

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Bishopstoke Parish Council  
held at Bishopstoke Methodist Church  
commencing at 7.30pm on 14 November 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Geoff Harris (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Andrew Daly  
Councillor Mark Kirby  
Councillor Martin Lyon (from para 45.6)  
Councillor Chris McKeone  
Councillor Dermot McKeone  
Councillor Mike Thornton  
Councillor Gin Tidridge  
Councillor Anne Winstanley

**In Attendance:** Mr David Wheal (Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council)  
Mrs Sophie Thorogood (RFO to Bishopstoke Parish Council)

**Public Session** 0 members of the public were present.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**FULL\_2324\_M04/**

**42 Apologies for Absence**

42.1 Apologies were noted from Cllrs Hillier-Wheal, A Dean, R Dean, Francis and Moore. Cllr Candy was not present.

**43 To adopt and sign Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12 September 2023**

43.1 The minutes of the above meeting had been included in the document pack for this meeting.

43.2 The Clerk thanked Cllr Winstanley for spotting an error in minute 41.1, referring to the Parish Assembly, and confirmed that the printed copy of the minutes is correct.

43.3 Proposed Cllr Daly, Seconded Cllr Kirby, **RESOLVED** with one abstention that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 12 September 2023 be adopted as a true record.

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

**44 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

44.1 There were no such declarations or requests.

**45 Reports from Committees, Working Groups, Officers and Councillors**

45.1 The resolutions from Council Committees were noted.

45.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Thornton, **RESOLVED** with one abstention that the Burial Board fees should remain at their current level for 2024-25.

**Action: Clerk – to publish notice that the fees remain at their current level and update the relevant documents**

45.3 The Clerk briefly went through the memo from the RFO detailing the changes that had to be made to the recommended bank accounts to be opened.

45.4 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Harris, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council should:

- Open a savings account with the Co-operative to hold allotment deposits and keep some savings;
- Invest £85,000 in an ethical 1 year bond with the Charity Bank;
- Invest £85,000 in a 35-day access account with Nationwide Building Society and
- Leave any remaining funds with the Borough Council until other options become available.

**Action: Clerk – to inform the RFO of the decision of Council**

45.5 Cllrs Harris and Winstanley had provided written reports in advance of the meeting, which are attached to these minutes. Cllr Tidridge reported that she, along with the Chair, had attended the Remembrance Sunday parade in Eastleigh and that the Chair had laid a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. Additionally Cllr Tidridge informed the Council that the discussion of the proposed SANG (Suitable Area of Natural Greenspace) at Stoke Park Farm will now take place at the January Bishopstoke, Fair Oak & Horton Heath (BIFOHH) Local Area Committee meeting due to the volume of responses received; the footpath lights on Alan Drayton Way are being fixed and the potential transfer of open space at Sewall Drive is now one step closer. Finally Cllr Tidridge announced that a new Bishopstoke Gardening Club will be meeting at the Bishopstoke Community Association.

*Cllr Lyon arrived at this point.*

45.6 In addition to the written Clerk's report, the Clerk noted that quotes have now been received for adding a new, dipped, basket swing to Blackberry Drive and moving the existing one to Otter Close. Additionally, the Clerk had attended a BIFOHH Team meeting at which it had been suggested that the Parish Council should consider bringing the Memorial Hall project back in house. This will be discussed with the Glebe Meadow working group. Cllr Thornton asked who is responsible for the grass around the play area between Bow Lake Gardens and Judges Gully Close – the Clerk indicated it would be either the develop or the Borough Council, as it has not yet been offered to the Parish. Cllr D McKeone asked if there is any indication when the War Memorial will be installed, and whether bringing the Memorial Hall project back to the Parish would allow us to demolish the Hall more quickly. The Clerk hoped that the War Memorial could be installed within approximately a month of all necessary permissions being received and indicated that the Council is unlikely to be able to demolish the Hall any quicker than the Borough can, but that it may be able to move faster with the remainder of the project.

#### **46 To approve and adopt the audited annual return for the year to 31 March 2023**

46.1 The report from the external auditors stating that they had found no causes for concern and no other matters to report had been included in the document pack. The Clerk thanked the RFO for her hard work throughout the year on the Council's finances.

46.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr D McKeone, **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve and adopt the audited annual return for the year to 31 March 2023.

**Action: Clerk – to publish the full audit report**

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**47 To approve delegating authority to the Assets Committee to determine which open spaces and other areas could be included in the Tree and Bee programme**

47.1 Information on the Tree and Bee programme had been included with the supporting papers for this meeting.

47.2 Proposed Cllr Thornton, Seconded Cllr Kirby, **RESOLVED** unanimously to delegate authority to the Assets Committee to determine which open spaces and other areas could be included in the Tree and Bee programme. Cllr Daly expressed concern that the fallen fruit might encourage rats and the Clerk offered to convey those concerns to the project lead.

*Action: Clerk – add discussion of this programme to the Assets Committee agenda and convey concerns to Helen Brown*

**48 To approve the continued membership of and contributions to external bodies**

48.1 Details of the current memberships held were included in the document pack for this meeting.

48.2 Proposed Cllr Harris, Seconded Cllr Lyon, **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the continued membership of and contributions to the external bodies listed.

*Action: Clerk – to inform the RFO of the Council's decision*

**49 To decide arrangements for travel tokens for 2024-25**

49.1 Details of the programme were included in the document pack for this meeting.

49.2 Proposed Cllr Thornton, Seconded Cllr C McKeone, **RESOLVED** unanimously to raise the base level of tokens to 132 per person and set the budget for 2024-25 to £2,800 for token refunds and £200 for new tokens.

*Action: Clerk – amend paperwork prior to sending renewal letters*

**50 To redesignate the Carnival budget heading as the Events budget**

50.1 Information on the change and procedure for approving events had been included in the document pack for the meeting.

50.2 The Clerk noted that most decisions on new events would be taken by Full Council, but that there may be occasions that the timing does not allow that and in those circumstances the recommendation includes a process for a majority decision of Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk to give permission for the event to proceed.

50.3 Cllr Tidridge requested the new budget be the “Carnival and Events” budget. Cllr Lyon recommended a limit on the funds available for any event decided by Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk rather than Full Council. Cllr Thornton asked for a review after one year and Cllr Tidridge suggested also including events reports within the Clerk’s report.

50.4 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Thornton, **RESOLVED** unanimously to amend the recommended fast track process to require a unanimous decision from Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk.

50.5 Proposed Cllr Thornton, Seconded Cllr Tidridge, **RESOLVED** unanimously to rename the Carnival budget to the Carnival & Events budget, to require unanimity in the fast track process, to limit “fast track” events to a maximum budget of £1,000, to add an “Events” section to the Clerk’s report and to review the situation in one year.

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **51 To consider staffing levels and decide upon a recommendation from the People Committee**

51.1 Various reports and options had been included in the document pack for this meeting.

51.2 The Clerk briefly described the main points that came out of the People Committee meeting and noted the various options for either funding a new member of staff or cutting services if staffing levels are not increased.

51.3 During discussion Cllrs explored various ways the post could be filled, including both job share and apprenticeships. The Clerk agreed that all options would be discussed by the People Committee.

51.4 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr D McKeone, **RESOLVED** with 8 in favour and 1 against to increase staffing by 20 hours per week, with the new post intended to start on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and with all remaining details of the final job description, information pack and adverts to be agreed by the People Committee.

**Action: Clerk – prepare the information pack for the job and take it to the People Committee for amending and agreeing**

## **52 To consider the 2024-25 budget, and funding for play areas, the Memorial Hall and the Glebe Meadow Project**

52.1 Reports detailing the need for and proposed levels of funding for both play areas and the Glebe Meadow project were included in the document pack for this meeting.

52.2 The Clerk noted that in addition to the normal budgeted spend on play area maintenance and repair (currently set to be £15,000 next year), the Council had either spent or allocated over £240,000 of developer contribution funding over the past 6 years. This has provided a full renewal of Sayers Road play area, a major refurbishment at Blackberry Drive, a complete remodelling of the frontage at Stoke Common play area, various repairs at Templecombe Road, a new timber trail at Otter Close and will provide a new wheels park at Glebe Meadow. The Council is unlikely to receive significant developer contribution funding over the next ten years due to the lack of large developments in Bishopstoke. Accordingly, in order to undertake refurbishments of play areas, or replacements of larger kit, a fund is needed in addition to standard annual planned maintenance spend.

52.3 Cllrs agreed that such a fund was necessary. Concerns were raised that perhaps the recommended figure would not be sufficient. The Clerk noted that the figure can be adjusted each year at budget time. Cllr Tidridge asked whether the Council was bound to accept the play area at Bow Lake Gardens when it is offered for transfer and the Clerk replied that it is not. Cllr Lyon suggested that an analysis be done of the current replacement cost for each play area as well as their expected lifespan, with those figures being used to determine future investment in the fund.

52.4 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Thornton, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council believes a fund is needed to allow refurbishment and enhancement of its play areas, as well as replacement of larger pieces of play equipment, and that £20,000 should be set aside for the fund in the year 2024-25.

**Action: Clerk – inform the RFO of the Council's decision and to add the cost analysis of play areas to the Asset Committee workload**

52.5 Information on the various options for funding the Memorial Hall and Glebe Meadow had been included in the document pack for this meeting. The Clerk noted that the planned job changes accompanying a new member of staff would allow the RFO to look for grants and other funding that may be available for the project.

Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

52.6 The Clerk indicated that the loan repayments outlined in the document pack represent a worst case scenario. The recommended option of raising the precept over three years to fully finance any loan repayment is partly to mitigate against the large increase in precept doing it in one year would cause and partly to give time for the exact amount of loan required to be determined.

52.7 Cllr Tidridge asked whether expected income from the Hall could be used to offset the loan repayments and the Clerk indicated that it could. Cllr Lyon indicated that a quantity surveyor would be able to provide not only accurate costings for the new building but also a good estimate for both maintenance costs and income from the building going forward and he recommended the Council employ one as a priority. Cllr Thornton noted that the previous Hall had been paid for via public subscription and it may be possible to raise funds in a similar way. Cllr Lyon also offered to give a presentation to the relevant Committee / Working Group on what to expect from a quantity surveyor and what a cost plan looks like.

**Action: Clerk – to liaise with Cllr Lyon to arrange the presentation**

52.8 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Kirby, **RESOLVED** unanimously to add £30,000 to the Glebe Meadow reserve in the financial year 2024-25 and make employing a quantity surveyor a priority.

**Action: Clerk – to inform the RFO of the funding decision and add employing a quantity surveyor to the Glebe Meadow working group discussions**

52.9 Proposed Cllr Harris, Seconded Cllr Winstanley, **RESOLVED** unanimously to fund the employment of a project manager for the project (when necessary) from the Glebe Meadow fund and not through general Parish Council expenditure.

**Action: Clerk – to inform the RFO of the decision**

### **53 To consider content for the next press release**

53.1 The Council agreed that the next press release would include Armistice Day (including an update on the wreaths and the delay installing the war memorial); the staff vacancy; the concluded audit; the bee and tree corridor; the increase in travel tokens and the short waiting list at Underwood Road allotments.

**Action: Clerk – to draft the press release and circulate it to the Communications Group for approval**

### **54 To agree the date, time and place for the next meetings**

54.1 The next meeting will take place on Tuesday January 9<sup>th</sup> 2024. It will take place at 7:30pm at the Bishopstoke Methodist Church. The Clerk requested any agenda items and supporting papers be with him by January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024.

54.2 Cllrs C McKeone and D McKeone gave their apologies for the January meeting.

*There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9:25pm.*

Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_