

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M11/2023

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL
AT 19:30 ON 11 DECEMBER 2023

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

1. APOLOGIES: Accepted from Cllr. R. Gurprashad.
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. Bookings Clerk: Has received enquiries for under 12 football and from Highfield FC ; hire on an ad-hoc basis; see 8.2-b.
 - b. Village Hall Reopening: The Parish Council advised that the contractors are still working; see 8.3-a.
 - c. Traffic Calming: Discussed notable speeding through the village early in the morning; volunteers willing to carry out Speedwatch training; County Cllr. C. Miller to provide W. Mead with contact details for the Speedwatch Groups network.
 - d. County Council:
 - i. County Budget consultation due.
 - ii. Council has been improving Special Education Needs.
 - iii. Council and District Council have been looking at how they can join.
 - iv. Flooding Forum: County Cllr. C. Miller has set up forums; some progress has been made on how to alleviate the flooding at the crossroads from Charlton-on-Otmoor across to the railway on the Islip Road.
 - v. There is planned resurfacing work to be carried out, on the Merton to Ambrosden Straight , in the Spring; there are also plans for the road to be closed for Gigaclear to carry out works.
 - vi. Cllr. C. Miller also advised that he is running for MP for the new constituency 'Bicester and Woodstock'.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting! County Cllr. C. Miller and 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 13 November 2023 at 7.30pm previously circulated.
RESOLVED:
 - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13 November 2023 at 7.30pm were accepted and approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. David Richardson with amendments to:
 - M10/2023 – 7.3: 'the old dog bins have been destroyed' should read 'will be destroyed' and 'instal' should be 'install'.
5. REPORTS:
 - a. Chairman's Report: None.
 - b. Clerk's Report: None.
6. VACANCIES/CO-OPTION:
 1. Consider any applications: None.
 2. Consider and approve draft poster:**RESOLVED:**
 - To approve the draft poster; to be posted on Facebook and the PC website.
7. PARISH COUNCIL GOVERNANCE:
 1. Merton village Neighbourhood Plan: Clerk tasked with removing from agenda until a response is received.
 2. Civility & Respect Pledge:
 - a. Registration: C/fwd; Cllr. R. Gurprashad reviewing.
 3. Generic Emails: With only one councillor having set up the new email address the Clerk advised that the Joint Panel on Accountability & Governance – Practitioners' Guide March 2023 -1.26 states: *Email management - every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access – this ideally would be a .gov.uk or .org.uk address or could be an address linked to the council website. The importance of secure email systems and GOV.UK. Councillors will have to reconsider setting up if required by 'Law'.*
 4. Policies: Reviews:
 - a. Training Policy:**RESOLVED:**
 - The Parish Council does not want to set up a training policy.
8. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
 1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
 - a. Play Area:
 - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: C/fwd.
 2. Recreational Area:
 - a. Launton Junior Football Club: Terms and Conditions of Hire: Having considered the teams requirements it was:**RESOLVED:**

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- That the proposal was not viable as the Parish Council cannot cater to Launton Junior FC's requirements.
 - b. Leasing of the Playing Field: As considered above 8.2-a.; the football pitch is to continue to be let on an ad-hoc basis.
3. Village Hall:
- a. Flooding: Update on works by Belfor UK: The floor is currently being laid; the skirting and doors, kitchen and changing rooms are to be completed.
 - i. Urgent Removal and Replacement of Hot Water Tank and Air Source Heat Pump: The old hot water tank has been removed and replaced with a new one and is now working. The contractors need to carry out repairs to the damaged lintel to the match officials room and finish lagging the pipes.
 - ii. Urgent Removal and Replacement of Loft Insulation: Part of the building is in need of loft insulation; the Parish Council to look into what grants are available to upgrade the insulation and for cavity wall insulation.
 - b. Village Hall Cleaner: Job description/Risk Assessment: In hand.
 - c. Repair to the Path Leading to the Merton Village Hall: Work completed.
 - d. Good Energy – Make the grid greener with a smart meter: Further information required to set up an installation.
4. Recycling Site:
- a. Adopt a Site Agreement 2023/24:
RESOLVED:
 - That the Parish Council approved the Adopt a Site Agreement 2023/24 between Cherwell District Council and Merton Parish Council.
5. Merton Woodland:
- a. Grass Cutting: To consider the proposal from the Woodland Volunteer Group:
RESOLVED:
 - To accept and approve the proposals set out by the Woodland Volunteer Group.
6. Dog Bins:
- a. New Bins: Installation C/fwd.
9. COMMUNICATIONS:
- 1. Merton PC Facebook Page:
 - a. To consider matters for publication: Various items of interest had been published.
 - Advert for Parish Council Vacancies; also to be published on the website.
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. Application No.: 23/03079/LB -
Proposal: Replace 1970s single glazed windows in the 1970s extension to the original building with double glazed windows. Proposed windows are in the same wooden flush frame style as the main building, with openings and pane arrangements matching the main building, to keep consistency across the building.
Location: Little Chippers, Merton, Bicester, OX25 2NF
Parish(es): Merton
Comment by 7 December 2023.
RESOLVED:
 - That the Parish Council had no comments or objections.
 - b. Application No.: 23/03252/F
Proposal: Change of Use of existing car store building to mixed use of car store and specialist restoration workshop
Location: Merton Grounds Farm, Langford Lane, Merton, OX25 2NS
Parish(es): Merton
Comments by 20 December 2023
RESOLVED:
 - That the Parish Council had no comments or objections.
 - 2. Decision Notices: The following decisions noted:-
 - a. Decision Issued: 23/02606/F
Proposal: Two storey flat roofed extension to south west elevation
Location: Alpha Cottage, Street Through Merton Merton OX25 2NH
Parish(es): Merton
Permission for Development subject to conditions.
Date of Decision: 16 November 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; awaiting update.
 - 7. Defibrillator: To consider the possibility of a 'First Responder': C/fwd.
 - Access to Defibrillator whilst works are carried out on the village hall: The Parish Council have ensured that the side access is open to allow access to the defibrillator.
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.

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3. Accounts for Payment:
RESOLVED:
- To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
 - a. Salary October 2023 - £189.45 plus back pay based on NALC Scales applicable from 1 April 2023 – less £0.30 overpaid October 2023 – Total £294.75.
 - Expenses £1.60
 - Reimbursement of Administration Costs: £0.00
 - **Total £295.75.**
 - b. Adopt a Site Agreement – Oct 2022 – June 2023 - £180.65.
 - c. Green Building Renewables – Inv. No: 0000009630 - £12,602.00 (Invoice has over-riden 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.
 - d. Village Hall Cleaner: Inv. No: 07 - £48.85
 - e. D. Richardson – Reimbursement of £38.40 – Travis Perkins Inv. No: 11A85320– Replacement drain cover replaced as perforated.
4. OALC – Pay Agreement - Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2023/24: To accept and approve:
RESOLVED:
- To accept and approve the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2023/24 applicable from April 2023.
5. Quotes:
- a. Village Hall Insulation and Lagging: C/fwd see 8.3-a-ii.
6. 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.
7. Training: Consider/approve any training costs: None considered.
8. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
- a. Budget Comparison: The following noted, otherwise in-line with budget.
 - i. Payments:
 - Village Hall – General – over budget; cost of preparation work in order for Belfor carry on with works.
 - Open Spaces – Woodland Grass Cutting over budget.
 - Play Area – Grass Cutting over budget.
 - ii. Receipts: In-line with budget.
 - b. Bank Reconciliation accepted and approved:
 - i. 1.10.2023 – 31.12.2023:- (Unity Trust St. No: 026/027 – 30.11.2023):
 - Balance B/fwd: £42,417.82
 - Add Receipts: £ 0.00
 - Less Payments: £ 3,733.64
 - Total C/fwd: £38,683.98
 - c. Balance Sheet:
 - Debtors £ 1,072.37
 - Cash Bank £38,683.98
 - Cash Float £ 28.00
 - Funds £31,445.67
 - Creditors £13,501.10
 - General Fund -£ 7,459.69
 - 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.
9. Banking:
- a. Unity Trust – Important Information – Changes to Foreign Transfer Fees: Whilst the Parish Council makes no foreign payments the information was noted.
10. Financial Controls: Verification by Internal Financial Controller Cllr. M. Smith: Completed and signed by Internal Controller and RFO
11. 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.
 - iv. Risk Assessment Review following Practitioners Guide: To action.
 - v. Asset Controls: All Deeds and Titles established and shown on register: In hand.
12. Budget 2024/2025: Draft circulated prior to the meeting; to be reviewed at the next meeting.
- a. C.D.C. - Information from Returning Officer regarding Parish election recharges in 2024/2025: Noted.
12. CLERKS CONTRACT AND JOB DESCRIPTION: To include a review of Clerks hours.
13. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING:
- 1. Meetings:
 - a. CFO - UPCOMING EVENTS : Delivering the Housing that your Rural Community Needs - Didcot Civic Centre – Monday 27th November – 7.30-9pm Exeter Hall Kidlington Wednesday 6th December 7.30-9pm: No attendance.
 - b. O.C.C. - Have your say on a new Primary Care Strategy – Come to our [webinar](#) on 1st December to have your say on a new Primary Care Strategy Healthwatch Oxfordshire is hosting a [webinar](#) on Friday 1st December at 11.30am: No attendance.

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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. MPC330(41): C.D.C. - Information from Returning Officer regarding Parish election recharges in 2024/2025.
 - b. MPC330(56): CAG (Community Action Groups) - How Nature Recovery Networks can benefit your parish – Surveys.
 - c. MPC330(60): C.D.C. - Budget Consultation 2024-25 – The consultation runs until Friday, 22 December 2023: Facebook.

15. Matters for Further Discussion: Agenda items: None noted.

16. NEXT MEETING:
 1. 8 January 2024 – 7.30pm - Parish Council Meeting:
RESOLVED:
 - To change the date to the 9 January 2024 – 7.30pm – Parish Council Meeting.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21:36.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation: Min Ref: M1/2024-4.

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

Date: 9 January 2024.