

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M13/2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN MERTON VILLAGE HALL AT 19:30 ON 13 DECEMBER 2021

PRESENT: David Richardson (Chairman) DR
Martin Smith, Paul Stubbs, Deborah Smith, Andrew Yearsley and R. Gurprashad (Councillors)
MS/PS /AY/DS/RG

IN ATTENDANCE: T. Charlesworth; (Clerk/RFO). TC
Wendy Meads (Village Hall Bookings Clerk). WM

1. APOLOGIES: Accepted from Gemma Allen.
2. PARISH COUNCIL:
 - 2.1. Election of Vice-Chairman: C/fwd.
 - 2.2. Co-option: Roy Gurprashad
 - a) DPI Registration: Submitted to C.D.C.
 - b) 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office': Completed as a co-opted member; witness by the Clerk. RG/TC
 - 2.3. To Receive Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:
 - a) RG declared an interest in a personal application submitted to C.D.C; it was noted that the PC had not been advised of the application to date.
 - 2.4. Resignation: The PC has received GA resignation with effect from 12 December 2021: In accordance with Section 89(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, where the vacancy occurs within six months before the day on which the councillor whose office is vacant would regularly have retired, an election shall not be held under Section 89(1) of the above Act, and the vacancy will be filled at the next ordinary election of councillors on 5 May 2022. The Council may choose to fill the vacancy for the period until that election. Vacancy Notice to be displayed on the notice board. DR
 - 2.5. COVID-19: Government Guidelines: On the 8 December 2021 the Prime Minister gave a statement on COVID-19 and the Omicron variant; he confirmed that the Government will move to Plan B in England; a full list of guidance is available on the Gov.uk website. Guidance for Local Government has not been updated since 3rd November; OALC advises to continue with face-face meetings but to wear face masks in indoor settings, return to social distancing, good ventilation and all other sensible mitigation measures which the PC risk assessments identified and had in place when the Regulations allowing virtual meetings came to an end in May. The Government is still mulling over the submissions made to the call for evidence in the summer.
 - a) Letter of Support for Remote Meetings: C/fwd.
 - b) **RESOLVED:** *"In response to the continuing Covid-19 outbreak and in the event that it is not possible to convene a meeting of the council in a reasonable time, the Clerk shall have delegated authority after discussion with the Chair. To make decisions on behalf of the council where such decision cannot reasonably be deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decisions made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations. This delegated authority ceases upon the first meeting of the council after the council meeting at which the delegation was put in place".*
 - c) Should there be another 'lockdown' the Village Hall would be closed; currently the hall will continue to be cleaned between usage/hiring.
 - 2.6. Welcome Pack: Ongoing. MS
 - 2.7. Merton Village Neighbourhood Plan:
 - a) Joint Neighbourhood Plan: There has been no response from Ambrosden PC. Following discussion the PC agreed in principal to look at putting together a Parish Plan for Merton. AY agreed to look at the skillset required in order to complete a plan. AY
 - 2.8. ICO Registration: To action. TC
 - 2.9. Annual Review of Audit and Governance Documents: To be acted upon before 31 March 2022.
 - a) Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit;
 - b) Review of Internal Audit;
 - c) Asset Register: Noted amendments; disposal of old village hall chairs and purchase of new; purchase of notice boards.
 - d) Risk Assessments: Allotments; Parish Council; Village Hall; Play Area and Woodland Volunteers; Covid-19.
 - e) Financial Regulations;
 - f) Standing Orders: Any amendments regarding the trigger point for spending. All
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:
 - 3.1: Blinds for the Village Hall: WM presented colour swatches for the PC to consider and advised that the difference between the current quote and that of a few years ago was negligible; the recommendation was for roller blinds for the windows and vertical blinds for the doors. See 8.4-c.
 - 3.2: Village Hall Cleaner: WM is cleaning the village hall following confirmation that M. Day had resigned. It was noted that the blue recycling bin had not been emptied last week as it needs wheeling to the entrance to the driveway of the village hall.
 - 3.3: Recycling Site: Confirmation required as to whether M. Day would be continuing with the role. WM

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4. MINUTES:

4.1: That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 November 2021 at 7.30pm were approved to be signed by the Chairman DR. DR

5. ASSET MANAGEMENT:

5.1: Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:

- a) Oxford Cavaliers Rugby League Club: The PC recognised that there are lessons to be learned from its dealings with OCRLC; there is a need to be more transparent, written formal agreements are necessary; councillors to seek approval from fellow councillors before sending emailed responses to emails or 'Facebook' messages in order that they form the council's response not an individuals.
- i. Village Hall Keys: All keys held by OCRLC had been returned; keys are currently held by PS, MS and WM; keys held by M. Day and G. Allen to be returned.
- ii. Proposed Hire Contract: The OCRLC have not accepted the PC proposal for hire and have found an alternative venue for their training.
- b) Football: Future lettings policy: The OCRLC hiring agreement would be used as a template for future lettings; the hire of the pitch is currently £40.00 per match.

RESOLVED

- That WM was granted flexibility within the hire charges for the hall and pitch to allow for i.e., broken toilets etc.
- c) Village Hall:
 - i. Purchase of Chairs: Complete.
 - ii. Purchase of Notice Boards: Complete.
 - iii. Faulty Kitchen Lights: Repaired.
 - iv. PAT Testing: Complete; report received and Certificates displayed.
 - v. Air Source Heat Pump: Arrangements being made for check. PS
 - d) Review of Allotment Agreement:

RESOLVED:

- That the addition of Para 7 to reflect the advice for the non-use of Nitrates was approved. TC
- Clerk to reissue the Tenancy Agreement to the current holders.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

6.1: Parish Matters/Merton Facebook Page: To confirm with G. Allen if she is to continue to publish articles on behalf of the PC for the Parish Matters; AY will take on the role if not.

- a) To consider/approve matters for Publication:
 - None.

7. COMMUNITY:

7.1: Planning Applications:

- a) None.

7.2: Decision Notices:

- a) Application No: 21/02167/LB
Proposal: To replace the existing windows with slimline double-glazed units, also removing top light/vent openings and storm casing
Location: Little Chippers, Merton, OX25 2NF
Parish(es): Merton
Refusal Of Permission For Development
Date of Decision: 10th December 2021.

7.3: Planning Matters:

- a) Merton Nursing Home: Continue to monitor. Clerk to remove from agenda. TC
- b) Ambrosden Parish Council is looking to respond to a discharge of planning conditions of the planned Redrow development by Merton Road (21/03342/DISC): PC responded as previously agreed.

7.4: Traffic Calming: Report from 'Working Group':

DR/TC

- a) S106 Agreement: Nothing further to report. Clerk tasked with removing from agenda. TC
- b) 20mph Limit Application: Application submitted and waiting for response; noted that the PC may need to make a contribution to any costs. DR

7.5: Bus Stop Light:

- a) Solar array and LED Fixture: To follow up with the County Councillor. MS
- b) Book Library: In hand. PS

7.6: Defibrillator:

- a) Registration: Awaiting documents: To be followed up. PS

8: FINANCE:

8.1: Receipts: -

- a) Petty cash and Bookings: TC/DR

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- November 2021: Noted that; a party booking has been cancelled and a children's party has been postponed until February for which payment has already been received.
- 8.2: Account for Payment Prior to the Meeting:
- a) Castle Water – Inv. No: 0006150778 - £640.19 – less credit of £31.57 – Balance £608.62 increased by £40.00 incurred for late payment- for the period 1.8.2021 – 31.1.2022.
- 8.3: Accounts for Payment:
- RESOLVED:**
- That the following accounts were approved for payment:
 - a) Clerks Pay/Exp. November 2021 - £163.90 – Cheque No: 101614.
 - b) Good Energy – Inv. No: I-0112922 - £286.37 for period 1.8.2021 – 1.11.2021 – Cheque No: 101615.
 - c) Expertise Repairs – Inv. No: 20489 - £30.00 (PAT Testing) – Cheque No: 101616.
 - d) Viking – Inv. No's: 8091321 – 801155 - £1,423.13 – Cheque No: 101617 (Noted that some items have not yet been delivered).
 - e) Blackthorn Parish Council – Contribution to Homeworking Insurance with Coversure Insurance – Paid in full by BPC £114.31 – Half £57.15 – Cheque No: 101618.
 - f) Cash - Bookings Clerk: Float top up £12.00 purchase receipts received to the value of £11.64 – Cheque No: 101619. DR
- 8.4: Quotes:
- a) Laptop: C/fwd. TC
 - b) Goal Posts: To follow up. GA
 - c) Blinds/Curtains for Village Hall: See 3.9:
- RESOLVED:**
- To accept the quote for roller blinds for the windows and vertical blinds for the doors.
 - Colour: Grey.
 - Order to be placed.
- d) Village Hall Smoke Alarms: Quote as part of (8.4-e). MS
 - e) Village Hall Electrical check:
- RESOLVED:**
- To accept the quote for £350.00.
 - Order to be placed. PS
- 8.6: Viking Direct update on Account: Complete.
- 8.7: Spending under COMF Parishes Fund: Progress Form to be completed.
- i. 'Covid' Guidance signage: See 8.3-d: Ordered.
 - ii. Sanitiser: See 8.3-d: Ordered. TC
 - iii. Proposal to spend remainder of funding:
- RESOLVED:**
- To place an order for a larger notice board for COVID-19 updates. TC
- 8.8: Training: None.
- 8.9: Banking:
- RESOLVED:**
- To approve opening a Current Account with Unity Trust. TC
 - All signatories on the account with a dual requirement for transactions; Councillors to provide personal details as necessary. All
 - To approve a Unity Corporate MultiPay Card. TC
- 8.10: Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation: Presented and accepted. TC
- 8.11: End of Year Accounts 31 March 2021: Ongoing.
- a) Action from Audit:
 - i. Review of Risk Assessment: MS/TC
 - ii. Payroll Controls: Clerk/RFO had met with the Clerk of Launton PC to learn about the setting up of the HMRC PAYE system. TC
 - iii. Asset Controls: Deed and Titles. TC
 - iv. Reserves: To provide detail.
 - v. Pension Regulator: To be actioned.
 - vi. County Archives: To speak to J. Olds. TC/All
- 8.12: End of Year Accounts 31 March 2022:
- i. List of Questions for completion: TC
- 8.13: Budget 2022/2023: Draft Budget was considered and the following amendments approved:
- a) **Revised Figure.**
 - i. Village Hall – Payments – General – Addition of £350.00 o/s for the Electrical inspection/check.
 - b) **Funds:**
 - i. Woodland Area Project Fund - £0.00.
 - ii. Traffic Calming fund – Increase to £6,000.00 budget.

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- iii. Village Hall Regeneration Fund: Allowance £0.00. Village Hall Storage: The PC has received three similar quotes for storage and proposals for a patio area, it was agreed at this time not to make any further provisions in the Village Hall Recreational Fund but to concentrate any provision in funds to traffic calming.
- iv. Neighbourhood Plan Fund – Set up with a budget of £800.00.
- ii. Parish Council election 2022: No extra provision to be made.
- c) **Forecast:**
 - iii. Village Hall— Payments - Water – Forecast – reduced to £400.00.
 - iv. Village Hall – Payments – General – Forecast – reduced to £1,000.00.
 - v. Open Spaces – Woodland grass cutting – Forecast – reduced to £540.00.
 - vi. Admin – Website – Forward Year – budget £100.00.
 - vii. Admin – Community Activities – Forecast – reduce to £0.00.
 - viii. Play Area – Payments - Grass cutting – Forecast – reduce to £1,500.00.
- 8.14: Scribe Accounts: Contact has been established and Clerk/RFO to attend virtual meeting in January. TC
- 8.15: Grant Applications:
 - a) Update for Village Hall applications.
 - i. Screwfix Foundation Fund: Unsuccessful. Clerk to remove from agenda. TC
- 9. GENERAL
- 9.1: The Clerks Contract and Job Description: Review: In progress. DR
- 9.2: Correspondence for Action: The lists of correspondence presented M.P.C. 306 (November 2021) were considered as part of the agenda.
 - MPC306(15): Zurich Municipal - Merton Parish Council, when were your buildings last valued? It was noted that the buildings had not been valued during the Clerks service.
 - MPC306(22): C.D.C. – COMF – to be completed..
- 9.3: Matters for Further Information or Discussion:
 - a) Matters for Further Information: None.
 - b) Matters for Further Discussion: None.
- 10. NEXT MEETING:
 - 10.1: Merton Parish Council meeting to be held on 10 January 2022 at 19.30.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 22:10.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman

Date