

BISHOPS LYDEARD & COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Parish Council (PC) meeting held in the Village Hall, Bishops Lydeard on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 7pm (*taken by Cllr Jane Warmington*).

Present: Cllrs Allen, Bainbridge, Ball, Bletcher, Hunt, Lewin-Harris, Martin (Chair), Pattemore, and Warmington supported by Neal Gossage (Clerk)

Councillors absent: Cllr Rigby.

In attendance: 6 members of the public.

196/23 Apologies: Cllr Mike Rigby.

197/23 Declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda: Cllr Warmington declared an interest in planning application 13/23/0010 at Cothelstone Manor;

198/23 Adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th November 2023: under item 178/23 BANK REPAIRS - remove bold and replace with 'either Highways will consult residents themselves or they will attend a future PC meeting'.

199/23 Matters arising: There were none.

200/23 Clerk's report:

Darby Way Telephone Box

- There are problems with our plans to offer it "as is" to West Somerset Railway.

Public access rights

- Notification of further work to be carried out.

Public toilets water leak

- It appears as though there is a problem with the meter.

Request from "streamside" residents

- Funding has been agreed in principle.

Electric vehicle charging points

- This is an agenda item.

Devolution of services from SC

- Presentation received and discussed at SALC AGM

PO Box number

- This is now in use and on the website.

Website

- This has been updated for the Clerk's contact details

SALC

- Attendance at SALC AGM re SC funding issues

201/23 Chairman's report:

- Met SC Roads and Traffic officers - *insert precis of Clive's notes.*
- Tried and was only partially successful in joining on-line Local Community Network meeting
- The code of conduct course had not taken place
- Streamside Residents on agenda.
- Helping new Clerk.
- Electoral issues has meant liaising with Somerset Electoral Services; costs are around £4000; with the very recent resignation of Cllr Ball there may be three elections in this financial year (with an allocation for only one in budget).
- AGAR queries circulated for information; response needed by end of February (on both Jan and Feb agendas).
- Attended Christmas lights switch on which was a good event and thanks to those who organised this.
- Alan Ball resigned formally as a Councillor after the agenda was issued. The formal announcement of a casual vacancy will be a January agenda item.

202/ 23 Comments from members of the public: There were none.

203/23 Planning applications:

13/23/0010 Proposal: Conversion of small room in external wall to be used for a winter bat roost with small slit stone window to be blocked up and external door to be fitted at Cothelstone Manor, Cothelstone Road, Bishops Lydeard. Application Type: Full Planning Permission -

The PC supported the planning application without giving planning reasons.

06/23/0034/T Proposal: Application to carry out management works to one beech tree included in Taunton Deane Borough (Bishops Lydeard No.2) Tree Preservation Order 8 December 1997 at 1 South Drive, Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard (TD705). Application Type: Pruning of Tree(s) covered by TPO

The PC defer to views of Tree Officer.

13/23/0003 Proposal: Erection of a single storey extension to the side and rear with construction of driveway and parking at Doveleys, Cushuish Road, Cothelstone. Application Type: Full Planning Permission - No comment made in June, issues with Highways (now accepted with conditions).

The PC has further comments to make.

All applications can be viewed online at line <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/Planning-West-Apps>

204/23 To consider representations from James Dakin, Headteacher of Bishops Lydeard Church School in connection with a CIL funding bid of up to £20,000 and to decide on that application: CIL committee haven't been able to come to a decision. Very pleased school achieved 'good' Ofsted. Wish to support school but should the multi Academy Trust be providing this? The Head mentioned that the school was looking at ways of funding projects including a nurture and wellbeing centre, use of spare space because the school is growing (132 up to 142 so far). The hut is being turned into an additional classroom. The project applied for is intervention space with facilities.

QUESTION to CIL committee whether CIL rules allow schools to apply and yes they do;

QUESTION on whether furniture is capital expenditure and yes it is. QUESTION about what responsibility the multi-academy Academy Trust has and why aren't they providing funding?

ANSWER that 36 schools make up this Academies Trust; October census showed lower numbers

and a deficit budget recovery plan (with only 4K allocated for replacements and schools operating within their budget are propping up schools with deficits). The Head wishes to fulfil space potential and the current breakout space is very small and always in use. They would like to offer extras such as phonics when children with SENs and some other disadvantaged children would benefit. The school met the Parish Council after the last PC meeting to formalise the application to bring to this meeting.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Lewin-Harris to offer the school £17,552 subject to confirmation that the application is eligible for CIL funds. This was SECONDED by Cllr Pattermore and UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTED by Councillors.

205/23 Roads and traffic issues. To consider the report of the meeting on 17th November, to approve and agree next steps and to consider and decide on a new fee proposal from Transport Planning Associates: This would be a purchase provider arrangement (SC do work and PC pays). Few problems to overcome but should be no question of commuted sums; likely to be adopted by Highways Authority for future maintenance; document from Highways should be met by existing traffic consultants report (minimum signs and lines but attractive traffic calming measures).

Looking for approval on outstanding fee proposal (£1600). Five village gateways should be relatively straightforward. Village has shown support for this throughout. **PROPOSED by Cllr Lewin- Harris and SECONDED by Cllr Allen. A recorded vote was requested - 6 voted for and 1 against (Cllr Bainbridge).**

205/23 Avon and Somerset Police Report: no blog to link to for last month and minimal incidents reported.

206/23 CIL Working Party – to add at least one other member to this (who need not be a councillor). Current members are Cllrs Martin, Lewin-Harris and Hunt) : offer from members of the public Paul Wheatley and Philip Durban. **PC agreed to have both on Working Group (external applications only not PC own projects).**

207/23 Library update from Councillor Pattermore: Councillors were sent the report which was summarised at the meeting. The numbers of users and borrowings continue to increase and the Summer Reading Challenge (for children) had been a success. For the benefit of members of the public at the meeting, mention was made that Ian Hunter is the volunteer coordinator and thanks the Council for their continued support for the library which is an asset to village. **PROPOSED vote of thanks to Ian Hunter from members of the Council.** Mr Hunter had written an article for the next issue of Fiveways (Parish Magazine).

208/24 Streamside Residents Group update: Mr Durban gave an update. The PC agreed in principle that a range of improvement works (footpath repairs) would be eligible under CIL. There was a meeting with Cllr Rigby, Parks and Open Spaces to look at setting up a management agreement; discuss flooding issue (recently cleaned out). Looking forward to Friday meeting and hope to have positive feedback for January meeting. The path in question is well used and local childminders would like to thank the PC for work so far.

209/24 Strategic outline case for a cycleway between Bishops Lydeard and Taunton from Councillor Lewin- Harris: report not yet circulated. On line meeting about connectivity and

Somerset had a document ready to apply for any Government grant. Briefly there is a short list of five options, all based on a cycle path alongside the main A358; highest scoring is along south-side linking into Cotford (likely to be roadside bit). Options versus objectives as no landowners have been spoken to yet; next step is an outline business case (but no money for this); Somerset were asked for business case cost. Suggestion to go back and ask again for cost case, then may be feasible to pump prime. Difficult to pick one option as no landowner consultations to judge likelihood of it happening (land parcels (fields) are noted not owners). Difficulties may arise with properties along the route. Bishops Lydeard to Cotford roundabout is feasible as there is a wide verge. **Cllr Lewin-Harris to circulate report and respond with questions discussed.**

210/23 Banking arrangements and rationalisation: To approve reducing the number of accounts held and the transfer of the majority of funds into the Public Sector Deposit Fund: paper circulated on this. Reduce nine bank accounts to three and move to online banking. Some discussion about this. No investment fund is risk free (capital protected but variable interest) but is about as secure as can be (PSDF referred to). **PROPOSED by Cllr Bletcher and SECONDED by Cllr Allen. There were 5 votes for and 2 abstentions.**

211/23 EV charging points - to hear a report on progress from the Working Group (WG): suggestion that the report is put on line. Recommendations to Jan meeting; site meeting (20th December) with Somerset Council help and possible Local Election Vehicle Fund (where there is no commercial interest). Additional member may be required as Cllr Ball has resigned (but could remain on WG). Clerk looking at commercial interest by GP Surgery and will report back on interest and any proposals. Would consult village on this and on street chargers. The PC has lease on Surgery car park from Village Hall (at a peppercorn rent) so no problem foreseen. Central Government funding difficult and complicated and only available on public land. Somerset Council may have money to help. Chair said Lethbridge Arms were quite keen as they have an open (not gated) car park. **Draft letter to come from chair to other possible venues (dentists, WSR).**

QUESTION does the PC own any land - yes a tiny amount by Mr Back's stream, also loo block but not site upon which sits. E-copies of the report have been circulated already.

212/23 To consider a funding request from Citizens Advice and agree any contribution: most years PC has made a contribution; look at request for £320. This year's budget has allocated £850 for donations; **Cllr Hunt offered to write to Coop to suggest donation.** **A PROPOSAL to donate £320 to Somerset Citizens Advice was made by Cllr Warmington and SECONDED by Cllr Allen.**

213/23 Parish Lengthsman's Report: Clerk to follow up requests to refill grit bins and provide a new bin and grit at Stairfoot (Fennington crossroads).

214/23b Replacement of parish laptop: paper circulated. Laptop replaced as old one broke and data was corrupted so consultant to recover (now backed up to Dropbox cloud).

215/24 Somerset Council matters: Cllr Rigby sent his apologies.

216/23 Resignation of Member Auditor and appointment of new Member Auditor: Cllr Allen wishes to step down. Cllr Lewin-Harris has attended finance training and according to SALC this is not a requirement. Cllr Bainbridge is also a member auditor and will remain so.

217/23 Authorisation of additional hours worked by the new Clerk (5 in October and 42 in November) and approval of the local government pay award to £16.67 backdated to April 2023: The Clerk is producing a spreadsheet breaking down work done to give PC better idea of administrative costs especially for any new projects. **PC agreed to this sensible proposal.**

218/24 Finance:

- **Half year finance update:** MUGA showing a deficit but came from sinking fund not revenue budget. Accounts redone so discrepancy of 8k has been corrected. PC accounts are operated on cash basis but Clerk likely to suggest a move to accrual basis sometime in future.

Direct debits suggested to be approved in advance are as follows:

British Gas c£90/month Toilets
Go Cardless £5/month Website
BT Group c£90/month Telephone/Broadband
EDF c£110/month Library
ICO £35/year ICO
Services Charges/Bank charges c£35/quarter Bank charges
AGREED.

Clerk to provide links to information on future agendas.

- **Schedule of direct debits:**

To note income received:

PSDF Dividend/Interest October 2023 £1,488.97
Library income December 2023 £64.10

To note payments made by direct debit:

Somerset Web Services 2/11/23 £5.52
EDF Energy October 2023 £109.15
British Gas £81.90
HSBC bank charges £13.27
Unity Trust bank charges £20.10

To note payments made by BACS/Cheque:

Lengthsman September 2023 £1,140.70
Lengthsman October 2023 £1,287.42
Bishops Lydeard Village Hall £90.45
SC Library Legionella Assessment October £240.00
SALC £881.85
Coomber Security Systems – Service £345.24
SC Library salaries Q2 2023/24 £2,858.82
AIS Cleaning Contractors November 2023 £731.22

To authorise payments to be made by cheque or BACS

Bishops Lydeard Village Hall October 2023 £175.00

Neal Gossage (Salary December 2023) up to £1,867.04 (normal hours 65 plus 47 additional hours to catch up on backlog of work - **AGREED**

Balance of MUGA project (£1,800.00) - **AGREED**

Balance of POS project: held back £500 before planting now taken place (£500) - **AGREED**

Lengthsman November 2023 (£1,774.62) including VAT £295.77 (which the PC claims back).

PROPOSED Cllr Bletcher, SECONDED Cllr Lewin-Harris.

219/24 Budget 2024/25. To discuss the budget situation and take initial decisions which can underpin a formal decision next month: broadly the options for future additional works Somerset Council relinquishing - either the PC employs contractors, works in partnership, or receives and pays for Somerset Council (as PC currently does). Mention of bigger Parish/Town Councils keen to take on extra funding and running things themselves; and possibilities of joint arrangements with other parishes. This PC was concerned about cost increases (within current arrangements). There may be significant rise in charges if Somerset Council continues to provide services for the PC such as dog bins, grass cutting and mowing (in a number of areas). Lengthsman could cover some extras which would need to be looked at with PC.

Somerset Council will only be covering costs of Social Care and any other statutory responsibilities; all discretionary spending will stop. This is likely to be significant increase in costs to PC which we need to budget for ahead (for example our PC elections), AGAR, dog bins (with an estimated 25-30% increase).

Suggestion about voluntary community projects to replace hanging baskets for example. (Big ticket items in the parish are the library, loos, lengthsman, followed by hanging baskets). **A proposal to stop funding hanging baskets and replace these with £2000 fund to support voluntary community projects was AGREED** (there are already two community gardens and the church wall boxes).

Suggestion that MUGA does not need £15,000 sinking fund but reduce instead to £3,000 was AGREED.

In summary the PC budget deficit would be over £7000 if there is no rise in precept. There was discussion about future expenditure - for example election (up to £9000), dog bins £5,000 +; Somerset Council is offering services but the list is incomplete and budget has to be set by 2 Feb.

Clerk to revise draft budget from breakeven to 25% increase. If an increase becomes unacceptable Councillors need to have in mind a reduction of services that PC provides. Suggestion to explain to residents through leaflet after decision at January meeting.

220/23 To note planning permissions granted: None

221/23 To note planning applications refused/withdrawn: A number are awaiting a decision. Cllr Bletcher to advise Clerk of questions to ask Somerset Council Enforcement on current activities on live enforcement case in Parish.

222/23 Any other business – for report only: Concern about travellers still encamped on the industrial estate; Member finance training strongly recommend and all members should have PC email address; Disappointment that Just Giving page in Fiveways (PC and Church) had had some negative feedback; Christmas Light Switch-on was very successful with over 50 families there.

223/23 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 10th January 2024, 7pm Bishops Lydeard Village Hall.

DRAFT