



Minutes of The Annual Meeting of the Council held at The Rackliff
Centre on Monday 13 May 2024 at 7.30pm

PARTICIPANTS

Members Present:

Cllrs Liz Ellicott, Cllr Alex Britcher-Allan, Cllr Chris Ducklin, Cllr Barry Edwards, Cllr A Funnell, Cllr D Funnell, Cllr P Gripper and Cllr D Smith.

Officers Present:

Claire Reed, Clerk; Linda Neusten, Deputy Clerk

Others Present:

County Cllr James McInroy, Borough Councillor Matthew Sankey and three members of the public.

RECORDING OF THE MEETING

001/24 No one present filmed, photographed or recorded this meeting.

APOLOGIES

002/24 Apologies were received from Cllr Doug Smith. The reasons for his apologies were accepted by the Council. Apologies were also received from Borough Cllr Jayne Sharratt and Cllr Paul Curry (Speldhurst Parish Council)

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

003/24 Cllr Paul Gripper was nominated by Cllr Liz Ellicott, seconded by Cllr Mark O'Callaghan. It was unanimously **resolved** to elect Cllr Paul Gripper as Chairman of the Council.

ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN

004/24 Cllr Liz Ellicott was nominated by Cllr Paul Gripper, seconded by Cllr Dave Funnell. It was unanimously **resolved** to elect Cllr Liz Ellicott as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

005/24 There were none.

DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

006/24 There were none.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

007/24 It was **resolved** that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 08 April 2024, copies of which had been previously distributed to Members, be signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM THESE MINUTES (NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE)

008/24 **Use of the former White Hart Pub.** Minute 6.ii (08.04.24) refers. It was **noted** that this matter had been referred to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) planning.

009/24 **Village Talking Benches.** Minute 15 (08.04.24) refers. It was **noted** that a bench catalogue had been sent to Rev. Ronnie Williams for the proposed Talking Benches.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

010/24 It was **noted** that the typing of Dennis Penfold's book on the history of Rusthall is well underway although it is anticipated that it will be several months before it is published.

011/24 It was **resolved** to move the Highways Update forward.

HIGHWAYS UPDATE

012/24 It was **noted** that there had been a successful rally to call for a speed reduction on the A264, Langton Road on 04 May. There were members of the public, Greg Clark MP, Borough and Parish Councillors, including the leader of TWBC Cllr Ben Chapelard, in attendance.

013/24 It was **resolved** to ask County Cllr James McInroy to approach Neil Baker at KCC regarding the proposed speed reduction. It was also **agreed** that residents should be encouraged to report near misses on the TWBC near miss register <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/parking/near-miss> and that anecdotal evidence should also be collected via email to the Clerk.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY & BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

014/24 **Borough Cllr Alex Britcher-Allan briefed council on:**

- Liz was thanked for her Chairmanship over the past 3 years and Mark for his role as Vice Chair.
- Paul was welcomed to his new role as Chairman.
- Following the recent elections, TWBC is in the process of organising committees. The first Full Council Meeting will take place on 29 May 2024. The Council is no longer led by the Borough Partnership, it is now controlled by the Liberal Democrats.
- Matthew Sankey was welcomed as borough councillor for the new Speldhurst and Rusthall ward along with Jayne Sharratt who retained her seat.
- TWBC parking have agreed to formalise the Disabled parking bay outside St Paul's Church Centre, making it enforceable. It will be repainted on 29 May 2024.
- Members of the Council and residents appeared on South East Today as part of a 'reclaim the night' protest which took place following incidents of indecent exposure on the Common. The report is available on iPlayer.
- The Tunbridge Wells Literary Festival over the weekend was great success.
- There was a successful school fete at St Paul's Primary School on Saturday.

015/24 **Borough Cllr Matthew Sanky reported:**

- There is a good team of Borough Councillors working for the new ward. Although not re-elected as a borough councillor, Cllr Paul Curry remains active in the area as chair of Speldhurst Parish Council.

016/24 **County Cllr James McInroy reported:**

- KCC's Annual pothole blitz is now underway.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- 017/24 **Planning Committee.** It was **resolved** to reinstate the Planning Committee with the published terms of reference. It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint the following members to the committee: Cllrs Chris Ducklin, Barry Edwards, Liz Ellicott, Dave Funnell, and Doug Smith. It was **agreed** that the Planning Committee will appoint a chairman at the first meeting of the committee.
- 018/24 **Allotments Committee.** It was **resolved** to reinstate the Allotments Committee with the published terms of reference. It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint the following members to the committee: Cllrs Liz Ellicott, Angela Funnell, Dave Funnell, Paul Gripper and Doug Smith. It was **agreed** that the Allotments Committee will appoint a chairman at the first meeting of the committee.
- 019/24 **Environment Committee.** It was **resolved** to reinstate the Environment Committee with the published terms of reference. It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint the following members to the committee: Cllrs Chris Ducklin, Alex Britcher-Allan, Angela Funnell, Paul Gripper and Mark O'Callaghan. It was **agreed** that the Environment Committee will appoint a chairman at the first meeting of the committee.
- 020/24 **Commons Conservators.** It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint Cllr Paul Gripper as an observer on the Council's behalf.
- 021/24 **Pond Wardens.** It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint Jenny Blackburn as pond warden. It was **agreed** to approach Paul Froome to see if he might be interested in supporting Jenny with the role. **Action: Cllr Liz Ellicott**
- 022/24 **Finance.** It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint Cllr Mark O'Callaghan as lead councillor for Finance.
- 023/24 **Highways.** It was unanimously **resolved** to appoint Cllr Liz Ellicott as lead councillor for Highways.
- 024/24 **Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).** It was resolved to appoint the Chairman as the council's representative at KALC. In his absence, the Vice-Chairman will represent the council.

AGAR 2023-24

- 025/24 It was **resolved** to move the review of the Financial Risk Assessment forward.
- 026/24 The council considered and **approved** the updated Financial Risk Assessment.
- 027/24 The council considered and **approved** the Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24. The Chairman and the Clerk signed and dated the Statement on behalf of the Council.
- 028/24 The council considered and **approved** the Accounting Statements and supporting documents as provided by the Responsible Financial Officer who had, prior to the meeting, signed and dated Section 2 of the AGAR for 2023-24. The Chairman signed and dated the Accounting Statement on behalf of the Council.
- 029/24 The Council **noted** the period for the Exercise of Public Rights from Monday 03 June to Friday 12 July 2024.

POLICIES

- 030/24 **Standing orders and Financial Regulations.** The council **resolved** to adopt the updated Standing Orders (2024) and Financial Regulations (2024).
- 031/24 **Code of Conduct.** The council **resolved** to re-adopt the Members Code of Conduct.
- 032/24 **General Power of Competence.** The council **confirmed** its eligibility for the General Power of Competence.

FINANCE UPDATE

- 033/24 **Accounts for Payment.** Council **resolved** to approve the payments for May 2024 as presented at the meeting and detailed in Appendix 1.
- 034/24 **Internal Audit Report.** Council reviewed the Auditor's report and **resolved** to adopt the two recommendations. **Action: Clerk**
- 035/24 **Risk Assessments.** Council reviewed and **resolved** to approve the updated risk assessments for the following: Allotments, Fremlin Pond, Litter Picking, Lone Worker, Salomons Road, Snow Clearance, Beacon Lighting and Rackliff Centre.
- 036/24 **Grant Request.** Council **resolved** to approve a grant of £250 to the Youth Club towards equipment for its Bee Project. **Action: Clerk**
- 037/24 **SIM for the Clerk.** It was **resolved** to purchase a new business SIM card for the Clerk. **Action: Clerk**

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 038/24 It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 08 April 2024. The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

- 039/24 It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 22 April 2024. The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

DEFIBRILLATOR UPDATE

- 040/24 It was **noted** that a written record of inspections is no longer being completed. It was **agreed** that the monthly inspections should be recorded. **Action: Clerk to provide record sheets to Cllrs Alex Britcher-Allan and Mark O'Callaghan**

RUSTHALL VOLUNTEERS UPDATE

- 041/24 It was **noted** that Cllr Mark O'Callaghan continues to work on the site to get it live. The next stage is to write to voluntary organisations to ask if they would like to appear on the site. **Action: Cllr Mark O'Callaghan**

SUMMER FETE

- 042/24 The fete will take place on Saturday 29 June with the theme being the new all ability allotment garden. Volunteers are needed to set up and to man the stall. Cllrs Liz Ellicott, Paul Gripper and Doug Smith volunteered to set up the stall. Cllrs Alex Britcher-Allan, Angela Funnell and Paul Gripper agreed to man the stall during the fete. It was **noted** that a local artist has agreed to sketch an A1 map of the garden.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- 043/24 **The outgoing Chair, Cllr Liz Ellicott, reported:**
- On 12 April Greg Clark MP met with the Commons Conservators and Borough Cllr Jayne Sharratt to discuss the Coach Road and Langton Road.
 - The Parish Assembly on 18 April was well attended with residents commenting that it was friendly with a good atmosphere. It also provided a good send off for the outgoing Clerk Alison Stevens.
 - At the St Georges Quiz night on 27 April Lisa Coghlan was presented with her KALC Community Award.

- The rally on the A264 had been very successful with support from drivers.
- On 09 May Cllr Liz Ellicott took part in the 'reclaim the night' protest which took place following incidents of indecent exposure on the Common. The event was attended by the police and residents. The report can be found on BBC iPlayer.

CLERK'S REPORT

044/24 The Clerk, Claire Reed, thanked the council for the warm welcome she had received. There will be a fuller update at the next meeting.

DIARY DATES

045/24

- 10 June 2024 at 7.30pm - **Full Council Meeting** in The Rackliff Centre
- 13 June 2024 at 7.30pm - Extraordinary Environment Committee Meeting in The Rackliff Centre
- 17 June 2024 at 7.30pm - Allotment Committee Meeting in The Rackliff Centre

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

046/24 The following was noted by the council:

- The Family History Group meets on a Thursday morning at 10.30am in the library with coffee from 10.00.
- The all ability path at Happy Valley is taking shape thanks in part to a donation from the Parish Council. It was **agreed** that this should be included in the Parish Council information folder for the village fete.
- The Greener Rusthall group are creating a rubbish sculpture to be positioned outside St Paul's Church Centre to show how long it takes each item collected to degrade.
- Clarification was sought on how long after someone dies a Commemorative Plaques could be installed. It was **noted** that the period is 5 years as per the policy agreed by full council.

The meeting closed at 8.42pm

Claire Reed, Clerk

..... Chairman

Dated