



Alton Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 8th January 2025 at 7pm

Present: Councillor J. Shepherd (Chair), Councillor R. Wood, Councillor E. Brindley, Councillor P. Ballard, Councillor N. Moulton (SMDC), Cllr Worthington (SCC).

Guests: Councillors M. Deaville (SCC), K. Flunder (SCC).

Mr S.J. Burton (Clerk).

No public.

Apologies: Councillor P. Gwinnett (Vice Chair), Councillor N. Conway, Councillor A. Dronzek, Councillor H. Kelsall.

Cllr Shepherd declared the meeting open at 7pm.

1/25. Declarations of Interest.

- i. None.

2/25. Talk and presentation by County Councillors Mark Deaville and Keith Flunder on highways issues.

- i. Cllr Deaville gave an introduction and overview of the work he and Cllr Flunder together with their teams are undertaking to improve the road network in Staffordshire, including the Moorlands and Alton, with the links to parish councils. Whilst he acknowledged there is still a lot of work to do, he reported over 30,000 potholes repaired since last March and also much work to repair and clear gulleys, having increased the number from 3-4,000 a month to 8,000. With over 5,000 miles of road network in Staffordshire there is a structured approach to all work.
- ii. Cllr Flunder then explained his role with responsibility in the north of the county and gave a presentation on the methods for tackling road maintenance, explaining there has been a 20% improvement over this time last year and mentioning that finance should now be secure for 3 to 4 years.
- iii. From 14th January this year the council website will allow multiple defects to be reported at the same time and repairs such as potholes will be improved by completing 'whole place' repairs, i.e. repairing potholes as a group and not individually where several potholes appear together. Cllr Deaville stated he would continue to lobby to get as much money and value for money for emergency repairs as he can.
- iv. Cllr Wood asked several questions on behalf of the council.
 - a. **How is SCC Highways' partner Amey driving value into the contract to maintain roads?** Cllr Deaville outlined the services Amey provide, the quality measures in place and how they are held to account for their work.
 - b. **Why do Highways Inspectors sometimes drive a route marking all defects with 'white circles', but there is no follow up - the white circles wear off with no action taken? Isn't this practice a complete waste of the Inspectors time and vehicle cost?**



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Could the inspectors do minor pothole repairs themselves? Cllr Deaville stated he would take that idea back with him for consideration.

- c. **Why allocate finance on the preventative treatments programme to surface dressing low usage roads, for example housing estates, instead of main roads?** Cllr Deaville stated he took the point and would also take that away with him.
 - d. **How can Alton PC help?** Cllr Deaville stated that the work already being done by liaising with Cllr Worthington (SCC) and using Cllr Flunder as a point of contact. Cllr Flunder will supply a contact list to the clerk. **Action: Cllr Flunder.**
 - e. **Is there any attempt to educate farmers to maintain drainage ditches on their land to prevent flooding?** Cllr Deaville stated that talking to farmers and other people who for example do not cut back their hedges is best, although if that does not work matters can be escalated with letters and if necessary environment officers can visit.
- v. There being no other questions Cllr Shepherd thanked Cllrs Deaville and Flunder for attending the meeting and this item of business was concluded.

3/25. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th December 2024.

- i. The minutes of the above meeting were declared a true record proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Wood and agreed by all and were signed by the Chair and the clerk.

4/25. Matters arising.

- i. The clerk confirmed he has asked the lengthsman to repair/maintain some of the benches in the parish (minute 185/24 i).
- ii. The clerk confirmed he has informed the lengthsman that his rates will be increased by 5% from April this year (minute 185/24 ii).
- iii. The first meeting of the Section 106 funding group will be arranged over the next few weeks by Cllr Shepherd in consultation with the clerk. **Action: Cllr Shepherd.**

5/25. Alton Towers.

- i. Nothing for this item of business.

6/25. Footpaths.

- i. Nothing for this item of business.

7/25. Village Hall.

- i. Nothing for this item of business.

8/25. Lengthsman.

- i. Cllr Wood stated that the planter by the Alton sign on the Denstone to Alton Road needs to be removed as it is rotten. **Action: the clerk to task the lengthsman.**

9/25. Highways and Road Safety.

- i. Cllr Wood reported that some work on roads is due from 20th to 24th January.
- ii. Cllr Shepherd reported that the black and white railings at the bottom of New Road are damaged. **Action: The clerk to report.**
- iii. Cllr Moulton reported that a hedge in Nabb Lane grows into the road every year. Cllr Shepherd stated it will be reviewed later in the year when it starts to grow.



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10/25. Parish Cemetery and St. Peter's Church Yard.

- i. One mole hill has appeared in the cemetery. **Action: Cllr Shepherd to attend.**

11/25. Planning and Licensing Applications.

- i. SMD/2024/0571. Mr A Startin, AJS Rees Developments. Woodbine Cottage Saltersford Lane Alton. Change of use of annexe to holiday let. Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Wood seconded that the council object on the same grounds as the previous application, vis, Alton Parish Council object on the following grounds which were included in the decision notice for granted planning permission for application SMD/2022/0290 relating to Woodbine Cottage and Alterations to the same outbuilding in association with conversion to ancillary living accommodation 'The development hereby permitted and described above shall only be occupied and used by members of the household or family that occupy the existing dwelling at Woodbine Cottage; or, a guest of that household or family, during a temporary period where the occupant has their main residence elsewhere. The dwellinghouse described above shall not be used or occupied by persons who do not have that specified connection to the existing dwellinghouse, or in any other way that is outside of those restrictions, and it shall not be let, sold or otherwise separately disposed of as a property independent of the existing dwelling at Woodbine Cottage.

Reason:- It has not been demonstrated that the dwellinghouse is able to provide an appropriate standard of living condition for persons that do not have a pre-existing connection or association with the occupation and use of other adjacent land and buildings.'

12/25. Planning decisions.

Nothing for this item of business.

13/25. Section 106 funds for playing field and play area update.

- i. There was no update for this item.

14/25. Parish Council Updates.

- i. **Round House-update.** The clerk reported that the additional sum for the insurance for the Round House is £171.11. Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Ballard seconded that the quote be accepted, this was carried. **Action: The clerk to arrange payment.**
- ii. The clerk stated the lawn mower which was sold sometime ago is no longer on the insurance.

15/25. Correspondence requiring response.

- i. Email from SMDC re the precept. Precept requirement has been submitted by the clerk.

16/25. Correspondence for Information.

- i. Email from Highways re Gallows Green-road sign overgrown.
- ii. Email re Best Kept Village-circulated.
- iii. Staffordshire Societal Resilience Summit invite-circulated.



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- iv. Email to the lengthsman advising the benches that require maintenance and that a 5% increase in his rates/charges has been approved.
- v. Suspension of brown bin collections due to the weather-SMDC email. Also placed on the Alton Facebook page. (circulated).

The clerk read out the correspondence.

17/25. Finance.

- i. Precept 2025/26 submitted to SMDC £18,086.25 (increase 5%). Charge for band D property raised by 1.08%
- ii. Clerk salary £452.95
- iii. Buxus Green invoice December £689.79 (paid).
- iv. Interest income £37.79
- v. Authorised payments were signed off by the Council.
- vi. Current bank balances were presented to the Council.

The finances were read out by the clerk to the meeting.

There being no other business the meeting was closed by Councillor Shepherd at 8pm.

Signed..... Chairman Wednesday 12th February 2025

Signed..... Clerk