

BISHOPSTOKE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held in the Parish Office, Riverside, Bishopstoke commencing at 7.30pm on 13 December 2016

Present: Cllrs Toher (Chair), Dean, Mignot, Parker-Jones, Tidridge and Winstanley

In Attendance: Mrs C Taylor (Assistant Clerk, Bishopstoke Parish Council)

Public Session Cllr Daly and 1 member of the public were present.

FGP_1617_M07/

106 Apologies for Absence

106.1 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RESOLVED** unanimously that, in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair to the committee, Cllr Toher preside as Chair to the committee for this meeting.

106.2 Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllr Thornton, Cllr Chaffey and Mr D Hillier-Wheal (Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council).

107 To accept as a true record, and sign, the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting held on 15 November 2016

107.1 The draft minutes had been circulated with the supporting papers for this meeting.

107.2 Cllr Parker-Jones asked for Item 91.1 to be amended to delete the last sentence, for the last 6 words to be removed from Item 94.1, and for the first 9 words from Item 91.6 to be replaced with the words 'Some members could not recall'. Cllr Parker-Jones also proposed including within item 96 additional information, on record, concerning making a recommendation to Full Council on the proposed budget. After discussion it was agreed that this addition would be included under Matters Arising.

107.3 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RESOLVED** with Cllr Toher abstaining (absent) that, subject to the amendments listed in Minute 107.2, the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting held on 15 November 2016 be accepted as a true record.

108 To consider Matters Arising from the above Minutes

108.1 Minute FGP_1617_M06/Item 91.4 – Cllr Tidridge asked if the Clerk had received a response from Eastleigh Borough Council regarding item 84.4, and if not, when a response could be expected. The Assistant Clerk was asked to request the Clerk to respond to this query by reply to all members of the committee.

Action: Clerk

108.2 Minute FGP_1617_M06/Item 94.1 – Cllr Parker-Jones informed the committee that the next meeting of the Cemetery Working Group had now been arranged for 20th December 2016 6pm in the Parish Office and that the Group were still awaiting a volunteer policy.

Action: Clerk

108.3 Minute FGP_1617_M06/Item 96 – Cllr Parker-Jones asked for it to be recorded that her recollection of this Item was that all members had been asked whether there should be a

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recommendation for the budget, or whether it should be deferred to Full Council for further discussion, and the decision had been to not make any recommendations on the budget.

108.4 Minute FGP_1617_M06/Item 99.4 – it was noted that Do the Numbers had agreed to change their dates, and Full Council had agreed the appointment of Do the Numbers as internal auditor.

108.5 Minute FGP_1617_M06/Item 102.3 – the Assistant Clerk was asked if contact had been made with Eastleigh Borough Council animal welfare officer for help in drafting the chicken policy. The Assistant Clerk informed the committee that she had contacted the Eastleigh Borough Council animal welfare officer and the chicken policy was in the process of being drafted and would be looked at by the animal welfare officer. Cllr Parker-Jones stated that the online RSPCA guidelines for keeping chickens may be useful in the drafting of the chicken policy. The Assistant Clerk was also asked to include guidelines concerning avian influenza. Cllr Winstanley stated that the policy should include the need to observe national policy, and the need for sufficient indoor housing for animal welfare purposes when requested by the government policy to keep the chickens inside.

Action: Assistant Clerk

109 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

109.1 Cllr Toher declared an interest in FGP_1617_A07 Item 5, due to membership of the committee for Age Concern, there being a payment of a grant to Age Concern contained in the Non-Confidential Payments report.

109.2 Cllr Winstanley declared an interest in FGP_1617_A07 Item 5 as she had put in a claim for Chair's Expenses, which was contained in the Non-Confidential Payments report.

110 To receive the RFO's Report, and approve Budget Monitoring and Non-Confidential Payments Reports for November 2016

110.1 The budget monitoring and non-confidential payments reports had been circulated with the supporting papers for this meeting.

110.2 The Assistant Clerk reported, on behalf of the Clerk, that the format of the non-confidential report will be changed next month. Previously it was reporting from the date the last report was created to the date the current report was created. This will change to reporting by calendar months to ensure regular payments only appear once per sheet, and allow accurate checking against the bank statement.

110.3 The Assistant Clerk reported, on behalf of the Clerk, that some Cemetery items had been reclassified in the budget monitoring report from general maintenance to burial board maintenance, in order to maintain consistency with previous years.

110.4 The Assistant Clerk reported that in 2014 the Council agreed an annual grant of £500 to the Street Pastors. The Clerk has now received the request for this year which is being passed for payment. Cllr Winstanley informed the committee that this item has been discussed with the Clerk, and that the Street Pastors will still complete a grant application but do not need to provide all supporting documentation. The grant still needs to be submitted for payment to be made. Reports are received weekly from the Street Pastors and this enables committee members to monitor their activities. The Assistant Clerk stated that this payment would still be classified as a S137 payment (*under the Local Government Finance act 1972*) as are all other grants.

110.5 Cllr Winstanley stated that it was important to ensure that payments can be easily reconciled to ensure no payments are missed.

110.6 Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Budget Monitoring report for November 2016 be noted.

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110.7 Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Non-Confidential Payments for November 2016 be noted.

111 To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan

111.1 Cllr Toher informed the committee that she had met with Cllrs Dean and Tidridge on 1 December 2016. The next step for the neighbourhood plan is that she will be emailing all those who have expressed an interest, assigning them to working groups, asking for volunteers to chair the working groups, and asking for their agreement that their contact details can be passed on. The intention is for a meeting in early January of all those who have expressed an interest, the 3 councillors mentioned, and the Clerk, in order to prepare a questionnaire for sending out. She has asked the Clerk to place information on the website in order to obtain expressions of interest and an understanding of the areas each working group will be working on. She will also be contacting Toby Ayling, Eastleigh Borough Council, regarding contact liaison and strategic priorities.

111.2 Cllr Toher informed the committee that, following the initial meeting, the expected timetable will be to prepare the survey in early February, to distribute the survey in various formats mid-February, to analyse the survey by the end of March, and in early April to start writing the neighbourhood plan. At this point additional expertise may be required, for example for traffic issues. A grant is available for possible costs but must be spent within 6 months of application. It is expected that there will be a draft available by mid June. She will regularly update the committee on progress.

111.3 Cllr Toher read out the email intended to be sent out to those interested, and no changes were suggested by the committee. Cllr Toher informed the committee that the email would be sent out the following day.

111.4 Cllr Winstanley asked how many volunteers had come forward. Cllr Toher informed the committee that in some working groups there were 8 or 9 volunteers, but fewer in other groups.

112 To note the requirement for urgent spending on verge protection

112.1 The Assistant Clerk reported, on behalf of the Clerk, on the need for urgent spending on verge protection for both the Manor Farm allotment site and the Cemetery. Verge marking at the allotment site is needed because people have been cutting the corner, and reversing onto allotment plots. Protection at the Cemetery is needed as people are currently driving over and removing the existing verge protection, and tearing up the ground near graves and seating areas by the roundabout. The cost of the allotment verge marking and Cemetery verge protection is expected to be in the order of £550 and £850 respectively.

112.2 Cllr Parker-Jones stated that there needed to be adequate access to the graves and that the verge protection in the Cemetery should be attractive to look at. Members agreed to verge protection in principle, with the intended type of verge protection to be reported to the Cemetery Working Group meeting 20 December 2016.

112.3 Cllr Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Parker-Jones, **RESOLVED** unanimously to note the requirement for urgent spending on verge protection.

Cllr Daly left at this point.

113 To recommend virement between existing budget headings in the 2016-17 budget

113.1 The Assistant Clerk reported that the RFO recommended virement between existing budget headings to cover existing, necessary work (for example plot clearance, asbestos testing and removal, and mole control) and the urgent spending on verge protection. The recommended virement was to reduce the Carnival budget to the predicted spend of £4000, and to increase allotment maintenance to

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£4500, Cemetery grounds maintenance to £5200 and general burial board maintenance to £3000. This virement would have no impact on the overall predicted spend for 2016/17.

113.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RECOMMENDED** unanimously to vire between existing budget headings for 2016/17 by reducing the Carnival budget to £4000, increasing allotment maintenance to £4500, increasing Cemetery grounds maintenance to £5200 and increasing general burial board maintenance to £3000.

The Chair requested a short break, 8.20pm. Discussion resumed at 8.23pm.

114 To discuss the 2017-18 budget and determine any further work required on individual budget lines

114.1 The proposed expenditure budget, reserve levels and precept calculations had been circulated prior to the meeting.

114.2 The Assistant Clerk, on behalf of the Clerk, informed members of the changes that had been made to the budget proposals in order to indicate where savings could be made. The revised budget proposals contained an ongoing spend of £181,490, which when added to one-off costs gave a revised total of £223,490.

114.3 Following discussion the following was agreed for further work on individual budget lines:

The Assistant Clerk to request the Clerk to provide a more detailed breakdown and explanation of the trade-off between the lines for play area provision and play area maintenance, for the next meeting in January. The committee considered that there may be a need to put the £8000 provision back into the budget for 2017/18 rather than delay the play area programme by one year.

Action: Clerk

The committee considered that the noticeboard program should not be delayed by one year, and that the proposed budget should revert back to £3000, in particular for the Memorial Hall notice board replacement to be included.

Action: Clerk

The Assistant Clerk to request the Clerk to inform the committee of any further information on quotes being obtained for the fencing at the back of the Cemetery, and if available, to be provided for discussion by the Cemetery Working Group on 20th December 2016.

Action: Clerk

The committee considered that the Cemetery grounds maintenance budget should not be reduced from £5000 to £4000, but should instead be reduced to £4500.

Action: Clerk

The committee considered that the £2000 budget for the provision towards election expenses should be reinstated in the proposed budget.

Action: Clerk

114.4 The Assistant Clerk, on behalf of the Clerk, informed members that the tax base figures had been received from Eastleigh Borough Council, and this showed an increase in Bishopstoke's tax base from 3518.52 households to 3525.31 households. The Clerk had provided details of the effect on income and reserves through possible percentage rises in council tax. In order to provide an income to at least meet expected ongoing costs a council tax rise in excess of 6% would be required. The Clerk recommended that the committee look at a rise in council tax of 8 to 10% in order to provide some income towards the one-off costs, and in order to avoid the otherwise significant reduction of reserves. A rise in council tax of 8 to 10% would result in a more gradual reduction of reserves.

114.5 The Chair requested comments from members on the information presented. Cllr Winstanley commented that if income covered ongoing expenditure, future one-off costs will still need to be met

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by a rise in council tax as it would not be possible to run down reserves below prudent levels. The Assistant Clerk was asked to request the Clerk to produce for the next meeting a three-year projection to give a view of the issues facing the council in the next 3 years.

Action: Clerk

Members queried why the increase in the tax base was so low given the level of housebuilding in the area. Cllr Winstanley stated that there was a considerable rise last year. The Assistant Clerk was asked to request the Clerk to produce for the next meeting, information on how the council tax base is determined, and for an explanation for the low increase.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Toher commented that there was a need to ensure that the reserves were at a reasonable level. Cllr Tidridge commented that the reduction in reserves between the different percentage levels was not large, and given the financial situation of some residents, felt that reserves could be reduced to £120,000. Cllr Toher commented that the actual cash cost increase per band D needed to be reviewed, rather than the percentage, as the increase was in the order of a few pounds per year. Cllr Mignot commented that reserves may need to remain higher in case of the need to look in the future at work for the Bishopstoke Community Association and the Bishopstoke Memorial Hall. Cllr Dean commented that a 9.9% increase shown would result in the reduction of reserves from £160,000 to £125,000, which meant that the large one-off costs of £25,000 would be met by reserves. In addition she felt that the resulting increase per band D would be approximately an additional 40p per month for band D residents, which she felt was not unreasonable and would be manageable by residents.

Cllr Toher requested that the Clerk amend the documents for the changes requested under 114.3 and that they should be reviewed again in the January meeting of the committee, for a recommendation to then go to Full Council.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Winstanley stated that it is still unclear if the government are changing the rules on permissible increases in Parish Council taxes. The recommendation will need to take account of respecting people's finances but with a budget suited to ensuring sufficient income to cover the reasonable expenses of the Council. Cllr Parker-Jones commented that there was a need for the Council to engage the community to explain any increase, and had asked the Clerk for some changes to be made. Cllr Tidridge requested that the Clerk be asked to publicise on Facebook, and by other means, to encourage people to attend the next Council meeting to see the deliberations on the budget.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Toher thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion.

115 To receive the Clerk's Report, including an update on Parish Council assets

115.1 The Assistant Clerk reported that there was 1 planned burial in December, giving a total of 19 interments to date in the year from April 1st.

115.2 The Assistant Clerk reported, on behalf of the Clerk, that he had been working on the need for verge protection at Manor Farm allotment site, and on verge protection and fencing along the front part of the Cemetery. Quotes had been requested for the larger amount of fencing work still required at the Cemetery.

115.3 The Assistant Clerk reported that the Parish Office is now closed for Christmas and will reopen on January 3rd 2017. Phone messages and email will still be monitored.

116 Date, time, place and Agenda Items for the next meeting

116.1 The next meeting is scheduled to be on Tuesday 10 January 2017 at 7:30pm in the Parish Office, Riverside, Bishopstoke.

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116.2 Agenda Items for this meeting should be received by the Clerk no later than Tuesday 3 January 2017.

117 Motion for Confidential Business

117.1 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Toher, **RESOLVED** unanimously that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed relating to employees' remuneration, it was advisable in the public interest that the public be excluded and for the record the business be regarded as confidential.

117.2 Cllr Toher agreed to provide the Assistant Clerk with minutes for the record following discussions on amended hours of work and salary increments for staff.

The Assistant Clerk and 1 member of the public left at this point

118 To make recommendations on amended hours of work and salary increments for staff

118.1 Notes from staff appraisals had been circulated prior to the meeting.

118.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RECOMMENDED** that the Clerk's hours be increased to 37 hours per week from January 1, 2017, with up to 8 hours per week overtime, as required, without additional Chair approval, and that the Clerk be awarded an annual scale point increase from 1st January 2017.

118.3 Proposed Cllr Parker-Jones, Seconded Cllr Winstanley, **RECOMMENDED** unanimously that the Assistant Clerk's hours be increased to 10 hours per week from January 1, 2017, with up to 10 hours per week overtime, as required, without additional Chair approval, and that the Assistant Clerk be awarded an annual scale point increase from 1st April 2017.

The Assistant Clerk returned at this point and resumed taking the minutes.

119 To approve payment of staff hours of work, mileage and out of pocket expenses for November 2016

119.1 Members noted the report tabled by the RFO which is attached to these minutes.

119.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Mignot, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the November 2016 staff payments be noted as tabled.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm

Resolutions to be noted by the Full Parish Council

- 106.1 that, in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair to the committee, Cllr Toher preside as Chair to the committee for this meeting.
- 107.3 that, subject to the amendments listed in Minute 107.2, the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting held on 15 November 2016 be accepted as a true record.
- 110.6 that the Budget Monitoring report for November 2016 be noted.
- 110.7 that the Non-Confidential Payments for November 2016 be noted.
- 112.3 to note the requirement for urgent spending on verge protection.
- 117.1 that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed relating to employees' remuneration, it was advisable in the public interest that the public be excluded and for the record the business be regarded as confidential.
- 119.2 that the November 2016 staff payments be noted as tabled.

Recommendations for consideration by the Full Parish Council

- 113.2 to vire between existing budget headings for 2016/17 by reducing the Carnival budget to £4000, increasing allotment maintenance to £4500, increasing Cemetery grounds maintenance to £5200 and increasing general burial board maintenance to £3000.
- 118.2 that the Clerk's hours be increased to 37 hours per week from January 1, 2017, with up to 8 hours per week overtime, as required, without additional Chair approval, and that the Clerk be awarded an annual scale point increase from 1st January 2017.
- 118.3 that the Assistant Clerk's hours be increased to 10 hours per week from January 1, 2017, with up to 10 hours per week overtime, as required, without additional Chair approval, and that the Assistant Clerk be awarded an annual scale point increase from 1st April 2017.

Payments in November 2016 in excess of £500 published in accordance with the Government's transparency directive

Green Smile	Grounds Maintenance (November)	£3,283.82
Stoke Park Infants Association	Grant for Storyteller's Throne	£1,000.00
Green Smile	Various works	£615.00

Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Clerk's Signature: _____ Date: _____