

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M2/2024

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL
AT 19:30 ON 12 FEBRUARY 2024

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

1. APOLOGIES: Accepted from 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: Hall reopened.
 - b. Traffic Calming: No update. County Cllr. C. Miller extended his apologies regarding the Speed checks contact; his written report considered.
 - c. Poultry Farming – Health Issues: Progressing.
 - d. Village Hall Bookings Clerk: Following the completion of major works there are a few residual jobs; the hot water is not getting through to the taps in the Disabled toilet; request for two mirrors to be mounted in the Disabled toilet; it was noted the football clubs can now access the toilets from outside.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution.

4. MINUTES: To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9 January 2024 at 7.30pm previously circulated.
RESOLVED:
 - That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9 January 2024 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:
 - i. Precept requirement presented to C.D.C.
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: Clerk to remove from agenda.
 3. Policies: Reviews: Need to be completed by 31 March: Clerk to formulate a list of policies for review as a control measure.
 - a. Expenses Policy: Review: To be circulated for consideration at the next meeting
8. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents: To be completed before the 31 March.
 1. Review Effectiveness of Internal Audit: Circulated prior to meeting, to be reviewed for consideration at next meeting.
 2. Review of Internal Audit: Circulated prior to meeting, to be reviewed for consideration at next meeting; the Clerk advised that the current Internal Auditor has confirmed that, after a three year period working for the Parish Council and personal commitments she is no longer able to continue as the internal auditor for MPC. Clerk has emailed another internal auditor listed as a provider on the internal audit forum and is awaiting a reply.
 3. Asset Register: All Deeds and Titles to be established and shown on register; it was noted that certain restrictions apply to the Woodland tenancy which have been shared with the Woodland Working Group; Clerk to locate paperwork relating to the purchase of the woodland.
 4. Risk Assessments: Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area; Woodland Volunteers: Review following Practitioners Guide: To be reviewed for consideration at the next meeting.
 5. Financial Regulations: To be reviewed for consideration at the next meeting.
9. ASSET MANAGEMENT:
 1. Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:
 - a. Play Area:
 - i. Replacement of Safety Caps: C/fwd.
 - ii. Play Area:
 - b. Recreational Area:
 - i. Bookings Update: Bookings are starting to come in; camping and caravanners due in March.
 - First Aid Kit: To be reviewed and new book to be purchased. Cllr. R. Gurprashad agreed to support the bookings clerk in undertaking the review
 - ii. Launton FC: To consider the following requests:
 - Payment: Request to make through Bank Transfer: Bookings Clerk had requested payment through her in order to keep track of payments.

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- Football Nets: Approval of storage: There has been no further communications since confirming the above and that the nets/goal posts can be stored but, would be their responsibility.
- iii. Heathfield FC: Have not been able to play due to the weather/condition of pitch; they have been maintaining the area of play in readiness.
- iv. Trees: Report of split and creaking Conifer tree to the rear of the recreational field following high winds: This was reviewed as a Health & Safety issue: There is provision of £300.00 in the budget; Power to Spend under the Open Spaces Act 1906- s10.

RESOLVED:

- To contact Oxford Tree Service; previously provided services.
2. Village Hall:
 - a. Flooding: Update on works by Belfor UK: Insurance Brokers to be contacted regarding some residual works; contribution to use of electricity whilst carrying out works etc.
 - i. Air Source Heat Pump: The heating is now complete. Heating settings to be reviewed in order to facilitate morning bookings.
 - b. Village Hall Cleaner: Job description/Risk Assessment: In hand;
 - i. as part of a Risk Assessment it was noted that all cleaning materials are now stored in a box out of reach of children.
 - ii. Chairs to be spot cleaned where necessary.
 - c. Good Energy: Make the grid greener with a smart meter: Update on installation of a smart meter: In hand.
 - d. Kettle and Tea Urn: Consider and approve purchase: Originals located, new ones no longer required.
 3. Dog Bins:
 - a. New Bins: Installation completed; thanks were expressed to the volunteer.
 - b. Additional Dog Bin: To consider an additional village dog bin: The Parish Council is satisfied that increasing from 25litre bin to a 40litre should be adequate provision; usage to be monitored. The old bins would be retained for now and kept on the asset list as they may be used in other parts of the village; subject to consultation and consideration of annual cost implications.
10. COMMUNICATIONS:
 1. Merton PC Facebook Page:
 - a. To consider matters for publication: Various items of interest had been published.
 11. 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: 23/03252/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
PERMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS -
Date of Decision: 9th February 2024.
 3. Withdrawal Notices: None recorded.
 4. Planning Matters:
 - a. C.D.C. - CHERWELL DC - Planning Application Validation Checklist Consultation - NOW LIVE. Comment until 11th March 2024: PC to review.
 - b. C.D.C. - Proposed Neighbourhood Area Designation: The parish of Heyford Park: No comments.
 5. Traffic Calming: Working Group to arrange a meeting.
 - a. 40mph buffer zone: No update.
 6. Defibrillator: To consider the possibility of a 'First Responder': Requirements to be reviewed.
 12. FINANCE:
 1. Receipts: To record and approve any receipts received listed on receipts and payments schedule.
 - a. Allotment Rent 2023/24 – Plots 1 & 2 - £32.00.
 - Tenants have been advised of the PC's decision to offer a rent free year 2024/25.
 - b. C.D.C. - Adopt a Site Payment – October-December 2022 – January-June 2023 £180.65.
 2. Accounts Paid Prior to the Meeting:
 - a. Castle Water – Inv. No: 10001246060 - £147.65 – Outstanding invoices from October.
 3. Accounts for Payment:

RESOLVED:

 - To approve the following for payment; to be set up with Unity Trust online banking:-
 - a. Salary January 2024 - £189.45.
 - Expenses January £1.60
 - Reimbursement of Administration Costs: £0.00
 - **Total £191.05.**
 - i. February 2024 - £189.45: See 12.9-a-i.
 - b. Green Building Renewables – Inv. No: 0000009630 - £12,602.00 (Invoice has over-riden and in-line with the quote) - Works completed payment to be made in full.
 - c. Good Energy – Inv. No: I-0337922 - £1,003.06.
 - d. Village Hall Cleaner – Inv. No: 08 - £123.44 – (incl. £33.44 mats).
 - e. Blackthorn PC - Coversure Insurance – Approve contribution - £67.18 - Paid in full by BPC £134.37.

RESOLVED:

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- Not to approve payment of the following see 9-a-i.
- f. CSC Collect - £399.98 due to HMRC: Clerk to contact HMRC as this should be cleared now PAYE is set up.
- 4. Quotes:
 - a. Village Hall Insulation and Lagging: County Cllr. C. Miller to has advised that there may be some funds available and will be in contact to discuss.
 - b. PAT Testing:
 - RESOLVED:**
 - To accept and approve the quote, from Expertise Repair, as per 2021 prices £30.00, unless the PC has more than 20 items, which would be at £1.80 per item. (not VAT registered).
 - Date to be confirmed with Cllr. M. Smith for access; week commencing 26th February.
 - c. Grass Cutting: Having considered the proposed increases:-
 - RESOLVED:**
 - To accept and approve the quote for £222.00 per cut plus VAT for the Recreation ground based on two cuts per month and £240.00 plus VAT based on one cut per month.
 - To continue with one cut per month on the Recreation ground; to review to two cuts dependent on use of the grounds.
 - To accept and approve the quote of £160.00 plus VAT per cut for the Woodland.
 - Feedback to be sourced from the Woodland Group regarding the encroaching brambles and over hanging branches and the opening/access.
- 5. Funding: Information regarding funding for village halls emailed to councillors for consideration.
 - a. County Councillor – See 12.4-a.
 - b. Village Hall Insulation and Lagging: To consider if there are any grants available to upgrade insulation and for cavity wall insulation: See 12.5-a.
 - i. Cllr. M. Smith took on the task of looking into applications for funding towards the village hall.
- 6. Training: Consider/approve any training costs: None considered.
- 7. Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation:
 - a. Budget Comparison: The following noted:-
 - i. Payments:
 - Village Hall – Water – over budget.
 - Village Hall – Electricity – under budget: Little use this year, balance to be used towards the installation of the heat pump.
 - Clerks Pay – over budget: Pay rise backdated to April.
 - Open Spaces – Woodland grass cutting – over budget.
 - Open Spaces – Purchase of three dog bins – over budget.
 - Play Area/Recreational Area – grass cutting – over budget.
 - Admin – Publications/Postage/General – 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: 029– 31.12.2023):
 - Balance B/fwd: £38,314.98
 - Add Receipts: £ 0.00
 - Less Payments: £ 338.70
 - Total C/fwd: £37,976.28
 - c. Balance Sheet:
 - Debtors £ 891.72
 - Cash Bank £38,134.33
 - Cash Float £ 28.00
 - Funds £31,445.67
 - Creditors £14,576.16 (Currently Incl. Monies recoverable by HMRC – See 11.9-a-i)
 - General Fund -£ 7,955.07
 - 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 etc., as previously minuted.
- 8. Financial Controls: Verification by Internal Financial Controller Cllr. M. Smith: Not completed.
- 9. Unity Trust Bank - Important update regarding new cheque books and paying-in books – to be sent out
- 10. End of Year Accounts 31 March 2023/24:
 - a. Actions from Internal Audit Report:
 - i. Payroll: Registration completed and PAYE Tool set up. In order to comply with the pay months according to HMRC that run from 6th to 5th of the month:
 - RESOLVED:**
 - That salary will be set up for payment on the last day of the month starting with February 2024; pay to be emailed to councillors; expenses to be claimed separately.
 - Payment to be presented at the following meeting for approval.
 - ii. Pension Regulator: Information regarding pension schemes to be sought; Registration to be completed with the pension regulator.
 - iii. Document Management: Ongoing.
- 13. CLERKS CONTRACT AND JOB DESCRIPTION: Draft circulated to councillors.
- 14. COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN: C.D.C. - FOR ACTION: Community Emergency Plan Survey – 2024 – GDPR form to be completed for the Emergency Plan and plan to be uploaded – To be completed by 1 April 2024: To review the Parish Council's

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Emergency plan for uploading.

15. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS/TRAINING:

1. Meetings:
 - a. CFO - Delivering the Housing that your Rural Community Needs - 5th February 2024: No attendance.
 - b. CFO - Village Halls Week 2024 - 18th to 24th March - 'Go Green': No attendance.
2. Training:
 - a. None.

16. GENERAL:

1. Correspondence: Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda:
 - a. MPC332(40): 13.12.2023 O.C.C. - Let's make Oxfordshire Smoke Free - PLEASE get involved! To look into funding for play area signage and village hall.
 - b. MPC333(04): C.D.C. - Spring Clean 2024 -The Spring Clean will start on **15 March 2024** and run until **29 April 2024** which also coincides with the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean, we are running this over 7 weeks this year - completed forms are returned by **Monday 04 March 2024**: It was noted that a parishioner had recently organised a clean up.

17. Matters for Further Discussion: Agenda items:

1. Internal Auditor.

18. NEXT MEETING:

1. 11 March 2024 – 7.30pm - Parish Council Meeting:

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21:32.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation: Confirmed and approved.

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

Date: 11 March 2024.

Minute Ref: M3/2024-4.