

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 December 2024 at the Youth & Community Centre, North Square, New Ash Green, DA3 8JY

Present: Cllr M Aspinall
Cllr R Brammer
Cllr C Clark
Cllr J Clucas
Cllr C Gorton
Cllr M Manley
Cllr V Ngwenya

In attendance: Alison de Jager – Parish Clerk
5 members of the public

In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was chaired by Vice-Chairman Cllr M Aspinall

8889/24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Fishenden, F Cottee, S Hobbs, P Kirtley (Prior Commitment), A Jauch (holiday) I MacLeod and G Pender (family commitment) Cllr C Clark PROPOSED that the apologies and reasons for absence are accepted. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED. Apologies were also received from Cllr D Brazier – Kent County Council, Cllrs L Manston, S Manamperi and Cllr M Lindop, Sevenoaks District Council.

8890/24 Declarations of Interest

a. Cllr J Clucas declared an interest in item 6.3 as the Community Warden attends the Thursday Lunch Provision.

8891/24 Minutes

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 November 2024 and the Extra Ordinary meeting of 10 December 2024 be approved and signed as a true record PROPOSED: Cllr M Aspinall SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton 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 7.53pm

8892/24 Clerk's Report

a. The Clerk's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED with additional feedback on the Free Family Christmas Fun Day. The event was well supported with 105 children and their families attending. We received many compliments on the activities and the gifts from Santa. This was funded by a grant from Cllr D Brazier and funds from the Youth Provision Reserve.

8893/24 Council Administration

a. **Employee Assistance Programme** – Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the quotation for the 1 year Premium Package from Well Being Solutions at an annual cost of £710.00 is accepted. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and AGREED.

8894/24 Finance and Governance

- a. **Current Financial Position** - The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer reported that as of 13 December 2024 we were holding £203,265 showing a surplus of £66,725 with General Reserves at £66,344 which is £6,251 more than our 3 months running costs plus redundancy costs. Milestone Academy have sent an amended invoice for gas in the amount of £3,173 which will be checked before payment. Lloyds bank have introduced charges for community bank accounts at £4.25 per account per month from January 2025 and transaction charges will be introduced in 2026. Youth provision – afternoon tea was a great success and the total spend, excluding donations, was £588.00 Cllr M Manley PROPOSED that the additional £88.00 over the authorised spend amount is vired from the Youth Provision. SECONDED: Cllr V Ngwenya and AGREED.
- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr V Ngwenya PROPOSED that the payments from 15 November 2024 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and AGREED.

**The meeting was suspended at 8.14pm
To allow the Chairman of Hartley Parish Council to speak on the following
item.**

Comments are attached to these minutes

The meeting reconvened at 8.17pm

- c. **Community Warden.** – Following discussion, Cllr R Brammer PROPOSED that the Parish Council sponsors Jackie West, Community Warden for 1.5 days per week at an annual cost of £13,500 increasing by approximately 10% from 01 April 2025 and that this decision is delegated to the Clerk to enact and advise Kent County Council, with the understanding that no formal agreement is entered into until Hartley Parish Council has made their decision in January 2025. SECONDED: Cllr C Gorton and UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.
- d. **Budget 2025-26** – The Deputy Clerk took members through the draft budget and following discussion, Cllr C Gorton PROPOSED that the 2025-26 budget is set with the agreed amendments. SECONDED: Cllr R Brammer and UNANIMOUSLY AGREED. A copy of the budget is attached to these minutes
- e. **Precept Demand** – Cllr R Brammer PROPOSED that the precept is set at £240,800.00 being an increase of 19.73% which equates to 31p per week on a Band D property. SECONDED: Cllr V Ngwenya and UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.

8895/24 Planning

- a. **Applications – 24/02895/FUL: The Studios, The Row, New Ash Green, DA3 8JL** – Conversion of 9no garages into 3no. retail units (Class E). Following Cllr R Brammer PROPOSED that the Parish Council does not submit a response with regard to this application and leave the decision to the Planning Officers at Sevenoaks District Council. SECONDED: Cllr M Manley FOR: 5 AGAINST: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 2
- b. **Planning Applications Working Group** – the notes of the meeting of the meeting of 4 December 2024 were NOTED.

8896/24 Ash Green Sports Centre

- a. **Current Financial Position** – The Deputy Clerk/Finance Officer reported that the Sports Centre is showing a £1,881 deficit and General Reserves of £9,147, which is 1.1 monthly running costs. This time last year reserves were at £13,605 including an additional £11,000 received in grants. The new instructor is paid for the classes they teach through their wages which will amount to an additional £2,000 expenditure. An invoice for the gas in the amount of £3,173 has been received from the school. This will be checked before payment. The electricity invoice has not been received yet. The new

Boxfit instructor has agreed to cover reception shifts when available and they have been paid for two training sessions. The remainder of the Parish Council grant will be paid in January 2025.

- b. **Approval of Payments** – Cllr M Aspinall PROPOSED that the payments made from 15 November 2024 are APPROVED. SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.

8897/24 Northfield

- a. The minutes of the meeting of the Northfield Management Committee held on 18 November 2024 were NOTED.

8898/24 Community and Environment

- a. **Christmas Afternoon Tea** – Cllr M Aspinall gave a verbal report on the Christmas Afternoon Tea which was attended by approximately 50 people and positive feedback received. Cllr M Aspinall thanked Cllr J Clucas, the Deputy Clerk and Assistant Clerk for their help on behalf of Cllr S Fishenden.

8899/24 Items for Information

Cllr C Gorton had briefly attended a meeting held by the District Councillors to explain the planning process to residents and take questions from residents to put to the Landlords of the Shopping Centre. District Cllr L Manston had suggested that a joint meeting with the District Councillors, Parish Council and the Village Association be arranged with the Landlords of the Shopping Centre.

Cllr M Manley referred to the planning application for the Studios that was discussed earlier and asked if the concerns regarding future of storage for the Oxfam shop would be minuted. The minutes reflect decisions, not discussions and therefore will not be recorded under that item.

Cllr R Brammer requested that an item be placed on the next agenda for consideration to setting up a WhatsApp group for the Parish Councillors.

Cllr J Clucas suggested that an item be placed on the next agenda for a meeting to be arranged with the Chairman of the Parish Council, Chairman of the District Council and the Landlords of the shopping centre to discuss local concerns.

Cllr C Clark noted the response to the Remote Meeting and Proxy Voting response had been submitted.

Cllr M Aspinall reported that he had witnessed a horse being led through the Co-op earlier in the week.

8900/24 Progress Tracker

- a. The Progress Tracker was NOTED

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed:

Date: Chairman

ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **Full Council (19 December 2024)**

Report Title: **District Councillor's Reports**

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

In the absence of the District Councillors the following report was presented to the meeting

- We are holding a meeting tonight to give residents more information about how the planning process works and how to engage with consultations.
- A waste and recycling survey is open until 3rd Feb as Government requires all councils to collect food and glass from 2026. Wheelie bins are being considered which we know many residents have strong feeling on.
- A consultation on the SDC boundary review is live until 20th Jan and likely to see Ash and New Ash Green split into different wards with New Ash Green standing alone and Ash joining other wards to create a new one.
- Leaders of the political groups at SDC are preparing a response to the Government's devolution deal which looks set to replace District and Borough councils with 3 unitary authorities and a Mayor for Kent.

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ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Agenda Item: **4 – Full Council 19 December 2024**

Report Title: **Clerk's Report**

BURIAL GROUND – the Burial Ground Working Group met on 02 December 2024 and completed the Law Commission consultation on burial and cremation for submission by 9 January 2025.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVENT – This free event has proved popular with bookings for the morning sessions full at 75 spaces and 63 on the afternoon session.

FOCUS GROUP – The next Focus Group meeting will be held on 13 January 2025.

HEALTH CHECKS

Kent County Council, with Radox Health are providing free cardio vascular disease health checks and these will be held at Ash Green Sports Centre on 24 January 2025 for Councillors and staff.

SPORTS CENTRE – members of the Sports Centre have donated items for the Community Cupboard.

THURSDAY LUNCH PROVISION – The Christmas Lunch was held on 12 December 2024. The Cook and the volunteers produced a good meal and it was well attended and the choir from the primary school singing Christmas Carols.

Agenda Item: 5.1 – Full Council: 19 December 2024

Report Title: **Employment Assistance Program**

Report Author: **Parish Clerk**

Background:

Employment Assistance Programmes (EAP) were introduced to support staff well-being and enhance workplace productivity by providing confidential assistance for personal or professional challenges. They offer employees access to services such as counselling, financial advice, and mental health support.

Quotations:

The following quotations cover 10 members of staff and 16 Parish Councillors and all amounts are quoted per month excluding VAT.

NAME	Standard Package 3 year	Premium Package 3 year	Standard Package 2 year	Premium Package 2 year	Standard Package 1 year	Premium Package 1 year
Health Assured	£63.71	£100.84	£77.92	£141.17		
Well Being Solutions	£46.66	£53.33			£52.08	£59.16
WorkNest	£81.25	£127.08				

Services:

	Health Assured Standard	Health Assured Premium	Well Being Solutions Standard	Well Being Solutions Premium
24/7 helpline (counselling, legal, financial)	x	x	x	x
Face to face, online and telephone counselling sessions	6 sessions	10 sessions	-	6 sessions
Telephone counselling			6 sessions	
Online health portal	x	x	x	x
cCBT	x	x	-	-
Family and couples support	-	-	-	x
Rewards and Discounts	-	-	-	x
Access to Occupational Health Assessments	x	x	-	-

Crisis assistance and telephone support	x	x	-	-
Dedicated relationship management	x	x	-	-
Management support line and counselling.	x	x	-	x
Day 1 intervention for absence	-	x	-	-
HR advice line (management only)	-	x	-	-
Life and leadership coaching	-	4	-	-
Work health assessment	-	x	-	-
Night worker questionnaires	-	x	-	-
Mental health first aid course – 2 day accredited course	-	x	-	-
Quarterly management report	-	-	x	x
Printed EAP literature	-	-	x	x
Monthly mental health awareness	-	-	x	x
Family members included	-	-	-	x

Recommendation:

For the Parish Council to consider the 1 year Premium Package from Well Being Solutions at an annual cost of £710.00. This option offers the most relevant services, while being cost-effective.

Agenda Item: 6.3 – **Full Council: 19 December 2024**

Report Title: **Community Warden**

Report Author: **Parish Clerk**

Update:

Jacquie West recently met with her Line Manager and officers from Kent County Council to discuss her area allocation. During the meeting, Jacquie confirmed her preference to continue working within the parishes of Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley.

Mr. S. Peerbux, Head of Community Safety, KCC has clarified that each Parish Council must individually communicate the level of sponsorship it wishes to undertake. Following this, KCC will draft an agreement with the respective Parish Council. A partnership arrangement with other Parish Councils is not required. The responsibility for allocating the remainder of the Community Warden's hours lies solely with KCC.

Recommendation:

For the Parish Council to consider sponsoring the Community Warden for 1.5 days per week at an annual cost of £13,500. It is noted that this amount is expected to increase by approximately 10% as of 1 April 2025.