

COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Cookham Parish Council
Held in the Community Room of the Library on Tuesday 7th January 2025

PRESENT: Cllrs. B. Perry (Chairman), R. Kellaway, M-L. Kellaway, L. Austin, C. Aisladie, M. Brar, H. Fleming, L. Austin, T. Caen, J. Edwards and J. Moore.

Also Present: Mrs. Deepa Kanthi (Clerk)
 Mr. David Jacobs, Mr. Andrew Hill and two other members of the public. No members of the press were present.

OPEN FORUM:

Mr. Jacobs explained he was an Architect working up a plan with Mr David Edmonson (landlord) at the care home site at Berries Road. He said that it is not practical to continue the care home on this site because it has 35 small bedrooms whereas legislative changes mean that care homes now need over 50 beds and larger room sizes. It is not viable to knock down and build a new compliant a care home of this size on this site. Accordingly, a proposal for a five apartment building and 3 detached houses had been prepared. The nearby residents and the Sailing club had been consulted, and the design maintained the style of adjacent buildings. No planning application had yet been submitted. He wanted to present the proposal to the Parish Council before submitting the application. He showed a number of drawings and answered questions.

Mr. A. Hill expressed his dis-satisfaction regarding the granting of planning permission in respect of the site AL37 at the Development Management meeting held on 19th December 2024. He highlighted several issues, such as writing to RBWM without receiving a response, additional speakers not being allowed to speak, insufficient time allocation and improper procedures. He questioned why the meeting hadn't been deferred and criticized the lack of public awareness regarding the Parish Council's stance on the application. Only minor changes were made, and the public had not been adequately engaged. Mr. Hill said that Mr. Strzelecki said that he had been told not to share his time, Cllr. M. Brar said that was not correct. Mr. A. Hill referenced communication that stat that the Cookham Society declined the offer to speak; this was not true. Mr. Hill urged the Parish Council to seek to review the decision and seek legal advice.

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllrs. N. Bedwell, E. Bune and L. Tull.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. C. Aisladie declared an indirect financial interest in item 10.

Cllr. M. Brar declared she would not be speaking on planning issues.

Cllrs. M. Brar, M. Howard, T. Caen and J. Edwards declared they were members of the Cookham Society. Cllr B. Perry declared that he was Chairman of the Cookham Society and accordingly would not vote on the motion he will propose under AOB simply to ensure debate. He is also the Principal of Bill Perry Law.

3. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 3rd December 2024

These were **approved**.

4. To receive, for information, minutes of committee meetings prepared since the last Council meeting

4.1 Finance Committee meeting, 3rd December 2024 - **Noted**

4.2 General Purposes Committee meeting, 17th December 2024 - **Noted**

5. **Matters arising from the meeting on 3rd December 2024 not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda**

There were none.

6. **Finance**

6.1 to approve payments/receipts to date as per the cashbook circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting - **Approved**

6.2 to ratify the cost of £957 of adding a hedge to Alleyns Lane allotment grazing field as discussed at the meeting on 3rd December 2024 - item 20.1 - **Approved**

6.3 to ratify the costs of leaving gifts for the locum clerk from general reserves - **Approved**

6.4 to ratify the costs of a first aid kit for the office from general reserves - **Approved**

6.5 to approve the shortfall in the costs of installing a fence in the Alleyns Lane grazing field not exceeding £50.00 from general reserves - **Approved**

7. **To approve the costs of work to trees T11, 12 and 13 in the Alfred Major Recreation Ground**

Cllr. H. Fleming suggested revisiting these quotes as some work has already been carried out. She would collaborate with the Clerk and requested deferment of this item until the next Council meeting.

Action: Cllr. H. Fleming and The Clerk

8. **To receive any update on the intention by Elegy Ltd to build a crematorium on Long Lane**

The Chairman reported the objection document he had drafted at Cllr Edwards' request had been circulated last week and then submitted to the Planning department at RBWM. It was noted that very few objections from members of the public were seen on the planning portal. Cllr. J. Edwards agreed to work with Cllr. A-L. Regan to encourage members of the public to submit their objections. It was also discussed that not all residents were aware of the project.

Action: Cllrs. J. Edwards and A-L. Regan

9. **To discuss and approve an application from the Cookham Village events team for a grant for a village picnic**

The Chairman mentioned that Page 1 was missing from the application form. Cllr A-L Regan said it was only formal information.

Cllr. A-L. Regan requested a £2,000 grant from the Council, highlighting that the event occurs every two years and is free for the community. She also asked for permission to use the Moor under the Bye-laws. She also mentioned that they hoped the event would become self-sustaining in future years. The event is scheduled for 4th May 2025 to mark VE Day.

It was agreed that the event could be hosted on the Moor subject to the details of the layout etc. being submitted and approved. On the grant, the Clerk explained that there was only £500 left in the budget for this year. Cllr. M. Howard suggested adding £1,000 from next year's budget and sanctioning a total donation of £1,500. The Chairman pointed out that the Council has already committed to £1,000 for the Scouts from next year's budget, leaving only £500 in next year, which might be needed for Christmas lights. The total grant of £1,500 **was approved** (£500 for this year and £1,000 from next year's budget). It was also decided that this should not set a precedent. It was suggested that a larger budget might be required next year.

Action: Clerk

10. To approve the terms of engagement for a Chief Commons Officer (“CCO”)

The Chairman explained that due to the new employment legislation the Chief Commons Officer (whose appointment had already been approved in principle) would be self-employed rather than a permanent employee, so the contract for that needed approval. The draft contract is currently with Just Employment Ltd., who may suggest minor amendments. **It was agreed** that the CCO may be appointed on the basis of the contract presented with such minor amendments as Just Employment may advise.

Cllr T. Caen left the meeting at 9.30pm

A motion that CCO should also cover the Alfred Major Ground was proposed by Cllr. R Kellaway and seconded by Cllr. H. Fleming and **approved**.

11. To receive an update from the Chairman relating to the proposal to install a new path to the side gate of the Heritage Centre with a view to approval under the Byelaws.

The Chairman reported that a note had been circulated to all Councillors regarding the proposal. The Chairman explained the location and explained that the proposed width of the path would be 2 metres. **It was agreed** that the path should be approved, but the width should be reduced to 1 metre if possible. Cllr. J. Edwards requested that Odney should be asked that the materials used should be eco-friendly and blend as far as possible with the surroundings, which was **agreed** unanimously. **Action: Chairman**

12. To receive an update from the Clerk concerning the letting agents for Cemetery Lodge

The Clerk explained that Prospect estate agents are performing well and charging a fee of 12%. She informed the Council that she had requested a couple more quotations and is awaiting responses. **It was agreed** that this item would be deferred to the next meeting in February 2025. **Action: Clerk**

13. To consider and approve changes to the rules relating to the cemetery to allow reservation of plots

The Chairman reported that work is in progress to gather more facts needed to discuss this item comprehensively. It was agreed to defer the item till the next Council meeting in February 2025. **Action: Chairman and Clerk**

14. To receive an update on the Cookham Rise School Lease

The Chairman explained that the draft had not been completed due to the Christmas/New Year holidays, but he was following up on this. He reported that the solicitors had, however, succeeded in registering the Council's title to the Alfred Major Recreation Ground. **Action: Chairman**

15. To receive and approve a report from the Chairman regarding the Neighbourhood Plan

The Chairman reported that the Regulation 16 consultation period began on 7th January 2025 and will run until 17th February. RBWM has decided to display copies of the documents, with response forms, at the Little Bookshop in the Village, the station waiting room, the Jolly Farmer, and Cookham Library, as well as the Parish office and Maidenhead Library. He did not know why they had decided against Costa Coffee. It was indicated that RBWM prefers to receive comments electronically where possible.

16. Outside Bodies and Borough Councillor reports including a report on the RBWM financial situation.

Cllr. M. Howard reported that the finances of RBWM are in a precarious state. Consequently, the Borough has approached the central government for assistance. The response is uncertain though it is hoped it will be successful. Residents are likely to see an increase in Council Tax of up to 25%, which will still leave council Tax among the lowest rates outside London.

17. Any other business (by permission of the Chairman and upon which no decisions may be made)

The decision made by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to approve the applications to build on the AL37/Cannondown Road site at the meeting held on 19th December was discussed. The Chairman reported that, following the decision of the Development Committee, the only recourse was to pursue a statutory/Judicial Review ("JR"). A provisional estimate of £6,000 plus VAT has been provided by Leading Counsel for the cost of obtaining this advice.

The Chairman moved (after accepting various amendments during debate) that the Council should:

Seek expert advice from Simon Watts, the Council's traffic specialist, on whether the standard software tool utilised by RBWM was unreasonable, and if employing an alternative software (as recommended by the expert) would have yielded a different outcome.

1. Obtain advice from Leading Counsel, through Bill Perry Law (whose services would be donated) on the prospects of success of a JR, in conjunction with the Cookham Society, appointing Cllr. M. Howard to engage with the Cookham Society regarding the division of fees with the Council, which would mitigate the overall cost.
2. Instruct Counsel also to advise on the likely costs of pursuing a JR.
3. Appoint the Emergency Working Party to consider Counsel Advice when received and whether to proceed with the JR, and to decide that (including the appointment of a firm of solicitors to conduct the JR) unless the legal timescale permitted the Council to decide this (the Chairman to consider calling an extraordinary Council meeting if possible).
4. To add consideration of site AL38/Strandark to this review.

After an extensive deliberation, the motion was agreed by 6 votes to 3 (the Chairman abstaining). Cllr. R Kellaway wished his disagreement to be minuted.

The meeting closed at 10.02pm

Next meeting Tuesday 4th February 2025 at 7.30pm in the Community Room at Cookham Library.

Signed as a true record of the meeting

.....Chairman

Dated.....