

HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 9 December 2024 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall

167/24 Administration: Fire Exits, Fire Meeting Point, Mobile Phones. The Clerk confirmed that there has been no requests to record the meeting.

168/24 Present and Apologies

Present: Cllr. Drury (Chairman), Cllrs: Mrs. Amsler, Ms. J. Morgan and Mrs. Wheeler

In Attendance: Mrs L Goldsmith (Clerk), Ward Member Alan Pickering, 11 members of the public.

Apologies: There were none received.

169/24 Co-Option

169/24-1 Co-option of a new Parish Councillor

In between meetings Janet Morgan applied to become a Parish Councillor.

The Chairman proposed that Janet Morgan be co-opted to fill a casual vacancy.

Resolved: That Janet Morgan be co-opted to fill a casual vacancy.

169/24-2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was read out and signed by Cllr. Janet Morgan and signed by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council. Cllr. Morgan has been issued with a copy of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct and will complete a Declaration of Interests.

170/24 Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Drury declared an interest in agenda item 181/24.

171/24 Minutes of meetings

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 11 November 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

172/24 Report from the Clerk (information purposes only):

The Clerk reported that ABC is now operational from International House and is open to the public from 9am to 4pm. Committee meetings will continue to be held at the old offices.

173/24 Ward Member Report

Ward Member Alan Pickering advised that the 24/7 surveillance system is also still currently based at the old ABC offices. Officers will be carrying out a combination of home working and hot desking.

174/24 Open Session:

In response to question about what is happening to the old ABC offices, Ward Member Alan Pickering advised that ABC will be selling the site possibly for housing.

Ward Member Alan Pickering advised a member of the public that he supported the Stevenson proposal, PA/2022/3073, because he felt it would bring tourism to the area and more jobs and would help restore an unsightly industrial area and the proposed café could provide opportunities to bring the community together. A number of members of the public expressed their ongoing concerns about anti-social behaviour in the parish. The use of catapults continues with property being damaged and animals and birds being targeted. Incidents are being reported to Kent Police but frustration was expressed with the seemingly lack of response. Parishioners expressed their concern about feeling unsafe in their own village (see agenda item 178/24)

A member of the public asked if the reasons why four councillors recently resigned could be made public. The Clerk reported that KALC has advised that legislation focuses on the process of resignation. This means that resignations are not public documents.

A member of the public advised that replacement spare pads are required for one of the defibrillators.

A member of the public reported that a developer was seeking pre-planning application views on an application for the demolition of an existing bungalow at Six Acres St Michaels, and the erection of up to 55 new homes. The member of the public asked if the Parish Council would object to the planning application when submitted on the basis that this would be a major infill site and possibly have the effect of merging High Halden with Tenterden.

7.30pm Ward Member Alan Pickering left the meeting

Initials:

175/24 Highway Matters

Bus layby: It was noted that works to reinstate parking spaces in the layby opposite the shop have now been completed.

Faults: It was noted that the Clerk has reported that a number of hedges on the A28 need cutting back from the footpath. Cllr. Amsler reported that some hedges have already been cut and thanked the Clerk.

Hopes Grove: The Clerk has received complaints about alleged inconsiderate parking in Hopes Grove from football supporters. The Clerk has received reports of cars being parked on pavements, on dropped kerbs and in resident's privately owned parking spaces.

Resolved: The Clerk to contact both football clubs and ask them to remind their supporters to park considerately and where possible seek alternative parking areas.

176/24 .gov.uk website domain and email addresses

The Clerk advised that the website is now a [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domain. Hugo Fox hope to offer .gov.uk email accounts within a few weeks.

177/24 Ransley Field/Sage Homes

The Clerk reported that Sage Homes has advised that they are continuing to work with Southern Homes through an agreed maintenance strategy. Sage Homes expect to take over the site in the early part of next year. It was agreed that the site is looking more presentable.

178/24 Police Surgery/Anti-Social Behaviour

Members discussed all the concerns raised by the members of the public and expressed their disappointment with the perceived lack of action from Kent Police.

Resolved: Given the increase in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents in the parish the Clerk to request a public meeting with the CSU Inspector, Richard Batten, to discuss concerns and receive feedback.

179/24 Community Warden Service for High Halden

Members noted a copy of the report on the findings on a new service model and geographical allocation policy for the Kent Community Warden Service. The Operational Manager for the Community Warden Service has asked if the warden that is to be assigned to the parish can have access to a base for making drinks and use of a toilet. The Clerk has asked the Village Hall Committee if they can assist and suggested that the sports pavilion could also be used a base. The Clerk was given a copy of the timetable of activities in the hall. The Clerk will request a meeting with the new warden and will discuss the feasibility of using a combination of the hall and sports pavilion as a base. The Clerk will also suggest that the warden attends the village hall on Fridays when the Post Office is open which is also the day regular coffee mornings are held.

180/24 Community Orchard

The Clerk advised that ABC plan to deliver the trees mid-January. It was noted that the landowner has kindly offered to store the trees until they are planted. It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange a 'tree planting' day with the parishioners who have expressed an interest in the project and advertise this on social media and the website and also ask the allotment holders if they would be willing to help plant the trees. The Parish Council hopes the orchard will help to create a sense of community amongst the parishioners and that further activities could be planned linked to this orchard.

181/24 Allotments

7.42pm Cllr. Drury declared an interest and left the meeting. Cllr. Wheeler took over as Chair.

The Clerk advised Members that all of the allotments are currently rented out and that the tenancy agreements are due for renewal on the 1 January 2025. It was noted that the rental fee for 2025 will remain at £40.00 per plot. The total allotment income is paid to the landowner as agreed in the terms of the lease. Members discussed the allotment rent to be charged for the year commencing the 1 January 2026.

Initials:

Resolved: To increase the rent per plot to £45.00 from the 1 January 2026. The Clerk will advise the allotment holders of the increase by the 31 December 2024, giving 12 months' notice in accordance with legislation. The Clerk to send out the new tenancy agreements for 2025 by the 31 December 2024.

7.48pm Cllr. Drury returned to the meeting and resumed as Chair

182/24 Meeting Dates 2025

Resolved: To adopt the dates of the meetings for 2025 suggested by the Clerk.

183/24 KALC Community Awards 2025

Members discussed the scheme and noted that a parishioner merits an Award for having made a significant contribution to their local community. The nomination needs to be submitted to KALC by the 7 February 2025.

Resolved: The Clerk to post a request for nominations from parishioners on social media, the website and noticeboards. Members to consider and agree a nomination at the next meeting.

184/24 Parish Council Surgeries

Members discussed the merits of holding surgeries to better engage with parishioners who may not be able to or willing to attend a Parish Council meeting. It was agreed for the Clerk to arrange an evening and a Saturday surgery in the hall in the early part of next year.

185/24 Planning

Planning applications

OTH/2024/2153: Telephone Call Box, Village Green, High Halden

Notification for proposed 90 day consultation for the removal of internal telephony equipment and retention of kiosk.

Resolved: Support

Approvals: None to consider.

Refusals: None to consider.

Withdrawn: None to consider.

Other Planning Matters

Appeals: AP – 90588 1 Meadow View High Halden, 20/01196/AS: To note that the appeal has been dismissed

AP-90668: Appeal Land known as Oakleigh Field west of Oakleigh Farm, PA/2024/0217 – in progress.

AP- 90688: Appeal Homestaff Farm, Ashford Road, PA2024/0799 – in progress.

186/24 BT Box on Village Green

BT have advised the Clerk that if the planning application to remove the payphone equipment from the BT Box is approved because it is a Listed Building the phone will be removed in line with the Ofcom guidance and the door locked to protect it from potential vandalism or anti-social behaviour. BT has advised the Clerk that the BT Box could be adopted by the Parish Council for £1 through the Adopt a Kiosk scheme. The Clerk reported that more than 7,000 kiosks have already been adopted across the UK and turned into a range of community assets such as lifesaving defibrillator hubs or mini libraries. Concern was expressed about the potential cost of ongoing maintenance of the kiosk as a result of vandalism. Members considered a proposal to adopt the BT Box on the village green and agreed it would be beneficial to ask the views of parishioners.

Resolved: The Clerk to place a brief questionnaire on social media, the website and noticeboards asking parishioners whether they support a proposal for the Parish Council to adopt the BT Box and if so what it could be used for?

187/24 Financial Report:

/24-1 Budget 2025-2026

A copy of the draft budget, prepared by the Clerk, has been circulated to all Members. Members discussed the budget and noted that Section 106 monies are due which will fund the proposed project for a MUGA on the recreation ground. The Clerk reported that reserves have, as planned, been depleted and that a deficit budget is now not advisable. The expenditure for 2025-2026 is estimated to be £48,205.00.

Resolved: That the Budget for 2025-2026 be accepted

Initials:

/24-2 To set the Precept for 2025-2026

Members discussed the level of reserves and budget requirements for 2025-2026 and agreed that precept needs to be raised. The Council Tax base calculation was discussed and noted.

Resolved: That the Precept for 2025-2026 be £40,000.00 representing a 17.23% increase equating to £7.07 for a Band D property.

/24-3 Christmas Tree

Members noted a request from HHVEC for a donation toward the purchase cost of Christmas Tree on the village green which the committee kindly installed. Members agreed that the Parish Council should assist financially and would also be happy to organise the project in future years either solely or jointly with HHVEC. The Clerk reported that a nearby parish has arranged for village groups and residents to sponsor individual Christmas Trees. A member of the public offered to pay for the Christmas Tree this year, the Clerk will advise HHVEC of this generous offer.

Resolved: The Clerk to advise HHVEC that the Parish Council would be happy to contribute financially towards the purchase cost of the Christmas Tree in future years and to work with them on the project.

/24-4 To receive the update accounts for 2024/2025

Members received the updated accounts for 2024/2025

/24-5 To receive a bank reconciliation as at the 30 November 2024

Members received the bank reconciliation as at the 30 November 2024.

Resolved: Cllr. Wheeler to sign the bank reconciliation in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

/24-6 To receive an update on the bank mandate

The Clerk advised Cllr. Wheeler has been successfully added as a signatory to the bank account and that all ex-councillors have been removed

/24-7 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget:

Cllr. Drury checked the invoices against the payment schedule and it was and it was **resolved** for Cllrs. Drury and Wheeler to authorise the payments online. Cllr. Drury, as the Chair, initialled the payments list in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations.

Receipts: None to consider.

Payments :

Cheque/Transfer	Details	£
Transfer	Louise Goldsmith (Clerks Expenses)	74.28
Transfer	Air Ambulance Charity	500.00
Transfer	Barrie Croucher (Caretaking Services)	68.44
Transfer	MI Payroll (Payroll Services)	25.00
Transfer	Viking (Stationery)	79.44
Transfer	Npower (Pavilion Electricity)	111.82
Transfer	Mint Fresh (Bus Stop Cleaning)	77.22
SO	Louise Goldsmith (Clerks Salary)	832.84
SO	HMRC	208.20
DD	Google Cloud	48.00
DD	Hugo Fox (Website)	2.99
DD	Unity Trust (Monthly Charge)	6.00

Balances as at 09 December 2024

Unity Trust Current Account: £33,481.57

Unity Trust Savings Account: £14,308.30

Total: £47,789.87

Initials:

188/24 Information items:

/24-1 HHVEC Update:

Standing Orders were lowered to allow a member of the public to speak

The member of the public reported that HHVEC is working towards holding a boot fair on the recreation ground after the football season and are considering ways to celebrate VE Day 80 on the 8 May 2025. The committee is also looking to hold another village event on the green in the summer. It was noted that the committee is in urgent need of a replacement Treasurer and Secretary and more members in general.

The meeting resumed.

/24-2 CEO Briefing: Hoads Wood Update

The Clerk reminded Members that a huge amount of waste was illegally dumped in Hoads Wood and that the Environment Agency has been leading on investigations into bringing the culprits to justice, and also on plans to remove the waste. The Environment Agency has now appointed a contractor who will clear the site. Work will need to be carefully planned as there are several matters to take account of before the physical clearance can commence. The contractor was due to attend a public meeting, hosted by Bethersden Parish Council, on Friday 22 November 2024 where they were expected to provide further detail on plans and timescales.

/24-3 ARCK Village Hall Files Retrieval

Following the closure of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK), Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) are assisting with the distribution of Village Hall files from ACRK's office. It was noted that the Clerk has collected the historic file for High Halden Village Hall and will give this to the committee.

/24-4 KALC

It was noted that the Clerk has circulated a copy of the minutes of the Area Committee Meeting held on the 27 November 2024. It was noted that the AGM was held on the 30 November 2024.

189/24 Items for the next Parish Council meeting:

Nothing additional.

190/24 Date of the next meeting.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Monday 13 January 2025 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

With no further business to transact the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

Date:

Initials: