

OTTERHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD

on
THURSDAY 7 JANUARY 2016
at
OTTERHAMPTON VILLAGE HALL

PUBLIC SESSION:

No items were raised.

PRESENT:

Barry Leathwood (Chairman), Heath Bennett, John Berry, Dick Best, Bob Birkenhead, Julie Evans, Rachel Perrett, Dist Cllr Julie Pay, Aly Prowse (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

111/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from County Cllr John Edney and Dist Cllr Mike Caswell.

112/15 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3.12.15:

The minutes were APPROVED and signed by the Chairman.

113/15 CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR:

Following the interview held on 15.12.15, Rachel Perrett was co-opted to the parish council as proposed by B.Leathwood and seconded by B.Birkenhead. Barry welcomed Rachel and hopes she will enjoy the role. Paperwork to be sent to Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). **Action: Clerk**

114/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

There were no declarations of interest.

115/15 WARD REPORTS:

Cllr Pay reported that SDC is set to approve its budget by the full Council in February. Nothing further to report following the Christmas break.

116/15 PLANNING MATTERS:

39/15/00013 – Single storey extension, 21 Riverside – GRANTED

117/15 FINANCIAL MATTERS:

1. Balances

Current A/C £1286.23; Deposit A/C £14400.177 Reserve A/C £7400.47.

2. Approve Precept

A detailed discussion was held with regard to raising the precept. Current surplus and Reserves' figures together with future financial requirements were taken into consideration. D.Best cautioned that whatever we do it must be transparent. He also commented that this is the one tax that goes directly back into the community. Any rise will be directly charged to the electorate. A general guide is for councils is to hold a figure equivalent to at least 25% of the precept in Reserves, although over and above this we should include ongoing commitments such as Election and future replacement costs (e.g. play area). It was AGREED that the precept should cover the council tax support grant which is being phased out. J.Evans suggested looking at the Precept earlier than we do now (i.e. pre November). It was AGREED to increase the Precept by £1000 to £18500, as proposed by B.Leathwood and seconded by J.Berry. **Action: Clerk**

3. The following payments were AGREED:

A.Prowse	£280.16	(Clerk's salary for December including £18.02 other costs)
K.Preston	£190.00	(Village Gardening October - December 2015)

4. Budget Monitoring Statement

The budget monitoring statement detailing the 9 months expenditure to 31 December 2015 was previously circulated to members. There were no comments.

118/15 ITEMS FROM THE LAST MEETING:

1. Review Action List (for actions not covered by the agenda):

- a) No 4 – Street lighting at Combwich junction. The Clerk has written to Alyn Jones (SCC) on 21.12.15 requesting that he pursue this outstanding action.
- b) No 5 – The operation HAROLD booklet has been placed on the Combwich.Org website.

- c) No 9 – Highways Issues. The Clerk has written to Highways requesting an update on the outstanding actions. We have been advised that these issues will be picked up by the new safety engineer who starts in the New Year. We will request he visits the parish so that we can meet him to discuss our issues on site. **Action: Clerk**
 - d) No 14 – Insurance claim. B.Leathwood contacted the claimants who are still awaiting a report from the insurance assessors. Unless the trees can be proved to be the cause of the subsidence, they would prefer the trees to remain as they afford some privacy to their garden.
 - e) No 16 – Defibrillator training. D.Best has heard nothing more from his initial request. He did however advise that the defibrillator will be officially monitored on-line by the Ambulance Service.
 - f) No 17 – Tree maintenance. Photographs of the 3 trees in need of attention have been sent to Highways for consideration. It may be that we end up with responsibility for the trees.
 - g) No 18 – Annual grass cutting contract. The Clerk has written to SDC. Awaiting response.
 - h) No 20 – Maps of the parish council / Highways owned land were passed around at the meeting.
 - i) No 21 – Combwich Ponds. B.Leathwood has written to SCC asking for a progress update.
 - j) No 22 – Consultation with residents re bollards on slip road at crossways. Letters have been delivered to nearby residents and an article will be included in Otter Tales. Barry has received one phone call saying it may be an inconvenience. B.Birkenhead had some concerns over safety issues. The suggestion was made by Highways, so it is hoped a safety appraisal was carried out first.
- 2. Rural Broadband / Mobile Phone Mast**
- a) Broadband speeds at Steart and parts of Otterhampton are very poor. Speeds of 2mb are apparently guaranteed under phase 2 of the BT broadband roll-out but have not yet been delivered. This will be pursued. **Action: Clerk**
 - b) Mobile phone reception is also poor in various places in the parish depending what provider people are with. More research will be carried out. **Action: B.Birkenhead**
- 3. Cannington to Combwich – Hinkley Point Cycle Route.**
- The Cannington to Combwich cycle route is planned to start soon. There has been some further discussion on a cycle route from Combwich to Hinkley Point. The parish council's view is that the route should be along the C182 to accommodate commuting cyclists, but this was abandoned as the road is not wide enough and would be too costly to adopt. A further option would be to link in with the WWT network but this would not be suitable for commuting cyclists. It is thought that neither WWT nor the Environment Agency have been formally approached. Members would generally be in favour if the cycle path network was increased for recreational purposes. S.Littler from SCC PRoW will be attending the Steart Forum and will update us with the latest position.
- 4. Grant Application to Somerset County Council Health and Wellbeing Budget**
- We have been awarded £250 towards the Community Car Scheme and £150 for a bicycle rack near the play area. The Clerk has sent a thank you letter to County Cllr Edney for recommending us for the grant.
- 5. Shipping Container on Combwich Common**
- There have been many objections and complaints regarding the shipping container that the boat club erected without the parish council's permission. The method used to dismantle the old shed was inappropriate too, driving a tractor through it, leaving glass and wood splinters all around which have not been cleared up. In addition, SDC has advised that planning permission will be required. If it is not removed an Enforcement Order could be placed on all interested parties to remove it (which would include us). A meeting was held with 3 members of the boat club on 15.12.15. We advised them (and followed up in writing) that the container must be removed; they were unhappy with this and believed they had some sort of ownership rights based on the amount of time they had resided on the site. In hindsight permission should not have been given to erect the shed in the first instance (because of the Village Green status) some 20-25 years ago, hence it would be difficult to refuse them to have anything in its place. The boat club were advised that once the container is removed any future structure would need to be first approved by the parish council. There would also be conditions attached, such as maintenance of any structure.
- 6. SDC Garage, Brookside Rd – Keyholders**
- The key-holders for the garage are J.Berry, D.Best, B.Birkenhead, J.Evans, B.Leathwood and the Clerk. It was AGREED to purchase 2 shovels to keep in the garage to fill up sand bags. **Action: Clerk.**

119/15 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA:

1. Ongoing and future safety inspections.

B.Birkenhead carried out an inspection of the play area during December and identified that the bolts and bushes on the big swings need replacing. This would cost circa £40. The seats might just about last until the summer. Subject to grant funding, the new play area could be installed by May/June, so it was AGREED to repair the swings to make them safe, but not to replace the seats. **Action: B.Birkenhead.**

B.Leathwood has approached K.Preston who confirmed he would be happy to take on the regular inspections for the play area. There is a check list recommended and available to download from the ROSPA website. A Formal training course will also be sought for him.

2. Proposed Enhanced Children's Play and Recreation Area

The grant application for £8.8k to SDC will be tabled for approval at the next Cluster meeting on 26.2.16 which will be attended by B.Leathwood and J.Berry.

The £38k CIM application to West Somerset Council was submitted on 12.12.15. We will be advised early March if we have been successful.

120/15 COMBWICH TRACK – PARKING AND MAINTENANCE:

1. Sedgemoor Rambler's 40th Anniversary Bench.

B.Leathwood met with a representative of the Ramblers to discuss the siting of the bench. The proposed design was AGREED together with its location near the first gate to the WWT Steart Marsh' Reserve on the track. Costs will be met by The Rambler's Association.

2. Approve Parking Permit Letter (circulated 22.12.15):

The draft parking permit letter was APPROVED. The scheme is now ready to proceed but it will not be advertised. Only Otterhampton parish residents will be eligible to apply.

121/15 PARISH ENHANCEMENT:

1. Wharf Rd Vegetation Maintenance

There are tree surgeons in the village we could use to inspect the trees and vegetation, but we will await the response from Highways who have been asked to inspect the trees. If Highways determine the trees are not its responsibility, the maintenance will fall to us. In any event, it was AGREED to wait until August before carrying out any maintenance of the Wharf Rd.

2. Dog Waste Bag Dispensers

J.Berry suggested the dog fouling problem may improve if dog waste bag dispensers and dog bags were supplied next to the dog bins. The estimated cost for each dispenser is £80 and supplies of bags (800) are £23-£26, depending on quality. The Clerk has emailed SDC to ask if replenishing dispenser bags is a service they could provide when emptying the bins; alternatively, we could approach the gardener. We currently have 3 dog bins (Combwich track, Combwich common by the Village Hall and by the phone box). R.Perrett said the dog bin by the telephone box fills up very quickly and it would be helpful if there was a further bin near the Post Office or Brookside Rd Garages as the dog fouling in this area is terrible. The Clerk suggested we consider placing a larger bin by the phone box. We will obtain costs for the following (and then report back to members for a decision). **Action: Clerk**

- a) Replace the existing bin by the phone box with a larger one;
- b) Supply and fit new bin at the Brookside Rd end of the Village (or re-site from a) above);
- c) Supply and fit 4 dog bin dispensers;
- d) Agreement costs to empty four bins per annum;
- e) Agreement costs to replenish the dog bag dispensers (if SDC provide the service).

122/15 WELCOME PACKS:

B.Leathwood suggested we introduce Welcome Packs for newcomers to the Parish, available hard copy and/or on line. A number of neighbouring parishes have them and they are well received. The costs, met by the parish council, would not be very high. Barry will place an advertisement in Otter Tales to ask for volunteers to coordinate the packs. **Action: B.Leathwood**

123/15 FORTHCOMING MEETING NOTIFICATION:

- 14.1.16 – Community Forum
- 18.2.16 – Steart Forum
- 25.2.16 – Cluster Meeting
- 25.2.16 – Transport Forum (or 28.4.16)
- 26.2.16 – SSG

124/15 MEETING REPORTS:

10.12.15 – Transport Forum (J.Evans)

- a) Presentation by SCC on the cycle ways
- b) D.Eccles reported the finance is in place for Hinkley C to go ahead subject to some minor issues.
- c) Julie raised the speeding issues along the C182 particularly for villages closest to Hinkley Point. She was advised cameras will be monitoring the flow of traffic and that it would not be worth reducing the speed limit as there will be so much traffic on the road that it would be self-limiting. It was noted that there is a 40mph limit

along the new bypass. There is a process to apply for speed restrictions on a highway which Julie will research to determine whether a speed limit could be introduced along the C182. **Action: J.Evans**

125/15 CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATION:

Received/sent (excluding items covered by agenda or action list):

- a) Somerset Rivers Authority - Progress update on flood prevention and implementation measures;
- b) Letter sent to SCC – Requesting progress on Combwich Ponds.
- c) SDC - Gambling Policy for the next 3 years has been approved and will be implemented 31.1.16.
- d) SALC – “Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments Limited” for councils with a turnover > £25k has been set up.
- e) SALC – Advising councils that referendum Principles will not apply to parishes for 2016/17.
- f) Christmas cards from SDC, EDFe and Quantock AONB.
- g) Letter to Village Hall confirming the parish council grant as agreed at the Precept meeting. We subsequently received an email from S.Barton thanking us for the grant award.
- h) From Alyn Jones (SCC) – Explaining the delays in opening the Cannington roundabout and bypass.
- i) Quantock AONB – Orchard training workshop on 27.2.16; £10 per person.
- j) Letter to Y.Bulman wishing her well on her retirement as Village Agent.
- k) Albion Running Group – 50 miles “Ultramarathon” on River Parrett Trail on 21.5.16, looking for volunteers to marshal checkpoints and water stations. This will be publicised in Otter Tales. **Action: Clerk**
- l) Letter to J.Edney thanking him for recommending the £400 grant award we received from SCC.
- m) Mendip Community Transport Community – They have been granted funds to procure 2 new minibuses and are asking for proposals from parishes and users on how they might be best utilised in communities. J.Evans suggested widening the user groups, e.g. young people. The information will be scanned and circulated to members for further consideration. **Action: Clerk**

126/15 REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES:

1. Hinkley Liaison (including SSG):

Nothing to report.

2. Steart Ward:

D.Best reported misuse of the Steart hides which has been reported to the police.

3. OPRA (B.Leathwood):

The Harbour Club paid for replacement Christmas tree lights following the vandalism that occurred; There will be a summer fete this year. Volunteers to help out at the event will be requested in Otter Tales.

4. Otterhampton Parish Project Team (OPPT):

Other than the children’s play area (minute 119/15/2) there was nothing further to report.

5. Village Hall (H.Bennett) :

There was a meeting on 6.1.16, but unfortunately Heath was unable to attend as he was stuck in traffic (M5 incident).

6. School Liaison (J.Evans):

The School had an OFSTED visit in December and is awaiting the report; the new head, Nick Benbow is settling in well. Julie will continue to liaise with the School as our representative.

127/15 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on **WEDNESDAY** 10 February 2016, 7.00pm at Otterhampton Village Hall.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.

Signed
(Chairman)

Date: