

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M7/2023

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL
AT 19:30 ON 10 JULY 2023

PRESENT: David Richardson (Chairman) DR
Martin Smith, Paul Stubbs (Councillors) MS/PS

IN ATTENDANCE: T. Charlesworth; (Clerk/RFO) Clerk/RFO
Three parishioners.
Village Hall Bookings Clerk.
District Cllr. J. Nedeclu

1. APOLOGIES: Cllr. R. Gurprashad and District Cllr. G. Coton.
2. PARISH COUNCIL:
 1. Election of Vice-Chairman: No volunteers.
 2. Vacancies/Co-option: None.
 3. To Receive Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: None.
 4. Merton Village Neighbourhood Plan:
 - a. Joint Neighbourhood Plan: Ongoing; land that has been identified in the draft is not under threat of flooding. MS
 5. Civility & Respect Pledge:
 - a. To consider passing a resolution to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge: Whilst the Parish Council has resolved to sign up in principal it needs to review.
 - b. To Review Statement and proposed policies: The Parish Council needs to put in place a training programme for councillors and staff to be able to complete the statements. All
 6. Policies: Reviews:
 - a. Internal Controls Policy:

RESOLVED:

 - To readopt the Internal Controls Policy with no amendments, as a working document.
 - b. Freedom of Information Scheme:

RESOLVED:

 - To approve the adoption of the updated Draft Freedom of Information Scheme.
 7. Asset Register: Clerk to be advised how many Cricket Bat Willow Trees needs to be entered into the Asset Register. MS/Clerk
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:
 - a. The Chairman welcomed those parishioners present, the Village Hall Bookings Clerk and District Cllr. J. Nedeclu; the following matters were discussed:-
 - i. Neighbourhood Plan: Potential land identified for housing and gift of land to the village; this had previously been proposed to the then Parish Council pre Covid. Owner prepared to revisit planning if the Parish Council is supportive.
 - ii. Poultry Farming: Health issues surrounding farming; the Parish Council offers its support where it can help.
 - iii. Defibrillator: The Parish Council advised that it took the decision to position the Defibrillator on the end of the village hall as positioning it in the bus shelter presented safety issues. It is working independently to the village hall electricity supply, which is currently isolated. The Parish Council needs to confirm its registration with the Health Authority; instruction for use is clear.
 - iv. Village Hall Bookings Clerk:
 - Bicester Football Team have made an enquiry; see 5.2b
 - Launton FC: Awaiting confirmation of costs and T & C; see 5.2a
 - Campers & Caravanners booking; They need to be advised in good time if the Village Hall is not going to be accessible.
 - v. District Cllr. J. Nedeclu: The Chairman welcomed Cllr. Nedeclu to the meeting; he reported:-
 - Following the elections C.D.C. have had to hand over management to CEO; Conservatives have twenty seats and Liberal Democrats and Green Party have fourteen seats.
 - Bus Programme with Oxford Coaches: Travel cost remains at £2.00 until 31 October 2023 and from November it will be £2.50; it will be renegotiated in January.
 - C.D.C. is a thousand pound under budget whereas O.C.C. Is in trouble financially.
 - 'Go Green' there is a criteria for funding; O.C.C. is currently replacing street lighting with LED bulbs.

The Chairman thanked those in attendance for their contributions before they left the meeting with the exception of the Bookings Clerk who remained.

4. MINUTES:
 1. That the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 26 June 2023 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. David Richardson.
5. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
 1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
 - a. Play Area:
 - i. RoSPA Report: Action; to replace some missing bolt covers; C/fwd. DR/MS
 2. Recreational Area:

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- a. Launton Junior Football Club: The Parish Council needs more information regarding sessions and matches in order to be able to draw up T & C's and costs; this will also be reviewed if the club helps mark out pitches and erect the new posts.

- b. Bicester FC – The team have been made aware that the toilets are currently out of use

RESOLVED:

- That the Bicester FC could hold training sessions on a Thursday evening 7-9pm at £25.00 per session with the possibility of random matches; Launton FC to be asked if they would help mark up the pitches and new goal posts.

3. Village Hall:

- a. Flooding: The Parish Council is still waiting for an update.
- b. Roof Insulation: Flooding works need to be completed before a review can take place.
- c. Village Hall Cleaner: Contract and job description: In hand. The cleaner confirmed that she is self employed. The Parish Council need to put in place a Risk Assessment for the position. All
- d. Damaged drain/manhole cover at end of Village Hall Driveway: The manhole cover cannot be identified; damage is to the surrounding concrete and as such the Parish Council have taken responsibility to repair.

RESOLVED:

- That the concrete be replaced to the value of £20.00 for a bag; to be reimbursed. PS

4. Woodland:

- a. Cricket Bat Willows: It has now been established that the Cricket Bat Willows were supplied free of charge by J. S. Wright & Sons as a gentleman's agreement and are owned by the Parish Council as owner's (owners) of the Woodland. The company recently visited the woodland and as a result the Woodland volunteers will review the maintenance of the trees.

MS/Clerk

6. COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Merton PC Facebook Page:

- a. To consider matters for publication: Various items of interest had been published.
- b. Agenda published on Facebook page.

7. COMMUNITY:

1. Planning Applications: None recorded.
2. Decision Notices: None recorded.
3. Withdrawal Notices: None recorded.
4. Planning Matters:
 - a. O.C.C. - Oxford United's proposals for the land known as 'The Triangle': No comments recorded.
5. Traffic Calming: Working Group to arrange a meeting.
 - a. 40mph buffer zone: No update.
6. Poultry Farming: Health Issues: See 3-a-ii: Clerk

8. FINANCE:

1. Receipts:

- a. Petty cash and Bookings: June 2023: None recorded. There is an event booked on the recreational ground and the Caravan & Campers are to be kept informed with regard to access to the village hall and water supply.
- b. Clerk advised that a VAT Reclaim has been submitted to HMRC for £994.00.

2. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting:

- a. Street Solutions UK - £624.96 – Inv. No: 'D5629 – Purchase of dog bins as previously agreed, noted that a reduction had been secured so cost slightly less than book price.

3. Accounts for Payment:

RESOLVED:

- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-

- a. Clerks Pay/Exp. June 2023 - £176.05
- b. M.R. And J.S. Cross – 187 - £504.00 (Grass cutting and strimming Recreation Ground 1.6.2023/14.6.2023) – 188 - £156.00 (Grass Cutting Woodland 23.6.2023) – Total £684.00; noted that the cost now reflects the quote for 2023/24 season. Contractors advised that the Parish Council only requires that Merton Woodland and the Recreational Ground be cut once a month with no cuts during very dry spells.

- To carry forward the following:-

- c. Lock & Key Centre – Safe & Installation £295.00 plus VAT and two large fire pouches £30.00 plus VAT: Order has been processed; payment approved on receipt of invoice and verification.
- d. Contribution to MPCC: No written request received: C/fwd.

4. Quotes:

- a. Hot Water tank: ASHP element £72.00 plus DPD: See b.
- b. Village Air Source Heating: See 3a/b. PS
- c. Local Administration (formerly known as Charles Arnold Baker after the author) 13th Edition – SLCC members purchase price £137.00 plus £4.00 postage plus VAT.

RESOLVED:

- To approve shared cost with Blackthorn Parish Council; Merton PC to reimburse Blackthorn PC if the cost cannot be paid by two separate invoices.

5. Funding:

- a. County Councillor – Offer of funds to support projects in Merton Parish: The application process has re-opened; PC to look at the possibility of applying for insulation.
- b. TOE: TOE and supported by funds from Grondon Waste Management Ltd as part of the Landfill Communities Fund: To be reviewed as possibility of funding for the Woodland. All

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6. Training: Consider/approve any training costs: The Clerk informed the Parish Council that she had completed and achieved the FILCA training which Blackthorn PC had paid for but, both councils benefit from. Blackthorn PC have also agreed an amount that the Clerk/RFO can commit to training and to that ends will write up a policy for training so that opportunities are not missed.

RESOLVED:

- That the PC would also write a policy for training; which would reflect a shared cost/training opportunities with Blackthorn PC.
7. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
- a. Budget Comparison: The following noted, otherwise in-line with budget.
- i. Payments:
- Clerks overtime over budget £1,399.72
 - Open Spaces – Purchase of Dog Bins – Over budget £474.98 - £153.51 covered by the balance of COMF Grant.
 - Admin - Internal Audit – Over budget £65.00 – Late submission charge.
- ii. Receipts:
- Village Hall - £965.40 – Transfer from Village Hall Account/committee – Earmarked for 'Special Projects' – not budgeted for.
- b. Bank Reconciliation accepted and approved: 1.1.2023 – 31.3.2023:- (Unity Trust St. No: 020 – 30.6.2023):
- Balance B/fwd: £28,996.31
 - Add Receipts: £11,052.90
 - Less Payments: £ 3,304.46
 - Total C/fwd: £36,744.75
- i. Verification by Internal Financial Controller Cllr. M. Smith: Invoices checked against list of payments.
- c. Balance Sheet:
- Debtors £ 1,433.21
 - Cash Bank £36,716.75
 - Cash Float £ 28.00
 - Funds £31,175.67
 - Creditors £ 1,412.00
 - General Fund £ 5,590.24
8. End of Year Accounts 31 March 2023/24:
- a. All required documents as required for the Audit and Transparency Code were published on the website by the 1 July 2023.
- b. Certificate of Exemption: Submitted to External Auditor before 1 July 2023.
- c. Publication of Exercise of Public Rights: Published on 30 June 2023 open from 1 July 2023 – 10 August 2023 (this includes the first ten days of July and for thirty working days).
- d. Actions from Internal Audit Report:
- i. Payroll: The Parish Council will have to complete the Basic PAYE Tool as a new Employer; it also needs to register with the Pension Regulator.
 - ii. Pension Regulator: See a.
 - iii. Document Management: To action.
 - iv. Generic Emails: Clerk to confirm names of councillors.
 - v. Risk Assessment Review following Practitioners Guide: To action.
 - vi. Petty Cash Controls -

RESOLVED:

- That the Parish Council would not close the petty cash account held for the Village Hall.
 - vii. Asset Controls: All Deeds and Titles established and shown on register: In hand.
9. GENERAL:
1. Clerks Contract and Job Description: C/fwd. DR
2. Correspondence: To note correspondence received not otherwise on the agenda:
- a. MPC322(14) Zurich Municipal - Merton Parish Council, When were your buildings last valued?
 - b. MPC325 (44) Ray Valley Forum: Thursday 29th June at 6.30pm @ Murcott Parish Hall, OX5 2RE.
 - c. MPC325(58) Oxfordshire GNS Coordinator Volunteer Link Up - OGNS Feedback and Poster
 - d. MPC325(61) OALC - OALC June update for member councils
 - e. MPC325(63) CPRE - June Newsletter: Stop Botley West Scoping Report; Online Hedgerow Event.
3. Matters for Further Information or Discussion:
- a. Budget 2024/25. Agenda

10. NEXT MEETING:

1. 11 September 2023 – 7.30pm - Parish Council Meeting:

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 20:46.

Minutes approved 11 September 2023 – Minute Ref: M8/2023 – 4.1 – with an amendment to 5.4-a 'owner's' should read 'owners' – Initialed by Chairman.

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman : *D. Richardson*

Date: 9 September 2023.