked at for some capital expenditure for the next year. There are a lot more requests for places next school year than there will be places available which demonstrates that the school continues to be a real asset to the village. The school would like to be informed of when the works for the outdoor gym will commence so that they can advise parents.
7. **Noticeboard:**  
Members considered some quotes for a new noticeboard for Pinesfield Lane. It was agreed that funding is an issue. At the suggestion of the Clerk it was agreed that the Clerk should ask County Councillor Sarah Hohler if any funding from her Member Grant could be made available.
8. **Climate Change Initiatives:**  
EVCP for the village hall car park: KCC has advised that that they are waiting on funding approval from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles which is expected within a couple of months. KCC will then send across a legal agreement for the works.

### **130/23 REPRESENTATION AT MEETINGS**

a) **Courts Working Group:**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16 January 2024 were noted. LL has joined the Trottscliffe Tennis Club marketing group as a volunteer and reported that a meeting has been held to consolidate a plan of action. Since then posts about the club have been placed on all forms of social media, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram. Posters and banners have also been printed. Posters will be placed in local schools and pubs and the banners will be put on privately owned land on Vigo Hill and at the tennis club. LL advised that this work has already generated some enquiries about membership which is really pleasing. Events are being planned and incentives being looked at such as merchandise 'Goody bags,' taster lessons, T-shirts, metal water bottles as and when you join the club. Videos are being posted of the courts which show the location to its best.

b) **Village Hall:**

IM gave the following report:

- An ongoing maintenance spreadsheet has being started along with a full risk assessment which is needed by the insurance company.
- IM has advised the committee of the grants currently available for installing solar panels.
- New windows for the village hall are being considered.
- First Aid Training: Two sessions have been completely booked out and the training was well received. A third session is now planned.
- Weekly coffee mornings in the village hall are due to commence from the 8 March.
- An evening of folk music is planned for Saturday 13 April with Edwina Hayes and a local girl.
- The Village Hall Committee is considering sponsoring a trainer for the new outdoor gym. The committee will discuss this idea with the tennis club.

8.46pm 2 members of the public left the meeting.

c) **Parish Partnership Panel:** There has been no meeting.

d) **Standards Committee:** There has been no meeting.

e) **KALC Area Committee:** There has been no meeting.

f) **Trosley Liaison Group:** LL advised that posters advertising the events due to be held at Trosley County Park over half term and Easter have been put up in the village.

**131/23] CORRESPONDENCE/CONSULTATIONS**

a) For Information

1] Area 2 Planning Committee: 21 February 2024

2] Joint Transportation Board: 4 March 2024

3] Parish Partnership Panel: 8 February 2024. Cancelled.

4] Standards Committee: 5 June 2024

5] KALC: 18 April 2024

b) New Requiring Attention:

1] Presentation on Agile: 8 February 2024: DG will try and attend.

2] Pre-Submission Draft of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 Regulation 19 Public Consultation. Noted.

**132/23] ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Emergency Planning.

Request for funding from the Church.

Request to use the green in front of the tennis club

Apologies AP and IM

**133/23] ANY CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS**

None to consider.

**134/23] DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING:**

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held in the village hall at 7pm on Tuesday 5 March 2024.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.52pm.

Chairman .....

Date.....