

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Russel House on
Monday 2nd December 2024 at 7 pm

Present: Councillors: Dr J Lord (JL) – Chair
Mrs L Bird (LB), Mr M Bortolozzo (MB),
Mr E Boyle (EB), Mr I Breminer (IB),
Mrs D Coen (DC), Ms C Dicker, (CD),
Mr A Hussain (AJH), Mr N Proudfoot (NP),
Mr N Robson (NR), Mrs L Rodgers (LR),
Mrs S Sheen (SS) and Mr K Thompson (KT)

In attendance: Town Clerk: Mrs A Howells (AH)
Finance/Project Officer: Mrs D Marshall (DM)
SDC Cllr D Esler

Item		Action
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> None.	
2.	<u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u> Cllr Robson – Item 6.9	
3.	<u>Minutes of the Council Meeting on 7th October 2024</u> It was resolved to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 th October 2024.	
4.	<u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u> None.	
5.	<u>To receive and consider the following Minutes of Committee:</u> <u>5.1 Planning and Development – 10.10.24</u> Cllr Robson presented the Minutes: SDC were waiting to find out what the changes to the NPPF would be before proceeding further with the Local Plan. There was concern regarding how the housing targets were decided. Resolved: that the Minutes be adopted. <u>5.2 Planning and Development – 24.10.24</u> Resolved: that the Minutes be adopted. <u>5.3 Planning and Development – 07.11.24</u> Resolved: that the minutes be adopted. <u>5.4 Planning and Development – 21.11.24</u> Members of the Committee approved the Minutes. Resolved: that the minutes be adopted. <u>5.5 Highways and Lighting – 04.11.24</u>	

Cllr Bird presented the Minutes. KCC had agreed to reduce the speed limit in Pootings to 30mph from 40mph. The residents had been informed and were delighted. Council congratulated Cllr Bird on persevering with this project. Cllr Robson asked about enforcement and was informed that the Police would not be taking any enforcement action due to safety issues. A serious accident had taken place recently at the junction of Pilgrims Way and London Road, also attended by the Fire Brigade, who stated this was the seventh serious accident they had attended this year. KCC were investigating Crash Remediation measures at this site. Further Speed watch was planned for Crockham Hill. Cllr Lord thanked the Assistant Clerk for organising and running the regular speed watch sessions in Westerham and Crockham Hill. Members of the Committee approved the Minutes. Resolved: that the minutes be adopted. 5.6 <u>Youth and Community – 11.11.24</u> Cllr Coen presented the Minutes. 5.3 Cllrs Bortolozzo and Coen had visited the Valance Shop and met with four students; this was a positive but low-key meeting. Any further engagement would need to be organized with the Head Teacher. 6.1 The fitness sessions were not being progressed at the moment but would be re-visited at a later date. 6.2 A new Arts and crafts session would take place at Churchill School in the Easter holidays. This would be evaluated for future demand. 6.4 A meeting was planned in January with WADS. A number of questions had been raised with them for discussion. Cllr Coen had attended the pantomime in which a number of junior WADS had acted. 7.10 Cllr Coen and the Clerk had attended a virtual meeting with KCC Family Hub representative. This was very positive and it was hoped that a new drop-in session would take place at the Library which would link well with the Churchill School Family Liaison officer. Members of the Committee approved the minutes. Resolved: that the minutes be adopted. 5.7 <u>Allotments, Playing Fields and Open Spaces – 18.11.24</u> Cllr Rodgers presented the minutes: A cesspit had been discovered at the Groundsman's hut and had been emptied. This would now need emptying annually and the Deputy Clerk was seeking quotes for work on the surround. Notice had been given that the allotment rent would increase in 2025 by 10%. There were not many vacancies although the annual rent was still being collected. Skips for each allotment site were being investigated. Approval had been given for trees to be removed to allow a container to be placed on KGF adjacent to the Darent River for the Junior Football club posts. The grass cutting costs had vastly increased. Members of the Committee approved the Minutes. Resolved: that the minutes be adopted. 5.8 <u>Finance and General Purposes – 25.11.24</u> Cllr Sheen presented the minutes:	
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	6.1 No further information had been received following the Doctor's Surgery who were appealing the District Valuer decision to reduce the rent. Cllr Lord thanked Cllr Sheen for the huge amount of work she had completed in this complex area. 6.2 There was currently a rolling lease with Churchill School for land adjacent to the School with an annual rent of £200. This rent did not cover the £4,000 WTC had spent on maintenance of the land. A meeting to be sought with the Head Teacher before the end of the financial year. 7.7 Due to numerous complaints being received from patients of the Doctor's Surgery regarding parking a survey had been undertaken by Britannia Parking. Following lengthy discussion Council agreed to proceed with the parking proposal and to investigate car parking charges for out of hours parking. Members of the Committee approved the Minutes. Resolved: that the Minutes be adopted.	JL/AH
6.	<u>Finance</u> <u>6.1 Payment List to 31st October 2024</u> Cllr Sheen reported that F&GP had reviewed the payment list and had nothing to bring to Council's attention. There were no other queries on the lists and the payment lists were approved. <u>6.2 Committee Accounts to 31st October 2024</u> Cllr Sheen reported that the accounts were in line with expected expenditure. The in-budget concerns detailed in the F&GP minutes were highlighted. There were no further queries and the accounts were approved. <u>6.3 First draft budget 2025/26</u> Thanks were given to the Finance Officer for the comprehensive notes provided for each Committee and for meeting the Chairs of Committees to discuss their budgets. The increase in the draft figures was due to a huge rise in utility, NI costs and grass cutting costs. The increase only maintained the work currently taking place and if the figure was lower then a decision would need to be made on what work would not take place. Following lengthy discussion it was agreed to support the current position. Further information would be available at the January meeting when a final decision would be made. <u>6.4 Internal Auditor's Interim Report</u> The Interim Internal Auditors report had not yet been received. The Finance Officer was not expecting any issues. The report would be placed on the January Agenda. <u>6.5 Reserves</u> The reserves as of 19th November 2024 had been circulated and the report was noted. <u>6.6 APFOS Mowing Tender</u> The information regarding the grass cutting tender had been circulated in the APFOS minutes and following discussion was approved. Resolved: To approve a three-year contract to be awarded to Landscape Services with effect from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2028 (with	

	potential two-year extension) to maintain both Crockham Hill and King George's Playing Field. To approve a three-year contract to be awarded to Wealden with effect from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2028 (with potential two-year extension) to maintain Westerham's open spaces including: The Green, Granville Rd, Ash Rd, Hartley Rd, Verrall's Corner and Madan Rd. 6.7 <u>Grant to Hi Kent</u> Cllr Sheen presented a paper regarding the Grant Applications Following discussion, it was agreed to award a grant of £300 to Hi Kent. Resolved: To award a grant of £300 to Hi Kent. 6.8 <u>Grant to Citizens Advice</u> Cllr Sheen presented a paper regarding the Grant Applications Following discussion, it was agreed to award a grant of £1,500 to Citizens Advice. Resolved: To award a grant of £1,500 to Citizens Advice. Cllr Robson left the meeting. 6.9 <u>Grant to Congregational Church Warm Hub</u> Cllr Sheen presented a paper regarding the Grant Applications Following discussion, it was agreed to award a grant of £320 to The congregational Church Warm Hub. Resolved: To award a grant of £320 to the Congregational Church Warm Hub. Cllr Robson re-joined the meeting.	
7.	<u>SDC Liaison Meeting</u> Cllr Lord reported that he and Cllrs Bortolozzo, Boyle, Robson, Sheen and the Clerk had attended the annual SDC Liaison Meeting on 13th November. The following items were discussed - SDC Local Plan, Parking Charges and Duration of Sunday Parking, Empty Properties – SDC Process, Darent Car Park – EV Charging Progress, SDC Financial Situation and WTC King Georges Field Brief Update. This had been a positive meeting and a further meeting on parking had been arranged for 9th December.	
8.	<u>Consultations</u> 8.1 Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings – This was an eight-week consultation from 24th October and looked at potential reform to the 1972 Local Government Act to allow councils to hold remote meetings, have remote attendance at meetings and allow proxy voting. Following discussion, it was agreed to support remote attendance in exceptional circumstances but proxy voting was not supported. Further comments were requested so that Cllr Lord and the Clerk could complete the consultation. 8.2 Local Government Boundary Commission – Sevenoaks Electoral Review – Cllr Lord reported that he had attended a virtual meeting with the Local Government Boundary Commission about the current review of the Sevenoaks district. They were seeking views for the first time since 2001. At the first stage it had been decided that the total number of SDC Cllrs would be reduced by 6 to 48 and were now looking at current wards to	

	determine any changes that were required. SDC Cllr Esler gave an update on the potential changes. As this would go formally to consultation in May it was agreed that Council would comment on any changes at this point.	
9.	<u>Policies and Procedures</u> The following Policies had been circulated: - 9.1 Strategic Business Plan – Cllr Lord and the Finance Officer were currently working on the draft and this would be circulated following the meeting for Cllrs to review and would be placed on the January Agenda for approval. 9.2 Freedom of Information Act - Publication Scheme 2024 – This had been circulated and following discussion and as there were no proposed changes this was agreed. Resolved: To approve the Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme 2024. 9.3 Communication Strategy – Cllrs Dicker and Hussain had circulated an email asking for comments/suggestions by 20th December. This would then be discussed at the January meeting. Thanks to both Cllrs for their work on the Strategy.	All Cllrs
10.	<u>Correspondence</u> 10.1 An email had been received from a resident thanking Council for organising the Christmas Lights Switch on. The Clerk was thanked for her work in organising the event.	
11.	<u>Reports from Councillors</u> Cllr Robson reported he had attended a virtual session by London Green Belt Council on 27 November at 7.30pm to discuss current planning issues and Green Belt threats. Cllr Bird reported that she had attended a meeting with the Pootings representative in the office. Cllrs Boyle, Bortolozzo, Breminer, Coen, Hussain, Lord, Sheen and Thompson had helped at the Christmas Lights Switch on. Cllrs Bird, Coen and Rodgers had attended the WADS pantomime. Cllr Sheen had attended the Citizens Advice AGM on 22nd November. Cllrs Bortolozzo and Breminer had organised and attended the litter pick on 29th November. Cllr Proudfoot had met with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk to review the state of the pavements around Westerham. Cllr Coen had attended an Information Session on Vaping/Smoking/Gas Canisters at SDC offices on 2nd December. Cllrs Lord and Sheen had attended a meeting with the Doctors Surgery. Cllr Breminer reported that the new SDC recycling bags were not popular with residents as they blew away and were not practical. The Refuse Collectors were taking longer to empty them than it took to pick up the clear recycling bags and there was more petrol fumes as the vehicles were static for longer. Cllr Bortolozzo reported that there were piles of rubbish which had not been picked up at various locations in Westerham. SDC Cllr Esler would report the issues back to SDC but encouraged	

	everyone to contact SDC.	
12.	<u>TN16, Crockham Hill Village Newsletter & website</u> Christmas Lights switch on thank you Recycling Christmas trees	
13.	<u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u> Parking Recycling bags	
14.	<u>Further matters for consideration at the next meeting</u> Budgets Strategic Business Plan	
15.	<u>Date of next meeting</u> Monday 20 th January 2025	

The meeting was concluded at 9.50 pm

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman