



Bishopstoke Parish Council

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**Members of the Assets Committee are summoned to attend a meeting on
Tuesday 28th November at 7:30pm at Bishopstoke Methodist Church, Sedgwick Road.**

AGENDA

PUBLIC SESSION – Residents are invited to give their views and question the parish council on issues on this agenda, or raise issues for future consideration at the discretion of the chair. Members of the public may not take part in the meeting itself.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. To adopt and sign Minutes of the Assets Committee meeting held on 25 July 2023
3. Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations
4. To receive a report on allotments and make decisions on future charges
5. To approve sites for inclusion in the next stage of the Tree and Bee corridor
6. To receive an update on the cemetery and closed churchyards
7. To receive an update on street furniture (bins, benches, boards, bus shelters etc)
8. To receive the Clerk's report, including all areas delegated to the Committee
9. Date, time, place and agenda items for next meeting

D L Wheal
Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council
22nd November 2023

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Assets Committee
held at Bishopstoke Methodist Church
commencing at 7:45pm on 25th July 2023**

Present: Cllrs Francis (Chair), D McKeone (Vice Chair), Harris, Hillier-Wheal and Winstanley (from para 10.1)

In Attendance: Mr D Wheal (Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Mrs A Luck (Assets Officer for Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Cllr Daly (Bishopstoke Parish Councillor)

Public Attendance: 0 members of the public were present.

ASSETS_2324_M02/

Public Session

10 Apologies for Absence

10.1 All Committee members were present.

Cllr Winstanley arrived at this point.

11 To adopt as a true record, and sign, the Minutes of the Assets Committee meeting held on 23 May 2023

11.1 The Minutes of the above meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting.

11.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Harris, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the minutes of the Assets Committee meeting held on 23 May 2023 be adopted as a true record.

Action: Clerk and Chair – to sign and publish the minutes and document pack

11.3 Cllr Francis suggested consulting with Dave Bowen Consultancy Ltd once the strategy for play areas has been drafted. Cllr D McKeone asked whether the type of play area and its age suitability could be added to the website. Cllr Hillier-Wheal asked for the Judges Gully play area to be included as being in Bishopstoke although not run by the Parish Council.

Action: Clerk – contact play area consultants for comment on the strategy, add information and Judges Gully to the website.

11.4 Cllrs Francis and Hillier-Wheal both offered to complete other areas of the bin mapping project. The Clerk committed to sending out any maps still needed.

Action: Clerk – send remaining maps to Cllrs.

12 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

12.1 Cllrs Francis and Hillier-Wheal declared an interest in items 4 and 5 on the agenda.

13 To make the following decisions regarding allotments:

Whether to adopt a deposit scheme

What rate to set a deposit scheme at if adopted

Whether to adopt early intervention when plots become a seed and weed nuisance

How early intervention is managed

Whether to include a water supplement in future rents

What rate to set the water supplement at and how might plot holders mitigate that

13.1 A memo giving more information on the reasons for and possible options for each decision had been included with the supporting papers for the meeting.

13.2 Cllr Francis felt that a formal meeting with the allotment site representatives to get their views on the proposals would have been a useful precursor to these decisions. The Clerk noted that formal meetings are planned and informal contact regularly takes place. In addition, the deposit scheme had been proposed by the site reps the year before, and ways to prevent plots becoming a seed and weed nuisance were always required. Cllr Winstanley suggested any decisions could be taken in principle, subject to consultation with the site representatives and this was accepted by the Committee members. Cllr Francis requested that a meeting be set up with site reps and officers to discuss the issues listed above.

Action: Clerk – set up a meeting with site reps to discuss the issues listed above

13.3 The Clerk presented Cllrs with information showing the gap between the income generated by the allotments and the costs of running them, whilst also noting that the costs being presented did not include officer time, or stationery, but were limited to actual on site spending. Both water and plot clearance costs are substantial, and methods to reduce the Council's spend on these areas would be most important for bringing costs more in line with income. A deposit scheme encourages those thinking of leaving their plots to do so with the plot in good condition, and also makes a contribution to the cost of clearing the plot for those who do not. Reducing the time between a problem being spotted and a tenant who is not working their plot leaving the tenancy reduces both the growth of weeds and the opportunity for other rubbish to be dumped on the plot. A number of other local and national allotment sites had been researched for evidence regarding deposits and water charges.

13.4 Cllrs asked whether the deposits would be held in a separate account and would be indexed. The Clerk noted they would, and would not, respectively. Cllr Francis proposed that if a deposit were to be set then it be equal to one year's rent on the plot. Cllrs also asked whether this would apply to all plot holders, and whether there would be a discount for those on benefits. The Clerk noted this was intended for new plot holders only (plus those taking on extra plots) and whilst there is currently no discount applied for those on benefits that is certainly something that the Council could consider.

13.5 Proposed Cllr Harris, Seconded Cllr D McKeone, **RESOLVED** with Cllrs Francis and Hillier-Wheal abstaining to put in place a deposit scheme for new tenancies, with the deposit equalling the annual rent on the plot.

Action: Clerk – work with RFO to publicise deposit scheme and select an appropriate start date.

13.6 Cllrs wanted to ensure that tenants in genuine difficulty would not be penalised by being quickly removed from their plot. The Clerk noted that the Council has a long history of either giving extra time to, or helping in other ways, tenants who become unable to work their plot for a time. This will continue, and early contact with the plot holder will be key to ensuring that the plot does not become so difficult to manage that the plot holder is eventually unable to carry on permanently. A sheet giving details of what to do if a tenant is struggling with their plot is already included in the pack sent to all new tenants (and to all tenants in 2022). This information will also be included in rent letters going forward and placed on the allotment noticeboards.

Action: Clerk – amend rent letters to include information on contacting the site representatives or Council if a tenant becomes temporarily unable to work their plot, add this information to allotment noticeboards too.

13.7 After discussion, Cllrs agreed that the simplest way to reduce the length of time it takes to remove tenants who have abandoned their plots would be to include the termination date in any letter requiring action from the tenant, effectively removing a second, termination only, letter from the system. All letters will give one month notice for work to be completed after which the tenancy will be ended if the work has not been completed.

13.8 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Harris, **RESOLVED** with Cllrs Francis and Hillier-Wheel abstaining to amend the process for dealing with unworked plots by including a one month termination date in any letter requiring action from the tenant, effectively removing a second, termination only, letter from the system.

Action: Clerk – work with RFO to incorporate the change to standard allotment letters and procedure.

13.9 With regard to water charges the Committee considered that the proposed scheme may be too complex to administer and after discussion agreed that it may be more appropriate to adopt an “in arrears” scheme whereby the water usage for one year is included retrospectively in the rent for the next year. Any scheme would not be introduced immediately but would wait for discussions with site reps to take place before a final decision on what form the scheme would take is made.

13.10 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr D McKeone, **RESOLVED** that the Council should charge for water used at the allotments, with the exact method and start date being a matter for a future meeting following discussions with the site representatives.

Action: Clerk – arrange a meeting with site representatives to discuss water charges and include the item on a future Assets Committee agenda.

14 To set allotment rents for the period 1st October 2023 – 30th September 2024

14.1 A memo outlining the income and expenditure at the allotments since 2012 had been included with the supporting papers. The Clerk again noted that all the measures being discussed at the meeting, including a potential rent rise, were aimed at closing the gap between income and expenditure, but not requiring that the allotments effectively pay for themselves. Each measure taken would have a small impact on that gap leading to an overall significant effect.

14.2 Cllrs asked the Clerk to ensure that the reasons for the rent rise, if agreed, are included in the next rent letter. Cllrs also asked the Clerk to investigate extending the discount scheme to include those on benefits.

Action: Clerk – investigate what the qualifying benefits might be for inclusion in the discount scheme and add that to a future agenda.

14.3 Proposed Cllr Harris, Seconded Cllr Winstanley, **RESOLVED** with Cllrs Francis and Hillier-Wheel abstaining that the rent for 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024 be set at £10 per rod, with the discounted rate set at £6.50 per rod.

Action: Clerk – inform the RFO and include the information in the rent letters for this year.

15 To approve the final design for the Bishopstoke Cemetery gates and sign

15.1 The design and specifications for the Cemetery gates and sign had been included in the supporting papers for the meeting.

15.2 Proposed Cllr Francis, Seconded Cllr Hillier-Wheel, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council go ahead with the new gates and sign for Bishopstoke Cemetery at a total cost of £9,620.

Action: Clerk – inform the contractor and agree installation dates.

16 To receive the Clerk’s report, including all areas delegated to the Committee

16.1 The Clerk’s report was included with the document pack for this meeting and was noted. In addition it was noted that the bench at Glebe Meadow play area has been repaired, and that following a meeting with the new Local Area Manager it had been agreed that the cemetery extension and allotments at Sewall Drive would be the prime asset transfer being worked on.

16.2 Cllr Harris asked whether there was any progress on the bus shelter repairs at Spring Lane and why it had been washed given its damaged state. The Clerk informed the Committee that we are awaiting a response from the companies contacted for repairs and the Parish had not instigated any cleaning of the shelter. The Clerk also detailed efforts to ensure both regular cleaning of, and rapid response graffiti removal from, the parish bus shelters. Cllr Francis suggested these efforts could be publicised in the newsletter.

Action: Clerk – include bus shelters in a future newsletter.

17 Date, time, place and agenda items for next meeting

17.1 The next meeting of the Assets Committee will take place at 7:30pm on Tuesday 26th September 2023 at the Bishopstoke Methodist Church. The Clerk reminded Cllrs that if they wished to add items to the agenda they should ensure the item, with any supporting papers, is with the Clerk by September 19th.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9:10pm

Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Clerk's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Assets – 28th November 2023

Item 04 – Allotments

This update was initially prepared for the September Assets Committee meeting. As that meeting was cancelled it is now being presented for the November meeting. Any updated information will be in red text.

Following the previous meeting of the Assets Committee the Clerk arranged a meeting between himself and the site reps from both Underwood Road and Jockey Lane allotment sites, as well as Committee Chair Cllr Francis. This is the first of a regular series of quarterly meetings to help communication between the Council and the allotment sites. It will also enable possible changes to the running of the allotments to be discussed prior to them coming before the Committee, and will provide an easier way for site reps to make suggestions themselves.

Deposit Scheme

The site reps fully agreed with the idea of a deposit scheme for new tenancies and were happy with the amount payable being set to equal the first full year's rent. The scheme is intended to take effect from tenancies taken on after October 1st 2023.

The RFO is arranging a separate bank account to hold the deposits, which is a legal requirement. The deposit scheme is now operating.

Dealing with unworked plots

The site reps were also in agreement that anything that can improve the speed with which unworked or abandoned plots are dealt with would be welcome. It was stressed again that where there are genuine medical conditions which cause a tenant to be temporarily unable to work their plot the Council will work with the tenant to find a short term solution. In cases where a plot is simply abandoned or there is no likelihood of a tenant being able to resume tending their plot then the Council needs to be able to deal with these situations quickly. Consolidating several letters into one has the effect of simplifying the Council's administrative burden, but also reducing the amount of time for plots to become overgrown, which will in turn reduce the costs associated with clearing these plots.

There will be a full plot inspection undertaken over the winter period to cover all non-cultivation issues. Dealing with these during the off season will allow more time to deal with cultivation issues during the growing season.

Charges

The rent rises for the year (from £9 and £6 to £10 and £6.50) were accepted. The site reps felt that there was no easy or fair way to introduce water charges as tenants' use of water is so varied. Underwood Road has little water pressure whereas Jockey Lane is fine. Some tenants have multiple water butts, others have none. Some crops require more watering than others. However, it was accepted that costs generally are rising and the Council is having to pay more not only for water but for machinery servicing, grass and tree work, plot clearance and more.

It was suggested that rather than introducing a water charge from October 2024 it would be more sensible to put in place another rent increase to help cover not only the water costs, but the other rising costs too. This would mean there is no additional administrative burden. It would also mean that there is a full year for the other policy changes on deposits and speeding up dealing with abandoned plots to have an impact on Council spending, hopefully allowing the rent rise to be smaller than if it were brought in this year.

General comments

The site reps asked whether the Council could process new tenants more quickly. This would help with preventing seed and weed nuisance.

The Jockey Lane site rep offered to take over the grass cutting currently managed by Green Smile. As the shop sells Allotment Association items, the site reps suggested asking whether the Allotment Association could make a contribution to the running costs, or even the cost of a new building when it comes.

The shed used by the Jockey Lane site rep for machinery and other work is failing and will need replacing within 18 months. **There is money in the current budget for improvements at Jockey Lane and so a new shed will be purchased and installed this winter without impacting the 2024-25 budget.**

The Underwood Road site reps would prefer any new building to be on the site of the existing allotment shop as that is easily accessible and allows them to better monitor who is on site. Moving Council machinery to the new shop instead of having a separate building will make the borrowing of that equipment easier. **An architect has been approached with regard to meeting officers and site reps on site to provide a quote for drawing up plans for a new allotment building.**

Tenants are still unaware of who and how to contact when needed. All contact details will be displayed on noticeboards on site, added to the website and included in the annual rent letter. The site reps would appreciate having a printed copy of all relevant documentation at each site for reference purposes.

A company has been found who can provide both a schematic of the current water supply at Underwood Road, but also then should be able to provide options and costs for improving the water pressure there.

Recommendations:

That the Committee shelve plans for water charging and revisit allotment rents in Summer 2024 for the September 2024 rent exercise.

Assets – 28th November 2023

Item 05 – Tree and Bee Corridor Location Possibilities

- 1 Grassy area between Stoke Common play area and Rose Close. (BPC at some point)
- 2 Bow Lake Allotments Community Orchard. (BPC at some point)
- 3 Open space around Bow Lake play area. (BPC at some point)
- 4 Open space on Burrow Hill.
- 5 Open space on Sewall Drive. (BPC at some point)
- 6 Land around the scout hut on West Drive.
- 7 Land at Bishy Beach.
- 8 Grass verges along Hamilton Road.
- 9 Grass verges along Underwood Road.
- 10 Grass verges on both sides of Fair Oak Road from Manor Farm Close to Alan Drayton Way.
- 11 Triangle of land by 92 Fair Oak Road, plus two nearby verges on Manor Road.
- 12 Grass verges on both sides of Alan Drayton Way.
- 13 Verges on Hunters Way
- 14 Open space around Otter Close play area. (BPC)
- 15 Two parcels of land where Alan Drayton Way meets Fair Oak Road at the Fair Oak end.
- 16 Corner verges where Whalesmead Road meets Fair Oak Road, Whalesmead Close, Orchard Avenue, Weavills Road and Hartley Road. Additionally at South West corner of Whalesmead Road and where Orchard Avenue meets Weavills Road.
- 17 Grassy area on Haig Road (east side) nr cut through to Strawberry Mead.
- 18 Open space at Templecombe play area. (BPC)
- 19 Various grassy areas around the Brookfield estate. (BPC)

Assets – 28th November 2023

Item 06 – Cemetery & Closed Churchyards

This update was initially prepared for the September Assets Committee meeting. As that meeting was cancelled it is now being presented for the November meeting. Any updated information will be in red text.

Interments

Currently it is expected that there is sufficient provision at Bishopstoke Cemetery to continue with interments for a minimum of two years. The recent trend of families having ashes interments appears to be reversed in the last year and full burials are now becoming popular again. This will have an impact on the longevity of the site. Only minor tree works were identified in the recent survey.

Stoke Common Cemetery

~~There is no new information about when the site will be transferred across to the Parish Council.~~ There is a general outline plan of how the Council wishes to lay the cemetery out but there have been no quotes sought as there is no timeframe for the work. The Borough Council have committed to installing two standpipes for water on site. **The latest information on the transfer of the site is that progress has been made and there are few outstanding issues remaining. There is expected to be funding transferred along with the Cemetery which the Council should be able to use to add seating, bins and a noticeboard. Given the possibility of installing a boardwalk between the two cemeteries, the Council may wish to consider adding the proposed paths around the Cemetery to that project to enable all similar work to be completed at the same time.**

St Mary's churchyard

The recent tree survey identified only the removal of deadwood and epicormic growth as items for the Council to action. The aerial survey of one of the trees recommended additional external measures to ensure its safety and these are being investigated. The Church, as part of their "eco-church" status have planted an additional nine trees over the past year which will result in increased maintenance costs over time for the Parish Council. The last memorial inspection identified no major problems with the next inspection imminent. **New damage is appearing on the roadside wall, which is not unexpected. The Clerk is arranging to meet with a contractor to assess the required work and begin the process of obtaining diocese approval for it.**

Old St Mary's churchyard

A large branch has recently fallen from a tree into the river and one of the properties behind the churchyard. ~~Specialist advice is being sought on how to deal with that.~~ **This has now been removed.** The meadowed areas did not grow particularly over the summer but it is hoped that they will fare better next year. Only one tree was identified in the tree survey for work, and that was a crown lift. The **recent** memorial inspection identified no major problems ~~with the next inspection imminent.~~

Assets – 28th November 2023

Item 07 – Street Furniture

Bin replacement

Replacement bins have been ordered for both the play area and the car park at Blackberry Drive, as well as in Templecombe Road play area. Work on the bin survey continues and that information will be used to assess which bins to replace and where future bins may be added.

Benches

Replacement benches have also been ordered at Blackberry Drive and Templecombe Road play areas. The Jubilee and other newer benches at Blackberry Drive have recently had graffiti cleaned off them and will continue to be monitored. One of the Jubilee benches is damaged and may need to be replaced. A broken bench in the Glebe Meadow play area is being removed.

Noticeboards

The Council's nine general noticeboards are mostly in good repair, although several have one of the two locks missing. An assessment will shortly be made as to repairing or replacing boards.

Bus Shelters

Recently questions have arisen over the ownership of the bus shelters around Bishopstoke with both the Borough and County Council's believing that the Borough owns them, whilst the Parish believes it owns them, and has done for around a decade. Research is being done at both Parish and Borough level to determine where they properly belong. Additionally, the Borough Council apparently has funding set aside to clean the shelters and the Clerk is attempting to determine if the Parish can access those funds.

Assets report 28th November 2023

Play Areas

A new basket swing has been ordered for Blackberry Drive with the existing one being moved to Otter Close. The latest round of inspections has been received and the Assets Officer is ordered various works from appropriate parties. Work to remove potential finger traps in the DDA roundabouts at Glebe Meadow and Sayers Road is taking place. The replacement hedging at Stoke Common play area will be planted and managed by Green Smile.

A project to identify the replacement costs and expected remaining lifespan of each play area agreed at Full Council is being added to the play area strategy and review for completion over the next six months. This information will be used to help agree future levels of funding for the Play Area Replacement and Refurbishment fund.

Burial Grounds

The initial work to mark out the route of the boardwalk and clear vegetation so that it can clearly be seen is set to take place in early December. This will be followed by a full quote for the work. An assessment will then be made of whether to proceed with the project and how to fund it. There were two new interments in August, three new ashes burials for September, one new burial and two new ashes plots in October and one new ashes plot for November bringing the total for the year to 20 so far.

Allotments

There is no information to add to the detailed allotment report contained elsewhere in the document pack.

Fixed Assets

The removal of graffiti and repainting of lettering on the Jubilee benches has been completed. Further work on dragons teeth and knee high barriers has been identified and requested. Further information is provided in the detailed report on street furniture contained elsewhere in the document pack.

Open Space & Trees

The tree survey has now taken place and the majority of the work identified is low level maintenance such as removing dead wood and raising canopies. The Brookfield estate is in need of tree thinning in a number of places and that will be the largest job from the survey.

Parish owned and managed buildings

Shears Mill has recently been worked on by the Environment Agency, and has also had its annual maintenance.

War Memorial

The Council has engaged an architect to produce the remaining plans required by the planning authority and also by the Diocese. They will liaise with the other contractors as required. Once planning permission and Diocese permission have been obtained work will proceed at a time when the ground is suitable in the old churchyard.

Bishopstoke Memorial Hall

The planning application for demolition is being decided at the Local Area Committee meeting on 29th November. There are no known issues to prevent permission being granted. We still await both the documents from the Land Registry indicating the three parcels of land have been joined together and properly registered, and the promised letter from the Borough Council detailing their requirement that the land be registered before demolition can proceed.

Draft tender documents for the next stage of the project are being reviewed by the Clerk, RFO and Glebe Meadow working group and will be returned to the Borough Council for amendment when the review is completed.

Assets Committee - Clerk's report 28th November 2023

Actions from previous meetings

ASSETS_2223_M05/45.3

Regarding the website and Glebe Meadow information

This has not yet been actioned.

ASSETS_2223_M06/53.4

Regarding a crossing from Glebe Meadow to Old St Mary's

This request was submitted via the Hantsweb portal on the 31st March. A reply has not yet been received. Similar requests have been told that extra measures are only considered where there is a history of accidents and therefore it is believed this request will not be successful.

ASSETS_2223_M06/55.3

Regarding bins

Streetscene have been asked for details of all the bins they empty within Bishopstoke. This has still not been provided.

ASSETS_2324_M01/6.6

Regarding a play area review

The timetable has not yet been drawn up. This action will be combined with the play area strategy and other overall play area actions in future updates.

ASSETS_2324_M01/7.3

Regarding the play area disclaimer and signs

The disclaimer has been drafted. Now exploring less expensive ways to add it to the signage without having to replace all play area signs again.

ASSETS_2324_M02/11.2

Regarding the minutes and document pack

The minutes were signed and both have been published.

ASSETS_2324_M02/11.3

Regarding the play area strategy

This has not yet been drafted.

ASSETS_2324_M02/13.2

Regarding meeting allotment site reps

The meeting took place on September 13th and was appreciated by all involved. The results are included in the document pack for this meeting.

ASSETS_2324_M02/13.3

Regarding allotment deposits

This will be in place from October 1st 2023. It will be publicised on Facebook, the website and on allotment noticeboards.

ASSETS_2324_M02/13.6

Regarding allotment rent letters

The rent letters went out as planned. It included a guide on closing down an allotment plot for winter; contact details for all the site reps and a reminder that they are the first port of call for information and advice; information on what to do if you are unable to work your plot; a request for volunteers to join an "Act of Kindness" squad to help tenants in the short term who may be struggling and any rule changes that have been agreed since the tenancies were produced.

ASSETS_2324_M02/13.8

Regarding standard allotment letters

The Clerk and RFO are currently working through the various letters making the necessary amendments.

ASSETS_2324_M02/13.10 Regarding water charging
See above – minute M02/13.2

ASSETS_2324_M02/14.1 Regarding potentially providing an allotment rent discount for those on benefits
This has not yet been actioned.

ASSETS_2324_M02/14.3 Regarding allotment rent
The RFO has been informed of the new rent.

ASSETS_2324_M02/15.2 Regarding cemetery gates
The Cemetery gates are planned to be installed in the week beginning 27th November.

ASSETS_2324_M02/16.2 Regarding bus shelter cleaning
This will be included in the next newsletter.

Recommendations from previous meetings

There were no recommendations for Full Council to decide on.