

# THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M1/2024

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL  
AT 19:30 ON 9 JANUARY 2024

PRESENT:	David Richardson Martin Smith, and P. Stubbs.	(Chairman) (Councillors)	DR MS/PS
IN ATTENDANCE:	T. Charlesworth; Two parishioners.	(Clerk/RFO)	Clerk/RFO
	Village Hall Bookings Clerk W. Mead.		WM

1. APOLOGIES: Accepted from Cllr. R. Gurprashad due to work commitments and County Cllr. C. Miller.
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST: To receive declarations of interest from councillors in relation to matters on the agenda and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct: None declared.
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The Chairman welcomed those parishioners present; the following matters were discussed/raised:-
  - a. Village Hall Reopening: The Parish Council advised that this was still unknown.
  - b. Traffic Calming: No update.
  - c. Village Hall Bookings Clerk: Informed the Council that campers/caravanners are provisionally booked for March and recurring general village hall booking enquiries are being received; the hall will also be required for the local elections in May.

*The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting! Members of the public left the meeting with the exception of the Village Hall Bookings Clerk.*

4. MINUTES: To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 December 2023 at 7.30pm previously circulated.  
**RESOLVED:**
  - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 December 2023 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. David Richardson.
5. REPORTS:
  - a. Chairman's Report: None.
  - b. Clerk's Report: None.
6. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:
  1. Consider any applications: None.
7. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
  1. Civility & Respect Pledge:
    - a. Draft Statement: To be considered and approved: C/fwd.
    - b. Registration: C/fwd; Cllr. R. Gurprashad reviewing.
  2. Generic Emails: Current email set up will continue unless the 'law' requires differently.
  3. Policies: Reviews:
    - a. Expenses Policy: Review: To be circulated for consideration at the next meeting
  4. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents:
    - a. Review Effectiveness of Internal Audit: Circulated prior to meeting, to be reviewed for consideration at next meeting.
    - b. Review of Internal Audit: Circulated prior to meeting, to be reviewed for consideration at next meeting; the Clerk advised that she was awaiting confirmation from the current Internal Auditor that she is to continue with the parish council's audit for 2023/24.
    - c. Asset Register: All Deeds and Titles to be established and shown on register; it was noted that certain restrictions apply to the Woodland tenancy to be shared with the Woodland Working Group.
    - d. Risk Assessments: Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers: Review following Practitioners Guide: To be reviewed for consideration at the next meeting.
    - e. Financial Regulations: To be reviewed for consideration at the next meeting.
8. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
  1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
    - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: C/fwd.
  - b. Play Area:
  2. Recreational Area:
    - a. Launton Junior Football Club: The Club has been advised of the Parish Council's decision which has been understood and accepted.
    - b. Leasing of the Playing Field: Launton Junior FC may be interested in using on an ad-hoc basis.
    - c. Flooding: Update on works by Belfor UK: Date for completion of works to be chased up.
      - i. Urgent Removal and Replacement of Hot Water Tank and Air Source Heat Pump: An on site meeting has been arranged with the contractors tomorrow.
      - ii. Urgent Removal and Replacement of Loft Insulation: Out of three requests for quotes one company has responded and attended site and confirmed that the village hall does have cavity wall insulation and provided a quote for clearance and replacement loft insulation; See 11.4-a and 11.5-a-b.
    - d. Village Hall Cleaner: Job description/Risk Assessment: In hand.
  3. Dog Bins:
    - a. New Bins: Installation C/fwd.



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## 9. COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Merton PC Facebook Page:
  - a. To consider matters for publication: Various items of interest had been published.
    - i. It was noted that County Cllr. C. Miller had confirmed that there was no plan to close Merton Road in Ambrosden on 8 January for Gigaclear.

## 10. COMMUNITY:

1. Planning Applications: To consider all recent applications received from Cherwell District Council detailed below and any other planning applications submitted and published on the CDC planning portal between the agenda being published and the meeting:
  - a. None.
2. Decision Notices: The following decisions noted:-
  - a. Decision Issued: Application No: 23/03079/LB Listed Building Determination  
Proposal: Replace single glazed windows in the modern extension with double glazed windows  
Location: Little Chippers, Merton, Bicester, OX25 2NF  
Parish(es): Merton  
LISTED BUILDING CONSENT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS -  
Date of Decision: 28th December 2023
3. Withdrawal Notices: None recorded.
4. Planning Matters:
  - a. None.
5. Traffic Calming: Working Group to arrange a meeting.
  - a. 40mph buffer zone: No update.
6. Poultry Farming: Health Issues: The matter has been passed to Cherwell District Council; Clerk tasked with removing from agenda.
7. Defibrillator: To consider the possibility of a 'First Responder': C/fwd.

## 11. FINANCE:

1. Receipts: To record and approve any receipts received listed on receipts and payments schedule.
  - a. None.
2. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting:
  - a. None.
3. Accounts for Payment:
 

**RESOLVED:**

  - To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
  - a. Salary November 2023 - £189.45
    - Expenses £1.60
    - Reimbursement of Administration Costs: £0.00
    - **Total £191.05.**
  - b. Green Building Renewables – Inv. No: 0000009630 - £12,602.00 (Invoice has over-ridden and in-line with the quote – Inv. No: 0000009395 - £3,150.00 – 25% Deposit for Heat Pump Installation S03379: Invoice was approved for payment once the Clerk/RFO is advised that the work has been completed in full; work still not completed.
  - c. Requests and Membership Renewals:
 

**RESOLVED:** Not to purchase signs or renew the following membership:

    - i. Hedgehog Awareness - I Need Your Help! - Consider purchasing signs.
    - ii. CFO - Community First Oxfordshire Membership 25/2025 – Unchanged for the year.
4. Quotes:
  - a. Village Hall Insulation and Lagging: see 8.2-c-ii; As the quote received was valid for three months it was agreed to speak to County Cllr. C. Miller to see if there would be any funds available in the County Councillor Priority Fund to cover the cost of some or all of the work.
5. Funding: Information regarding funding for village halls emailed to councillors for consideration.
  - a. County Councillor – Offer of funds to support projects in Merton Parish: The application process has re-opened; needs costings for insulation and pipe lagging; see 11.5-a.
  - b. Village Hall Insulation and Lagging: To consider if there are any grants available to upgrade insulation and for cavity wall insulation: To consider 11.6-a and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) financed scheme.
6. Training: Consider/approve any training costs: None considered.
7. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
  - a. Budget Comparison: Other than those previously noted, generally in-line with budget.
    - i. Payments:
    - ii. Receipts: In-line with budget.
  - b. Bank Reconciliation accepted and approved:
    - i. 1.10.2023 – 31.12.2023:- (Unity Trust St. No: 028– 31.12.2023):
      - Balance B/fwd: £42,417.82
      - Add Receipts: £ 212.65
      - Less Payments: £ 4,315.49
      - Total C/fwd: £38,314.98
  - c. Balance Sheet:
 

• Debtors	£ 891.72
• Cash Bank	£38,374.23
• Cash Float	£ 28.00
• Funds	£31,445.67
• Creditors	£13,197.75



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- General Fund -£ 7,264.74
- It was noted that the general fund will be a positive figure once the invoice for Green Building Renewables is paid and covered by the Village Hall Fund.
- 8. Financial Controls: Verification by Internal Financial Controller Cllr. M. Smith: Completed and signed by Internal Controller and RFO:
  - Noted that under budget control 'All payments within budget' that although the heating system replacement was not budgeted for, it will be covered by the Village Hall Fund and differences met by the balances from the allowance for electricity budget and Village Hall general budget.
- 9. End of Year Accounts 31 March 2023/24:
  - a. Actions from Internal Audit Report:
    - i. Payroll: Registration to be set up.
    - ii. Pension Regulator: Information regarding pension schemes to be sought; HMRC registration to be completed in order that the PC can register with the pension regulator.
    - iii. Document Management: To action.
- 10. Budget 2024/2025:
  - a. C.D.C. - Estimated Tax Base 2024-25 & Parish Precepts 2024-25.: The draft budget was considered:  
**RESOLVED:**
    - That having reviewed the hire charges for the village hall; charges would be increased to £12.00 per hour for non residents and £10.00 per hour for residents.
    - That an allowance of £4,000.00 would be made for the Village Hall ring fenced funds.
    - That an allowance of £1,100.00 would be made for the Traffic Calming Fund taking into consideration that costs will have increased.
    - A budget of £21,494.00 was approved.
- 11. Precept Requirement: To consider and approve the precept requirement based on the budget to be submitted to C.D.C. by 12 January 2024.  
**RESOLVED:**
  - That the Parish Council approved a precept requirement of £21,500.00; based on the Council Tax Base of 146.7 for 2024/25 this would amount to a 2%, being the percentage increase (or decrease if negative) from 2023-24 to 2024-25 shown on the council tax bill for a band 'D' property for 2024-25.
- 12. CLERKS CONTRACT AND JOB DESCRIPTION: C/fwd.
- 13. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING:
  - 1. Meetings:
    - a. O.C.C. - Oxfordshire County Council Lane Rental Scheme Proposal Consultation Meeting - The consultation meeting is on Wednesday 17th January 10:30 – 12:30 at County Hall, New Road Oxford OX1 1ND. There is also the option to attend remotely as in person places are limited – closing date for registration 12 January 2024.
    - b. C.D.C. - Invitation - Community & Parish Council Networking Event - Wednesday 24 January 2024 - Cherwell District Council Offices - Bodicote House – Bodicote - OX15 4AA - 10am – 1pm
  - 2. Training:
    - a. None.
- 14. GENERAL:
  - 1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda:
    - a. MPC331(12): 7.12.2023 CFO - Good News for community halls -Groundworks VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme opens today.
    - b. MPC331(22): 13.12.2023 OCC - Update on Oxfordshire Councils Charter - In January 2024, you will be invited to share your views on the draft charter in another survey which will run from 3 January 2024 until 11 February.
- 15. Matters for Further Discussion: Agenda items: None noted.
- 16. NEXT MEETING:
  - 1. 12 February 2024 – 7.30pm - Parish Council Meeting:

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 20:32.

**Draft Minutes subject to confirmation: Approved Minutes M2/2024 - 4**

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

**Date: 12 February 2024.**