

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 February 2025 at Ash Village Hall,
The Street, Ash, TN15 7HB

Present: Cllr S Fishenden
Cllr M Aspinall
Cllr C Clark
Cllr J Clucas
Cllr F Cottee
Cllr C Gorton
Cllr M Manley
Cllr V Ngwenya
Cllr J Scott

In attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk
Karen Law – Deputy Clerk
Megan Johnson-Hodges – Assistant Clerk
Cllr D Brazier – Kent County Council
Cllr M Lindop – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Penny Cole – Sevenoaks District Council
Cllr Perry Cole – Sevenoaks District Council
16 members of the public

8916/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Brammer (ill), S Hobbs (Family commitment) A Jauch (holiday), P Kirtley, (ill) and I MacLeod (prior engagement) Cllr C Clark PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence are accepted. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

8917/25 Declarations of Interest

a. None.

8918/25 Minutes

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 January 2025 be approved and signed as a true record with the amendment to remove Cllr I MacLeod from the apologies as she did attend the meeting. PROPOSED: Cllr M Manley SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.

The meeting was suspended at 7.47pm

- **To receive reports from the District Councillors**
- **Public Session**

The reports from the above are attached to these minutes

The meeting reconvened at 8.09pm

8919/25 Clerk's Report

a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED with the additional information that a Casual Vacancy has been declared for the Hodsoll Street and Ridley Ward.

8920/25 Council Administration

a. **National Insurance Contributions:** Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that a letter is sent to Tom Tugendhat MP and copied to Angela Rayner MP and Rachel Reeves MP regarding the governments decision not to exempt town and parish councils from

changes to the National Insurance contributions to come into effect from April 2025.
SECONDED: Cllr C Clark and AGREED.

8921/25 Finance and Governance

- a. **Current Financial Position** - The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer advised that as of 14 February 2025 we are showing a surplus of £34,085, General Reserves after adjustments currently stand at £63,979, allowing for the additional community warden costs. This is £2808 more than our 3 month/redundancy costs. The first payment of the Employee Assistance Programme is due for payment. Members were taken through the reports,
- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the payments from 10 January 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr J Scott and AGREED.
- c. **Policies:**
 - i. **Staff Appraisal Policy** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the draft Staff Appraisal Policy is adopted. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.
 - ii. **Disciplinary Procedure** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the amended Disciplinary Procedure be APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.
 - iii. **Community Grants and Donations Policy** – Cllr J Clucas PROPOSED that the amended Community Grants and Donations Policy is APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Clark and AGREED.
 - iv. **Co-option Procedures** – The review was carried out without amendment. PROPOSED: Cllr C Clark SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.
- d. **Consultation** – The consultation questionnaire for Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England was completed and will be submitted accordingly.
- e. **Grant Application** – Following discussion, Cllr S. Fishenden PROPOSED that this item be deferred to allow advice to be sought from the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). The advice will cover the following points:
 - Whether the Parish Council can provide funding to a campaign group.
 - If permitted, the statutory powers under which such funding can be granted.
 - If a grant is allowable, whether the funding can be distributed over a period of time.
 - Whether the Parish Council can seek legal advice on behalf of the campaign group.SECONDED: Cllr C Clark. Cllr M Manley PROPOSED an amendment to call an Extra Ordinary Parish Council meeting should the advice requested be received before the March Parish Council meeting. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.

Cllr C Clark PROPOSED that Standing Orders are suspended (7.a) to allow consideration to be given to the revision of the decision to continue with RBS Accounting software for the financial year 2025/26. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

- f. **Accounting Software** – The Deputy Clerk and Finance Officer reported that, following the decision to continue with RBS Accounting Software, Scribe revised their offer to waive the initial payment for the software and reduce the monthly charge. In addition to the software, online training on various topics is available to all staff and councillors at no additional cost. The Finance Officer noted that Scribe's products are specifically designed to streamline council management and she considers it preferable to the current system. The cost for the 2025/26 financial year would be £406.35 for RBS and £604.80 for Scribe. Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the quote from Scribe in the amount of £604.80 is accepted. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

8922/25 Planning

a. Applications

25/00105/FUL: Site of the Green Man, Greenfields, Hodsoil Street, TN15 7LE –
Demolition of existing garage and storage building and construction of replacement public house and garage.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.52pm to allow members of the public to speak on the above item.

The meeting reconvened at 9.00pm

Cllr F Cottee PROPOSED that the Parish Council is delighted to at last see plans to replace this greatly missed pub and Asset of Community Value. We fully support the principle of the new building on behalf of the local community.

We understand that pubs generally are facing many challenges and this response is therefore made with the express intention of ensuring that the replacement pub is designed to give the maximum chance of business success. Our comments are under two broad headings - the suitability as a pub, and the appropriateness of the design in the Hodsoil Street Conservation Area.

1. Pub design.

- Having consulted professional landlords we are concerned that the Kitchen, Toilets and Bar Area are inadequate, particularly given the overall area of the building.
- High level, low noise ventilation exhausts must be specified for the kitchen and toilet areas.
- Parking is an issue in this area because of the access required to the adjacent Care Home. It is essential that on-road parking is prevented by ensuring adequate parking to the rear of the pub. This would be greatly facilitated by a re-design of the garden and parking areas.
- It is not clear how the storage area will be accessed and how deliveries will be made. As part of the previous point, there must be an adequate turning circle for delivery vehicles.
- Modern pubs must have proper disabled access and some doors may need to be wider. This is not shown on the plans.
- Appropriate sound-proofing must be specified.
- We understand the need for accommodation as part of the business plan, but question the need for six double bedrooms and the absence of accommodation for the landlord. We recommend that a pair of the proposed six suites be converted to landlord family accommodation to provide an additional incentive for stable management of the pub. We also draw attention to the nearby London Golf Club plans which will provide a large quantity of B&B style accommodation and therefore make the existing proposal slightly more of a niche market.
- The front of the old pub was regularly used for local events and we therefore request the removal of the picket fence and foliage.

2. Building design.

- The bulk and exterior finish of the building needs to be specified and to be appropriate to the Conservation Area, with its five neighbouring listed buildings.
- The additional 0.7m height of the new building compared with the old appears overbearing and could lead to problems with the overlooking of adjacent properties. Overlooking issues must be dealt with by appropriate fenestration. We also look to any architectural technique that can be used to reduce the apparent bulk of the building due to its height.

In summary, we approve the intention of the application in principle and look forward to a revised application that addresses the business viability and heritage concerns.

SECONDED: Cllr S Fishenden and AGREED.

25/00317/HOUSE: Mimosa, Ash Road, Hartley, DA3 8HA – Erection of an annexe and store, demolition of two buildings and removal of hardstanding. Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the Parish Council objects to this application as it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

- b. The notes of the Planning Applications Working Group held on 05 February 2025 were NOTED.

8923/25 Ash Green Sports Centre

- a. **Current Financial Position** – The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer advised that the Centre is sitting with a surplus of £5,711 with general reserves at £16,739 which is 2.1 times our running costs. Members were taken through the reports
- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr S Fishenden PROPOSED that the payments made from 10 January 2025 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley and AGREED.

8924/25 Northfield

- a. The minutes of the meeting of the Northfield Management Committee held on 13 January 2025 were NOTED.

8925/25 Community and Environment

- a. **Community Warden** – It was NOTED that the Community Warden, Jackie West officially commenced her sponsorship time with Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley Parish Councils from the week of 10 February 2025.
- b. **Covid-19 Day of Reflection** – Cllr C Gorton PROPOSED that she will make enquiries with Sevenoaks Library to host an event serving tea and coffee. The COVID stones decorated by children during COVID are installed at the Library. SECONDED: Cllr M Aspinall and AGREED.
- c. **New Ash Green Children’s Centre** – it was NOTED that the NHS have advised their intention to dispose of the property. As this building is an Asset of Community Value, we have advised Sevenoaks District Council. A viewing of the building has been arranged for the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen.
- d. **Kent Fire and Rescue Services** – it was NOTED that a meeting with Steven Lewis of Kent Fire & Rescue Services has been arranged at Hodsoll Street Village Hall on Tuesday 04 March 2025 at 1pm.

8926/25 Items for Information

Cllr J Clucas reported that businesses continue to advertise on trees. Wooden boxes holding copies of the New Testament have also been attached to trees. There is a painted sign with a religious slogan, high up on a tree near the school and Youth Centre. The Village Association is aware of the fly-posting and remove them when reported. Cllr F Cottee reminded members of the Big Breakfast held at Hodsoll Street Village Hall on the first Saturday of the month.

8927/25 Progress Tracker

- a. The Progress Tracker was NOTED.

The meeting closed at 9.16pm

Signed: Date: Chairman