



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL (LPC)
Monday 20 January 2025 at 7.30pm
in the Loose Parish Pavilion, King George V Playing Field**

Councillors taking part: Vianne Gibbons (Chairman) (VG), Charlie Hollister (Vice-Chairman) (CH), Jim Andrew (JA), Neil Lettington (NL), Sarah Leeson (SL), Susan Hill (SCH), Tony Oliver (TO), Velma Bennett (VB) and Andrew Richards (AR).

Also present: Brian Clark (BC) (Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Loose & Linton Ward Councillor), Simon Wales (SW) (MBC Loose & Linton Ward Councillor), Simon Webb (SWebb) (Kent County Council (KCC) Division Councillor - Maidstone Rural West), Amanda Baker (AB - Assistant Clerk) Kim Owen (KO - Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)), and Nicky Bourne (NB - Clerk) who took the minutes.

There were five members of the public present.

1. To receive and record any apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Susan Hogg (SH) and Michael Hogg (MH) (personal commitments), Mick Westwood (MW-personal commitment), PC Harry Greenfield (rest day) and Janet Burnett (Assistant Clerk) (JB-illness).

2. To receive and agree any decision regarding any item to be taken as confidential.

None.

3. To receive any declarations of pecuniary interest on items in the agenda.

(In accordance with the NALC Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils (pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011). In addition, any declaration of personal or prejudicial interest. *(As agreed by LPC 21 Jan 13)*).

The RFO had received completed declaration forms from VG, CH, AR and TO for agenda item 19b and these had been approved prior to the meeting.

4. To receive any signed dispensation requests for any item on this agenda.

(Councillors to approve/disapprove as appropriate and to agree the reason for the dispensation if approved (see dispensation form). This follows the agreement made by the LPC at the meeting held on the 17 July 2017- item 17).

JA, SL, NL and SCH submitted signed declarations at the meeting for agenda item 19b. They were approved by the RFO.

5. To agree and to sign as a correct record the following minutes:

- LPC minutes for the meeting held on the 9 December 2024 (Pages 1999-2005).
The minutes for the LPC meeting on 9 December 2024 were **AGREED** and signed by the Chairman.

The following approved Minutes to be noted and adopted by the Parish Council:

- Planning Committee Meetings 25 November 2024 (Pages 689-691), 9 December 2024 (Pages 692-693) and 23 December 2025 (Pages 694-695).
- Environment Committee Meeting 14 October 2024 (Pages 443-448)

6. To receive updates on the boundary changes and make any necessary decisions. (SL/KO)

a. Mangravet Wood Option Agreement

The solicitor attended the meeting to address any further comments that councillors had on the option agreement. SL highlighted some queries from MW and the solicitor explained that these were standard provisions and wording for an option agreement. The agreement was signed by the VG on behalf of LPC and SL on behalf of North Loose Ltd.

b. Lease for Richmond Way

The LPC signatories on the transfer document (VG & AR) were advised by the solicitor that they will shortly receive electronic links to verify their identity. Once the identity checks are complete the transfer will be submitted for registration. The registration will take about six months. Action: VG & AR to complete identity checks.

7. To receive an update on the shed in Brooks Field. (KO)

KO has given the conveyancer the councillors' specific arrangements with regard to completing the necessary checks (in-person or electronically). Completed Politically Exposed Person (PEP) forms received by KO have been sent in. VB requested a PEP form. Action: KO.

8. To receive any reports from the Loose & Linton Ward Councillors. (BC & SW)

SW gave further information on devolution and its bearing on parishes. It is proposed that there will be a directly elected Mayor for Kent and Medway, with three or four unitary authorities. Our unitary authority is likely to be Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks, and will take responsibility for all matters such as highways, schools and social care. The elected representatives will be more remote as councillors will be fewer, reducing from 200 to about 80, and wards will be larger. Elections for May 2025 will be cancelled and County Councillors will continue to serve until "Kent" does disappear, but Borough Councils will finish in 2026 or 2027. Parishes need to be aware that they are likely to have a bigger role with matters being devolved directly from the unitary authority. Much could still change as boundaries remain under discussion. Maidstone will not exist as a borough, so decisions still need to be made about unparished areas. Council tax will be equalised across the four boroughs.

KCC have presented to government that they wish to take the Devolution Priority Programme. The Government should make their decision by early February.

SWebb clarified that KCC opted in September to look at priority status if it came forward. The letter arrived on 16 December 2024 giving 10 working days to submit an application for the Devolution Priority Programme by 10 January 2025. The request to postpone elections was made to give time to consult Kent and Medway on devolution, and to work on the necessary local government re-organisation, without a change in councillors or time lost to purdah.

JA asked how finances would filter down. SWebb explained that each unitary authority would have its own budget and the Mayor's budget would be separate. The potential impact on the precept and local residents was discussed. SWebb highlighted that there would be cost savings having less councillors and any issues between borough and county level working would be removed. Much is still to be decided and confirmed. VG thanked SW, BC and SWebb for the update and felt it was important that clear explanations should be made available for the public once decisions have been confirmed, explaining the impact at local resident level.

On other matters, SW will be attending the meeting regarding the noise issue in Westwood Road.

The no-whistle ban on the Cornwallis Academy artificial pitch has been lifted by MBC, but the usage is now restricted to 9pm and some additional sound-proofing should be installed.

The Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meeting on 15 January 2025 was cancelled due to audio link issues preventing remote attendance. A number of expected items on the agenda have been deferred to the March meeting. These include ANPR cameras and locations, and disclosure of the current situation with the funding of the integrated transport strategy. This relates to the money still available from the government and developers for the major junction schemes that have not proceeded. The 30mph scheme paper submitted by BC has been passed back to parish level. BC is trying to get further information on the flooding issue in Church Street by the re-scheduled JTB meeting on 12 February 2025.

9. To receive any reports from KCC Division Councillor Simon Webb. (SWebb)

SWebb requested he be kept updated and receive evidence on the Church Street issue to be able escalate to the Cabinet Member. The item continued to be discussed in item 12. Action: NB.

10. To receive any reports/information from the Community Warden Team.

NB and AB had attended a webinar about sponsoring a Community Warden and provided a summary. A Community Warden costs £45000 pa for 5 days a week including all employment on-costs. A Parish could sponsor for a minimum of one day (£9000). It was felt that anything less would not enable effective engagement with the community. The Community Warden would require a base. Parishes suggested ideas for alternative ways of working (E.g. just being able to contact a warden when a need arises, sharing with another Parish half a day each). The audience were continually reminded that the seminar was only about sponsoring a KCC-employed Community Warden as per their structure. NB advised waiting to see what develops. The Office are still able to contact the Community Warden Head Office if an individual need arises and also have support mechanisms through social prescribing teams, school Family Liaison Officers and the Police.

11. To receive any reports/information from the Police and from E-watch.

Beat Officer PC Harry Greenfield had provided a report. The main issues raised relate to parking and although he shares frustrations, as covered in previous meetings, he is limited to very specific circumstances only. These being when vehicles are blocking highways following road traffic collisions and or abandoned vehicles that block highways. Other than this, unfortunately police do not have powers to deal with parking.

Other issues raised concern people causing problems on the King George V Recreation Ground, Firstly, people on motorbikes on the field, which is an on-going battle across Maidstone. This issue is being managed to the best the Police can and CCTV from LPC has been helpful in identifying one of the bikes used in these issues across Loose and Mangraves/Parkwood.

Secondly, groups of undesirables “hanging out” in the park have been leaving litter, playing music or causing a general nuisance to the public. When on-duty, PC Greenfield is always keen to attend and deal with any offences and/or clear the groups off. Unfortunately, attendance from response patrols to incidents like the above is limited as 999 calls will always take priority.

Numerous other incidents cannot be disclosed such as domestic abuse incidents, missing people or mental health incidents.

PC Greenfield passed his thanks on to the parish team for the continued support with solving these issues. His area is one of the largest, if not the largest by way or number of parishes to

oversee and without support from the parish teams themselves, trying to combat any forms of crime would prove incredibly challenging.

E-Watch

- Mill Street, Loose: On Tuesday 31 December 2024 between 00:01 and 00:12. Somebody damaged a bus window in Mill Street, Loose. Crime Report No. 46/220633/24. Posted 3 January 2025.
- Bridge Street, Loose: Between 12:00 on Sunday 29 December 2024 and 20:00 on Thursday 2 January 2025. Somebody stole tiles from the roof of a residential property. Crime Report No. 46/2420/25. Posted 7 January 2025.
- Cripple Street: On Saturday 11 January 2025 around 12:05. A group of young people smashed a window of a residential property. Crime Report No. 46/5860/25. Posted 14 January 2025.
- Cripple Street: On Saturday 11 January 2025 around 10:52. Somebody smashed a window of a residential property. Crime Report No. 46/6292/25. Posted 14 January 2025.
- Linton Road: On Wednesday 15th of January around 05:52. Somebody stole fuel from a petrol station. They were in a blue Ford Focus. Crime Report No. 46/8124/25 Posted 17 January 2025.

12. To receive any questions/comments from the public or organisations.

(To include any letters/e-mails received by the Clerk from members of the public)

Church Street residents attended the meeting to express their extreme frustration at the lack of progress with the perpetual running water situation. There have been further accidents to pedestrians and a cyclist when the temperature dropped and the road became a sheet of ice. After surveys being carried out on Church Street by the KCC Land Drainage team in December, nothing further had happened despite chasing. NB advised that she has now received an update that there will be a meeting between the KCC Floods team and engineers on the survey findings on 21 January 2025.

The residents explained that the unaddressed issue is the change in the amount of water coming into the system since works were done by KCC Highways. BC and VG reiterated that regardless of the solution, the section of the highway is a continual hazard and remains a Highways issue. There is also damage to the buildings and the Kirkdale road surface all of which are in a conservation area. Should nothing be forthcoming from the survey, the residents wished to escalate the matter and would be engaging MP Katie Lam into the issue for support. VG advised that MP Katie Lam had been in contact wishing to meet with her Parish Councils and could be invited to visit the issue.

BC suggested the residents could table a question at the next JTB meeting on 12 February which KCC Highways must answer. AR highlighted the frustrations with getting any accountability at all. VG summarised the actions to be taken: NB to obtain the report findings and circulate; BC to advise the residents of the procedures for submitting a question to JTB; residents to submit a question by 5 February so that KCC have to give an answer; MP Katie Lam be requested to visit to view the issue; a complaint to be drafted to KCC at a high level regarding the amount of time, and the risks residents remain exposed to using the road whilst longer term solutions are investigated. SWebb agreed to ask questions at the full County Council meeting if he was provided with the report findings. Action: NB to provide all information.

A resident attended the meeting to highlight concerns regarding pavement parking issues along the Loose Road making it unsafe for pedestrians walking to the primary school. There is one specific vehicle which does not seem to move at all. She has contacted the Police but they are unable to help. BC advised that the Parish Council have been focusing on a number of parking

issues around the school and the wider parish. Parking restrictions (double yellow lines) were being proposed for a number of areas including this section of road and have been included in the LPC's revised Highways Improvement Plan. They will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting with the KCC Highways Improvement Partner Greg McNicoll. SWebb offered some funding from his member grant if required. NL agreed to research parking on the pavement laws and NB will contact PC Greenfield to discuss enforcement. Action: NL & NB.

Residents with an ongoing neighbour noise issue have sought further help. SW and NB will be supporting the residents at a meeting with the landlord on 28 January 2025. Action: SW & NB.

13. To agree the draft meetings calendar for 2025-6. (NB)

The draft calendar had been pre-circulated in response to staff and councillors wishing to put meeting dates in their diaries earlier than May. JA asked for a footnote to be included regarding planning meetings, which can start earlier if there are a larger number of applications on the agenda. AR asked that McAlpine Trust meetings are included. The Council **AGREED** the draft document with these amendments and will formally agree a final version at the May AGM. Action: NB

14. Risk: To receive and discuss any items of concern escalated by Councillors, Committees or the Office and make any necessary decisions:

a. To receive an update on the badger set issue in the Loose allotments (AR & NB)

AR, NB and AB attended a site meeting with an expert from Badger-gon. He viewed the issue from the allotments and from Brooks Field, explained the laws, possible actions and will send through a report of potential options. The priority is to resolve the risk issue of the collapsed hole on the boundary. The Council **AGREED** that the report should be circulated once received. Subsequent actions would be discussed at the next available meeting. The McAlpine Trust would need to be included in any decision making and they next meet in March. Action: NB to circulate report and add to the next meeting agenda.

b. To receive an update on actions from the Fire Risk Assessment (NL & NB)

An updated action sheet from the Fire Risk Assessment had been pre-circulated. The Office would like to thank NL for the time he has personally given to getting some of the short-term actions achieved. The exterior emergency lights will be completed on 22 January. NL and NB also met with a Kent Fire and Rescue Service adviser. The main tasks remaining are to further investigate segregating the electricity and gas sources in the store cupboard, and to seek further quotes and advice on installing a fire alarm system. Action: NB and NL.

15. To discuss the Loose Amenities Association (LAA) Duck Race and make any necessary decisions. (NB)

LAA are seeking LPC's permission to use Brooks Field once again for their annual Duck Race fundraising event. Set up would be on Sunday 25 May 2025, for the event on Bank Holiday Monday 26 May 2025. The format would be similar to previous years and all rubbish cleared from the site afterwards. After discussion the Council **AGREED** use of Brooks Field with the same conditions as last year. The relevant paperwork (the MBC Safety Advisory Group application and event risk assessment) should be submitted ahead of the April meeting (14 April 2025) for agreement by the Council. This should include an awareness of any new risks, particularly with the exposed stream bank after the conservation pond works project. As previously, LPC request a donation in respect of facility hire and LAA would need to fund any additional grass cutting required. Action: NB to advise LAA.

16. To agree the fete stallholder fees and the cancellation clause. (AB)

AB had pre-circulated the proposed stallholder paperwork for the 2025 Loose Fete and Dog Show on 14 June 2025. It contains a new cancellation clause, encourages electronic bank payment and stall fees have been kept the same at £25 for commercial individuals and businesses and £15 for community organisations and charities. The Council **AGREED** the stall fees and cancellation clause with minor wording amendments. Action: AB. As the necessity can arise for a decision to be made between meetings, the Council **AGREED** that any new decisions relating to the fete can be circulated to the Council for agreement by **ROUND ROBIN**. Action: AB.

17. To review the Enquiry, Concern and Complaints Spreadsheet. (NB)

A report on the enquiries, concerns and complaints received since the last meeting had been pre-circulated to councillors and was noted. An additional issue was received on 20 January 2025 concerning the road being blocked between Linton Road and Salts Lane by construction vehicles. Action: NB to investigate and monitor.

18. Promotion of Loose Parish Council & Articles. (JB)

Social media data had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting and noted. NB has been working on the settings for the mobile version of the website as some layouts were an issue. She asked that councillors continue to highlight anything they notice. The Office has now updated the website Pavilion calendar with enhanced information on each regular hirer.

19. Finance & Funding. (KO)

a. To ratify payments made on Appx A for for 20 January 2025.

The Appendix A was ratified by the Council. They were authorised by VG & CH.

b. To receive and to comment on the proposed budget for 25/26, and to set and agree the precept for the Loose Parish.

The Budget Calculations were circulated to Councillors. The Finance and Admin Committee met on 13 January 2025 and recommend the proposed precept be agreed. After discussion the Council **AGREED** the precept for 25/26 as follows:

- Increase of 3% (fiscal year 24/25 £155,000 next fiscal year 25/26 is £159,650)
- Increase in band D of 3.5% (fiscal year 24/25 £50.54 per year, next fiscal year 25/26 £52.31, a difference of £1.77 for whole year).

c. To receive a full record of accounts from the RFO.

The full accounts as at 13 January 2025 were circulated to Councillors and noted.

20. To receive and agree the McAlpine Trust accounts. (AR)

The accounts provided by AR had been pre-circulated to Councillors and were noted. The Council congratulated AR as the new Chair of the McAlpine Trust and for updating and producing the accounts.

21. To agree the format of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.

After discussion the Council **AGREED** the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on 24 March 2025 will follow the same format as 2024. There will be a Neighbourhood Plan display. The use of tables would be minimised to allow for a potential increase in attendees due to the increased parish size. Action: Office to proceed with the organisation.

22. To ratify any Round Robins since the last meeting on 18 November 2024.

The following **ROUND ROBIN** was ratified:

For Item 14b at the LPC meeting held on 9 December 2024, a **ROUND ROBIN** was sent on 13 December 2024: To agree a contractor for electrical works following the Fire Risk Assessment. A contractor was **AGREED** (VG, CH, JA, NL, AR, MW & SL).

23. Information Only.

- a. Greenway Public Right of Way (PROW) KB22B – KCC PROW have advised that they will take on the maintenance of the Greenway going forward, either by their maintenance team if budget permits, or using the Kent Ramblers volunteer force.

- b. The groundworks specification and new maps are almost complete and will be ready to go out to tender week beginning 27 January 2025. Action: NB

24. Next meeting of the LPC - 17 February 2025

The meeting ended at 9.30pm

Dated.....

Signature