

Kingston Parish Council (KPC)

Minutes of Meeting Held at 7.30pm on 12th November 2024

Present

Sue Dagleish (SD) (Chair) (Clerk)

Miki Ellar (ME) (Parish Councillor)

Paul Wheeler (PW) (Parish Councillor)

Julie Conder (JC) (Vice-Chair)

Mark Nicholls (MN) (Parish Councillor)

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

1 Apologies

None

2 Approval of Previous Minutes of Parish Council Meetings

2.1 Minutes from Parish Council Meeting on 10th September 2024 approved and signed by SD.

2.2 Minutes from Extraordinary meeting on 8th October 2024 approved and signed by SD.

2.3 Minutes from Extraordinary meeting on 11th October 2024 approved and signed by SD.

3 County Councillor's Report – Report Attached (Appendix A)

4 District Councillor's Report – Nothing to Report

Matters Ongoing

5 Planning Application No 24/1200/TTCA – Tree Works – Walkers Field, Church Lane, Kingston.

The council's decision was to support this application to remove two dead trees.

6 Planning Application No 24/03923/HFUL – Solar Panel Installation – The Thatches, The Green, Kingston

The council's decision in respect of this application was neutral.

7 Cranes Lane/The Green – Surface water issues

We continue to have two blocked underground drains in Kingston - one is located in Cranes Lane and the other on The Green close to Green Lees. PW has been liaising with the county council to find a solution to this issue. PW has requested to be allowed to attend the Highways meeting planned for 12th December 2024 so that he can raise this issue at the meeting.

The Crawshaw family have been asked if they would be willing to continue their contribution this year towards maintenance work on the drainage ditch that runs between their property and parish council land to prepare the area for winter to help reduce the problem of surface water in times of heavy rain.

8 Play Park Repairs

PW advised that he has started to paint the goal posts in the play park. It was agreed that the parish council would purchase new goal nets as the existing ones have holes which have been patched for some time and now need to be replaced.

MN advised that fungi growth had been spotted in the bark below the climbing frame - as this could be toxic, the area has been treated with a vinegar and bicarbonate of soda solution which appears to be effective. We will continue to monitor the area - if this natural remedy is not successful in the longer term, we will consider a chemical treatment which will involve the area around the climbing frame being cordoned off and taken out of service for a period of time as the chemical treatment would be toxic.

9 Grass Services Contract Tender Update (PW)

PW advised that our new contractor has carried out the initial trial grass cutting and maintenance exercise in the village during October to prepare the village for the winter season. This has been carried out successfully and the contractor has confirmed that he is ready to take over the contract fully in spring next year.

10. 20MPH Speed Limit (PW)

It was agreed that we will continue to request that Kingston be considered for a 20 MPH speed limit in the next allocation of funding in the new year.

11. Open Spaces Report (MN)

MN reported that footpaths in the parish are currently in good condition. Landowners in the parish have trimmed their hedges and are maintaining footpaths in good order. A litter picking exercise has been carried out over the past couple of months.

There were reports of four instances of fly tipping in the village. The County Council has dealt with three of the reports however we are still awaiting action in respect of the fourth area of fly tipping in the lay-by at Church Lane. This will continue to be monitored.

The area at the Sweards was discussed - it was reported that the Willow trees are growing well. The recent grass and hedge maintenance visit has also covered the Sweards area - it is noted that the area close to the young willow trees continues to be left to grow naturally.

Matters Arising

12 Budget Setting 2025 (JC)

JC advised that she is working on initial predictions of possible budget figures for next year. This will be finalised once figures have been published for the rate of inflation and also the Bank D equivalent figure. In the meantime, JC will meet with SD to further discuss the individual elements of the budget.

13 New Parish Clerk Recruitment (SD)

SD reported that unfortunately we have not received any applications for the role of parish clerk despite placing a national advertisement with SLCC. We have also been unsuccessful in finding any applicants for the role of parish clerk locally. The closing date for applications for the national advertisement was set as 30th November 2024 to

allow time for anyone to consider applying. As there have been no enquiries following the advertisement it is felt that we are unlikely to receive any applications.

SD advised that if, after the application period closes on 30th November 2024, we have still not received any applications for the role of clerk she would be willing to stand down as chair and councillor and would take on the role of parish clerk. As part of the regulations covering this process SD would take on the role on an unpaid basis for a 12 month period.

It was discussed that if this was required then the parish council would need to recruit a new parish councillor and also elect a new Chair. PW indicated that he would be willing to take on the role of Chair if SD stepped down to take over the role of clerk if we are not successful in finding an applicant for the role following the close of applications on 30 November 2024. This topic will be discussed in more details at the next parish council meeting on 14 January 2025.

In the meantime, SD will continue to cover the role of parish clerk,

14 Combined Authority Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Bus Franchising Consultation (JC) – Appendix B

JC has prepared a response on behalf of the parish council to the franchising questionnaire which has been reviewed by all members of the parish council. The Council voted and agreed that this response would be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council. The aim of the consultation process is to determine the future direction and approach for the provision of bus services in the region.

15. East West Rail (SD)

Nothing to report - there are meetings planned for the 13th and 14th November 2024 which SD will attend and make a report to the January meeting of the parish council. It is thought there will be a series of drop-in meeting that will be held in the area in the New Year to provide residents with further details of the EWR project.

16. ESPO Street Lighting Renewal (SD)

SD advised that negotiations have now been completed for the cost of electricity for street lighting for the coming year.

As part of the government's project 434, the old system where we had 3 MPAN numbers for our electricity street lighting supply has now been updated so that we now only have one MPAN number for our street lighting services. This removes the possibility that we could be charged three separate daily standing charges – this was what happened under our previous supplier OPUS and resulted in high monthly bills.

We have been provided with a fixed one-year rate quotation for our street lighting of £79.96 – this is a very competitive figure and the parish council voted to accept this offer. Unfortunately we are not able to obtain a three year fixed rate quotation as our annual costs are now very low so ESPO was not able to find a supplier willing to provide a quotation. In the circumstances as the monthly cost has reduced considerably the parish council agreed to accept the one-year fixed rate deal offered by ESPO.

17. Field Road – Car Parking on Verges

The topic of cars parking on the grass verges was raised as it was noticed that a walking group parked there instead of using the official designated areas within the village. It was decided that the parish council website would be altered slightly to

increase the visibility of car parking instructions within the village for the benefit of walkers and other visitors.

The possibility of placing posts or other impediments to parking on verges was also mentioned. While the parish council was not averse to their use in principle, and sought to protect verges where possible, it was noted that they are not universally suitable. For example, passage along Field Row can be problematic if two vehicles driving in opposite directions use the narrow road simultaneously. Occasional manoeuvres onto the verge were unavoidable. Reversing onto the main road can be dangerous due to limited visibility.

It was agreed that the council would look to instal 2 foot high bollards on the triangle of land at the bottom of church lane to prevent vehicles driving over this area. PW will look into this matter. The Parish Council will continue to review the benefits of similar installations elsewhere.

18. Invoices Paid and for Approval

Company	Service	Date Paid	Amount	Paid by:
Metro Rod	Drain survey in connection with pipe blockage in village	17 September 2024	216.00	B/P
Unity Trust	Bank Service charge	30 September 2024	18.00	D/D
VHMC	Grant Contribution for solar panels on village hall roof	3 October 2024	500.00	B/P
P Wheeler	Expenses for repair work to posts in village car park	17 October 2024	19.98	B/P
SLCC	Advert for New Parish Clerk with SLCC	17 October 2024	192.00	B/P
Total Energy	Street Lighting Invoice Costs	18 October 2024	6.98	D/D
P Wheeler	Expenses for safety covers for swings at play park	21 October 2024	20.54	B/P
Public Works Loan Board	Village Hall Loan	31 October 2024	643.79	D/D
Unity Trust	Bank service charge – monthly (charging has been changed to monthly from quarterly by Unity Trust)	31 October 2024	5.40	D/D

All invoices agreed for payment.

24. Bi-monthly Report (JC) - See Appendix C

JC reported that the finances were as expected for the time of year.

25. Items for next meeting to be held on 14 January 2025

Continuation of items covered in this meeting.

26. A.O.B

26.1 Invoice for Cambridgeshire ACRE membership – the parish council agreed to continue membership of this organisation for the upcoming year.

26.2 The topic of maintenance of trees in the village orchard was raised – it was thought that as several trees are getting older and based on the fact that we have had fallen branches in times of bad weather, a survey should be arranged to look at the condition of the trees in The Orchard so that the council can plan and budget for on-going maintenance of The Orchard. PW to obtain a survey cost.

The question of land registration of the Orchard was also raised and it was agreed that MN will look into this area.

The meeting finished at 9.54pm.

Minutes reference: 20241112

Signed:

Date:

Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton) Cllr Michael Atkins October 2024

Highlights

- Quality of Life Survey
- LHI 25/26 round opens
- EWR Consultation
- Climate Action Fair
- Improving the High Street Grants
- Contact information

News from the County

Quality of Life survey

The results of the latest Quality of Life survey across the County have been published. Residents continue to feel (on the whole) happy and safe in the County, and there has been a welcome reduction in the incidence of mental and physical health issues. However, cost of living remains a concern for nearly all residents, with half of residents using less heating and a quarter cutting back on nutritious food.

Budget

The Council's budget continues to present challenges, with an in-year forecast deficit of £10m, rising to nearly £40m for the next year. This experience is now sadly common across rural County Councils as they struggle with the demands of Adult and Children's Social Care, School Transport and Children's education and health care plans. Work is underway once again to identify savings and efficiencies ahead of the budget meeting in February.

Cambridge Rd, Coton/Madingley Rd nighttime closure

I have been told to expect that engineering works will take place at the Cambridge/Madingley Rd junction starting early November, with temporary signals during the day and closure at night. This is to replace the temporary/trial barriers with a more permanent solution

Mill Road Bridge (Cambridge)

Following legal challenge, the issue of closing the Mill Road Bridge returned to the County Council and has again been approved. A bus gate will be installed this month; blue badge holders can register up to two vehicles for exemption here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/mill-road-bus-gate-blue-badge-application-exemption>

Net zero 2030 – on track

The Council is on track to reach its net zero 2030 goal. Direct emissions from the Council's assets and operations have reduced by 42% over the last six years. This has been achieved through an effective programme of retrofit works and low carbon heating projects.

LHI 2025/26 round open

The application window for the next round of LHI schemes has now opened, and will close on 10th January. There will also be a drop-in session to ask questions on the 28th of November 2024 – please let me know if you would like an invite.

News from GCP, Combined Authority & Gov't

East-west Rail Consultation – opens 14th November

The delayed non-statutory consultation on East West Rail will open on 14th November. Materials and information will be made available here: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>

There will be in person events as follows:

Great Shelford, [Shelford Rugby Club](#), 22 November 2024, 2pm - 7pm

Cambourne, [Cambridge Belfry](#), 3 December 2024, 2pm - 7pm

Comberton, [Comberton Village Hall](#), 10 January 2025, 2pm - 7pm

I have previously signed a declaration opposing the southern alignment for EWR (from Camborne to Cambridge South) because of the direct impact on villages in our area, and also raised broader concerns about the use of diesel trains, the economic rationale, and the lack of benefits for local residents. I will be interested to see how/if the plans have changed when the materials are published this month.

Cambridge South East Transport project (CSET)

The County Council have agreed by vote to apply for a Transport & Works Act Order for the CSET Busway between Cambridge Biomedical Campus and a new Travel Hub near the A1307/A11, via the Shelfords and Stapleford. We expect this to go to public enquiry before a final decision by the Secretary of State.

Bus Franchising Consultation

The Combined Authority is seeking views on possible bus franchising – please respond at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>. There will also be two virtual events next week.

News from the District

Climate action fair

A reminder that the Climate Action Fair will be open 19th November from 5.30 to 8pm at the Hub in Cambourne. All are welcome at this 'marketplace' style event.

Improving the High Street grant

The Council has £200,000 to distribute for local high streets to improve the look and desirability of trading there. Parish Councils and small local businesses are all eligible to apply here:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/improving-the-high-street-grant>

Christmas Market

This year's Christmas Market will be at Cambourne Village College on 7th December, with 100 traders across three halls from 11am to 3pm. This has been a very successful and popular event in recent times so do come along!

Increased Council tax on Vacant and Second homes

The Council is considering using newly awarded powers to double Council Tax on long-term vacant or second properties. This is to encourage owners to sell or rent their properties and so alleviate an element of the local housing shortfall. We estimate there are 3000 such properties in the district. There are important exemptions including where homes are being actively marketed for sale or rent, as part of probate, are periodically occupied in job-related circumstances, or are undergoing significant renovation.

If approved in November full council this will come into force in April 2026.

Pilot Employment Hubs

3 Hubs are now in place to support people who have been unemployed due to long-term physical or mental health condition. Our nearest is located in Melbourn and is being delivered by Citizens Advice. There is no pressure to find employment but a focus on helping people in their journey back to work.

Contact Details

Councillors and residents are welcome to contact me on any issue which is concerning them:

<p>Cllr Michael I. Atkins matkinslibdem@gmail.com 07968 264637</p>

Appendix B

Bus Franchising Consultation Aug-Nov 2024

Short Questionnaire responses, Kingston Parish Council

Question S1

Do you have any comments generally on how well bus services are currently performing in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

Current bus services are not fit for purpose, and are especially unusable for rural communities. Buses cannot be relied on to take people to locations they need to visit at the times they need to be there. Most local people will therefore choose alternative modes of transport and not risk trying to travel by bus. Often, there is simply no bus option whatsoever.

Question S2

The Strategic Case says that reforming the bus market is appropriate to address the challenges facing the local bus market. Do you have any comments on this?

Kingston Parish Council supports the conclusions of the Strategic Case that the Franchising model is more likely than the Enhanced Partnership ("EP") model to achieve the specified objectives. The control and centralised approach offered by Franchising seems the best way to introduce an integrated transport network. The point that only Franchising will permit the cross-subsidy from profitable services to support others is particularly relevant to rural communities where passenger numbers may not be sufficient to return a profit on the services needed to ensure 'rural connectivity'.

Question S3

The Economic Case says that Franchising offers better value for money to the Combined Authority than an Enhanced Partnership. Do you have any comments on this?

We are encouraged to see that both EP and Franchising models offer positive economic benefits. We have no further comment on the forecasts, scenarios and assumptions used as this is a job for specialists with detailed knowledge. We note that the assessment has been independently audited.

Question S4

The Commercial Case says that the Combined Authority would be better able to meet its commercial objectives (success factors) through Franchising compared to an Enhanced Partnership? Do you have any comments on this?

We note that only a Franchising model would give the Combined Authority ("CA") the ability to decide which bus routes to run. We find this to be of great importance for rural communities such as ours. The perceived threat that routes might be dropped by

commercial operators with little warning means great anxiety for people whose employment/education/healthcare opportunities rely on having a bus service.

Question S5

The Financial Case says that Franchising carries more financial risk for the Combined Authority than an Enhanced Partnership, but offers greater control, resulting in greater benefits. Do you have any comments on the Combined Authority taking on this risk?

We are encouraged to see that both EP and Franchising models are deemed to be affordable by the CA. We have no further comment on the forecasts, scenarios and assumptions used in these calculations as this is a job for specialists with detailed knowledge. We note that the assessment has been independently audited.

Question S6

The Management Case sets out how the Combined Authority would manage the bus network under Franchising or an Enhanced Partnership. Do you have any comments on these plans?

We are encouraged to see that both EP and Franchising models are deemed to be deliverable by the CA. We have no further comment on the Management Case but note that the assessment has been independently audited.

Question S7

The Combined Authority's draft Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) identifies the potential impacts of the proposed Franchising Scheme or Enhanced Partnership on people with protected characteristics. Do you have any comments on it?

The Equality Impact Assessment mentions the impact on users of the need to access technology eg through smartphones, to get information about services and to make payment to use these services. We believe the provision of offline alternatives is crucial to enable potentially disadvantaged groups such as the elderly and the disabled to fully benefit from bus services, and that greater emphasis should be given to this. Would Franchising, if it gives greater control to the CA, enable the CA to demand that full offline provision is made for access to information?

Question S8

To what extent do you support or oppose the introduction of the proposed Franchising Scheme?

Strongly support

Tend to support ←**

Neither support nor oppose

Tend to oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Question S9

Are there any changes that you think would improve the proposed Franchising Scheme?

No comments.

Question S10

Do you have any further comments?

It is of concern that the Franchising model would mean the CA taking on greater financial risk. This is a certainty. The anticipated benefits however are not so certain. They are expressed as "aspirations" and "objectives". We would like to see some concrete examples of how this is expected to work in practice eg new routes, or timings on existing routes. We would like a clearer view of how the proposed new models would bring specific benefits to our community in Kingston.

APPENDIX C

Kingston Parish Council

Financial report 31 October 2024

N.B. All figures exclude VAT

Item	Budget 2024/25 £	Expenditure YTD £	Budget minus expenditure YTD £	Additional Information
Grass and Hedge cutting - Expenditure	2,914	1,780	1,134	2 invs Buchans (£968); lawnmower hire
Grass and Hedge cutting - Income	(311)	(305)	(6)	Fasnacloich and County Council
Insurance	467	300	167	New insurer
Clerk's salary	3,101	497	2,604	2 months
Grants (section 137)	850	500	350	Solar panels village hall. To pay: Churchyard maintenance, fixed £850
Village Hall upgrade	1,288	1,288	0	PWLB 2 of 2 tranches paid
Audit fees	78	80	(2)	
Village asset maintenance	1,035	1,291	(256)	Defibrillator pads; bus shelter cleaning last yr; RoSPA inspection; tree surgery £1k
Subscriptions	569	396	173	Paid: ICO, CAPALC, one.com
Parish Magazine	862		862	
Footpath lighting	353	113	240	New supplier
Miscellaneous and expenses	1,000	468	532	allotments rent paid to SCDC; village hall hire last yr; bank charges; job ad
Income other than precept	(488)	(452)	(36)	interest; ditch clearance receipt
Total	11,718	5,956	5,762	

Bank balances	Current account:	704	see below
	Deposit account:	25,034	
At 31 October 2024		25,738	

Reconciliation of bank balances

Balances brought forward	Current account:	3,465	
	Deposit account:	16,357	
At 01 April 2024		19,822	
Net expenditure as above		(5,956)	
Other items:	Precept income	11,718	
	VAT refund received	849	For financial year 2023-24
	VAT incurred on net expenditure 2024-25	(695)	To be recovered
At 31 October 2024		25,738	As above