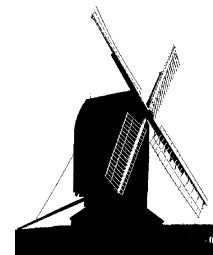


Rolvenden Parish Council



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Minutes of a meeting of Rolvenden Parish Council held in Rolvenden Village Hall on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr A. Hinge (Chairman), Cllr. C. Balch (arrived 7.36pm), Cllr. S. Bryant, Cllr M. Gilchrist, Cllr. J. Green, Cllr. L. Walker

In attendance: Louise Goldsmith, Parish Clerk

9 members of the public were also in attendance

Administration:

Fire Exits, Fire Meeting Point, Mobile Phones.

1178. Intention to record the meeting

There were no intentions to record the meeting.

1179. Apologies for Absence:

An apology for absence was received from Ward Member Kate Walder and Cllrs. H. Back, E. Barham, and M. Geerts and the reasons for absence were accepted

1180. Declarations of interest:

Cllr Bryant noted an interest in the War Memorial Trust.

Cllr Hinge noted an interest in the War Memorial Trust.

1181. Minutes of the meeting of the 12 December 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 12 December 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

1182. Borough Councillor's Report:

It was noted that Ward Member Kate Walker is sadly in considerable pain and awaiting surgery to her back.

1183. Chairman's report:

Introduction:

The Parish Council has had a challenging month with many areas to consider following the December meeting. The Neighbourhood Development Plan review has gained further momentum, engaging the services of Alison Eardley as consultant. A meeting of the proposed Steering Committee was held last week, with the principal agenda to set terms of reference, set out a plan of action to allow Alison to commence her review of the existing plan, make recommendations and formulate further actions which could then be delegated. Members of the Steering Committee met this week to show Alison around the village, view the existing agreed sites of development and to view the sites put forward to ABC as possible sites. A further meeting with ABC has been arranged to determine what requirements ABC will demand of Rolvenden, such that these needs can then be put into the plan appropriately. Further updates will follow as we know more.

Thoburn Trust.

The Trust is close to obtaining appropriate administrative control with mandates signed by all parties. We await Unity to process these. No meeting has occurred with Trustees this month. Meetings have been held without public scrutiny initially to allow for full and frank discussion between Trustees, and to build up knowledge of the trust, its obligations and formulate plans of action in a less formal manner not constrained by the formality of Council protocols. There is no intention to do things "in secret" and all decisions will be reported in full via Parish Council meetings (and published minutes) along with the reasoning behind them. Trustees are not obliged to hold meetings publicly but will move towards this at the earliest opportunity. The initial meetings have been very time consuming and would be difficult to hold after a PC meeting, commencing at 9.30pm.

The tenant has been given notice that the existing lease will terminate at the end of this year. This is not a means to evict a valued member of the local farming community but is a legal necessity due to the need to have full possession of the land to obtain vital funding for future work, which would not be otherwise possible. The tenant will be invited to return as a grazier under a new lease that meets these requirements.

CLM, a firm with specialist expertise in the management of land, in particular trust land and areas of environmental importance has been engaged to provide a detailed report that will withstand external scrutiny and thereby allow for best access to grants and funds, as well as giving Trustees options of projects and uses. CLM will build on the previous public consultation and the reports provided by Kent Wildlife. Once the report is assessed (and distributed for public scrutiny) this will be fed back for further public discussion before any decisions are made. This was

considered to be the most robust approach to ensure Trustees fulfilled their obligations and duties to the Trust. No Trustee will or has obtained any benefit whatsoever from the management of the Trust either directly or indirectly. The S106 money will be used to seed this process and was considered to be a value for money use, which will allow greater fund raising, and therefore be more cost effective in the long term.

The Precept has been a subject for extensive consideration. Louise as our clerk has worked hard to provide a budget. There are a number of points to consider. Our village precept has not kept up with inflation and there is a need to increase it to play "catch up". A number of essential items have not been budgeted for in previous years along with increases in landscape service requirements and have to be added in to ensure we fulfil our obligations and commitments. Unfortunately, as has been previously minuted, the unforeseen locum expenses will require a rebuild of reserves. These are not expected to be recurring costs. The wish list for SID may need to be postponed unless grant assistance is obtained.

The village hall Trustees and Management Committee have met this month. The Hall Manager has had an appraisal, and following on from that an assessment of the hall and its facilities. A cleaning regime and protocol will be produced detailing the expectations of the Committee and areas and frequency of cleaning to be performed. The Trustees have received an initial system proposal for heating management and will be assessing its suitability. The hall is currently operating within its budget, with healthy reserves that will allow for capital improvements to reduce utility costs, with substantial grants available to mitigate costs. We have engaged with Northiam village hall which has invested heavily in utility management with substantial savings. The village is desperately short of Trustee/Committee members and would greatly appreciate any volunteers, especially any with added value skills.

1184. Clerk's report:

The Clerk reported that PROW at KCC has advised that the landowner will be submitting a new plan for the proposed diversion of the AT41 footpath,

1185. Open Session:

Question about the diversion of the AT41.

A member of the public explained that the caravan at Rolvenden Club is being occupied by the new owner while building works take place.

A member of the public submitted a nomination for the KALC Community Award.

1186. Planning:

a) To consider any planning applications received prior to the meeting

PA/2024/2337: Proposed Agricultural Building, Alders Lane Fruits, Hastings Road

Erection of an agricultural barn.

Resolved: The Parish Council object to the application on the grounds that the site is within the High Weald AONB and the site is not an agricultural holding.

b) **PA/2024/2267: 16 Gatefield Cottages, Gatefield Road, Rolvenden**

Installation of EWI (External Wall Insulation) and Roof Extension.

Resolved: Support.

c) To consider any approvals:

PA/2024/1952: 20 Frensham Road, Rolvenden

Listed Building Consent: To replace the existing external painted softwood doors and windows like for like.

PA/2024/1909: 2 Thornden Farm Cottages, The Old Workshop, Thornden Lane, Rolvenden

Development Certificate: Existing use as a residential dwelling for a period in excess of 4 years

PA/2024/1756: Lambsland Cottages, Maytham Road, Rolvenden

Erection of dwelling and car parking with associated amenity space, landscaping and access following the demolition of existing 2no. dwellings and ancillary buildings.

To consider any refusals: None to consider.

Withdrawn: None to consider.

Planning Enforcement:

ENF/2025/0004: The Rolvenden Club, Maytham Road – alleged siting of a caravan.

Planning Enforcement team will be investigating whether permission is required.

d) **Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 January 2025 were noted. The Steering Group is due to meet with the Planning Policy Officers at ABC next week to discuss the emerging Local Plan and implications for Rolvenden and to understand where ABC are with the redevelopment of Monypenny.

1187. Parish Matters

a) **KALC Community Awards 2025**

Members considered two nominations.

Resolved: To nominate Judy Vinson for the KALC Community Award 2025.

b) **Warm Hub:**

Cllr. Walker reported that The Star continues to offer free tea and coffee and a subsidised three course meal to local residents in need of a warm space and chat every Tuesday to Friday from 12pm-3pm. Board games are also on offer and Cllr. Walker reported that 17 residents attended one week. Other sponsors are supporting the scheme along with the Parish Council. The scheme will run until the end of March 2025.

c) **Community Orchard**

The Clerk reported that ABC plan to deliver the trees tomorrow to a barn in High Halden where they will be stored until the Allotment Association is ready to plant them. The trees will come with guards and stakes. The Clerk will contact all the residents that expressed an interest in adopting one of the trees to assist with the planting. Members agreed that the Parish Council would cover any increase in cost to the Allotment Association in terms of insurance and the watering of the trees.

d) **Annual Litter Pick**

Cllr. Bryant proposed that the annual litter pick takes place on Saturday 22 March 2025 at 9am meeting at The Bull. The Clerk to assist with advertising the event on social media. Cllr. Bryant advised that the litter gets safely disposed at Hole Park and that ABC will be contacted to remove any large items.

e) **Neighbourhood Watch/Kent Police Update**

Standing Orders were lowered to allow Sian Reeves, Rolvenden Neighbourhood Watch, to speak.

Sian Reeves reminded everyone to keep reporting any incidents or concerns to Kent Police such as the regular occurrence of lights coming on in the old vicarage. The paper based and online ASB surveys have been received by Kent Police and are now being analysed. Sian Reeves advised that a couple of electric scooters have been seen in the parish. Identify Fraud is on the increase and Sian Reeves urged everyone that receives a letter or invoice from a service that they do not recognise to report it to the Home Office to prevent re-victimisation. Similarly, there is an increase in the use of social media to advertise and sell products that do not exist. If you think you have been a victim of identity fraud contact your bank immediately by calling 159. Sian Reeves explained the 'ABC' guidance to preventing fraud. Never **A**ssume, never **B**elieve and always **C**onfirm.

The meeting reconvened.

1188. HIGHWAYS/PROW

a) **Highways Improvement Plan**

Priority 1 Maytham Road, Rolvenden Layne: The Clerk showed Members the design of the proposed gateways to be installed at both entrances to Rolvenden Layne on Maytham Road. Members were delighted to learn that KCC is able to fund both the purchase and installation of both gateways. The Clerk will find out when the gateways are likely to be installed.

Priority 2 Hastings Road, Rolvenden: KCC has agreed to carry out both pedestrian and traffic surveys in Spring 2025 to ascertain both the need and feasibility of installing a crossing outside the school.

Priority 3: Speeding Traffic, Hastings Road, Tenterden Road: The Parish Council will continue to investigate ways of funding a Speed Indicator Device Scheme on the A28 throughout the village.

b) **Reported Faults**

Enquiry 853305 Pothole at entrance to Monypenny – now marked up for repair.

Enquiry 853299: 30mph roundels need refreshing on Tenterden Road

Enquiry 853300: Red speed table needs refreshing on Tenterden Road

Enquiry 853302: 40mph speed sign is faded on Tenterden Road

PROW: 250189459: Byway AT60 north of Cherrygarden Farm: The Clerk has reported that this is impassable.

c) **New Faults**

Potholes on Sparkeswood

Drainage issues on Hastings Road near to Merrington Place.

1189. Finances

a) **Grounds Maintenance Contract 2025-2028**

The Clerk reported that the tender documents were posted on Contracts Finder with a deadline of midday on Wednesday 18 December 2024. The tenders were opened on the 9 January 2025 by the Clerk/RFO and witnessed by the Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr. Hinge and Cllr. Barham and the Tender Opening Record Summary was duly completed. Members considered a report prepared by the Clerk/RFO summarising the details of the three tenders received.

Resolved; That the tender for the Maintenance Contract for three years, starting 1 March 2025, should be awarded to Tompsett Landscaping. The Clerk to prepare the contract.

b) **Draft Budget 2025-2026**

Members considered and commented on a draft budget prepared and circulated by the Clerk. The Clerk reported that general reserves have been depleted and that a deficit budget is now not advisable. It was agreed for the estimated expenditure for 2025-2026 to be £44,425.00 and the estimated income to be £43,850.00.

Resolved: That the Budget for 2025-2026 be accepted

c) **Precept Requirements 2025-2026**

Members discussed the level of reserves and budget requirements for 2025-2026 and agreed that as the general reserves are low that the precept needs to be raised. The Council Tax base calculation was discussed and noted. **Resolved: That the Precept for 2025-2026 be £40,500.00 representing a 19.54% increase equating to £9.24 for a Band D property.**

d) **Appointment of an Internal Auditor:**

Resolved: To continue with Harold Hoad as the internal auditor. The Clerk to make arrangements for the internal audit for the financial year 2024/2025 ending on the 31 March 2025.

e) **To receive the accounts**

The accounts dated the 31 December 2024 were noted.

f) **To receive the bank reconciliation as at 31 December 2024**

The bank reconciliation as at the 31 December 2024 was noted.

g) **To receive a list of payments for approval**

Cllr. Hinge checked the invoices against the payment schedule, (appended to the minutes), and it was **resolved** for Cllrs. Hinge and Balch to authorise the payments online. The authorised schedule was initialled immediately below the last item by the Chair in accordance with the financial regulations.

1190. External Meetings

a) **Thoburn Trustees Meeting:** See minute reference 1183.

b) **Rolvenden Village Hall:** See minute reference 1183.

c) **KALC Area Committee:** It was noted that that the next Area Committee Meeting is due to be held on the 29 January 2025.

1191. Items for the next meeting

Invitation from MP Katie Lam.

Cllr. Balch and Walker gave their apologies.

1192. Correspondence/Consultations

Devolution White Paper: The Clerk reported that a white paper was issued in December 2024 by the Government setting out the way forward for English Devolution. It is expected that Parish Councils will continue as per present structure. There is to be a directly elected Executive Mayor. Kent as a County will disappear. It very much looks like Kent will be split into 3 Unitary Authorities, West Kent, North Kent and East Kent. Ashford is most likely to be in East Kent with Folkestone, Dover and Canterbury. East Kent could have many challenges – higher welfare and social care costs, plus having to deal with coastal defences. It is likely that Council Tax will dramatically increase. The Clerk advised that the KALC Area Committee is going to be discuss the Devolution White Paper at the next meeting.

1193. Any Confidential Items: See below.

1194. Date of the next meeting: Thursday 20 February 2025 at 7.30pm

Part 2 Exclusion of Public and Press – In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings Act 1960), the public and press be excluded from the meeting by the reason of its confidential nature.

The meeting closed to the public at 8.59pm

Confidential Item

The Chair and the Clerk reported in a Confidential Item.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.27pm

Signed: Date:

BACS Payments for Approval January 2025

Reference	Payee	Invoice	Description of Transaction	Gross
57/24	Maureen Brooks		Litter Picking	150.00
58/24	Louise Goldsmith		Expenses	94.95
59/24	Hole Park Estate	SI27819	Wreath for Remembrance 2024	20.00
60/24	M I Payroll		Payroll Services	25.00
61/24	SLCC Enterprises Ltd	776	Locum Fees	3762.00
62/24	The Star Inn		Warm Hub expenses	220.40
DD	Unity Trust		Monthly Charge	6.00
DD	Hugo Fox		Website	11.99
DD	HMRC		Clerks Tax and NI	369.36
SO	Louise Goldsmith		Salary	1045.15
62/24	The Star Inn		Warm Hub Expenses	240.40

Receipts January 2025

Date		Amount
13/01/2025	Groundworks/Locality Grant	4750.00

Bank Reconciliation as at 31 December 2024

Opening balance	£81,535.03
add receipts	£62,129.01
	<u>£143,664.04</u>
less payments	£116,076.94
Balance	£27,587.10

Chairmans signature.....

