

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Bishopstoke Parish Council
held at Bishopstoke Methodist Church
commencing at 7.30pm on 9 January 2024**

Present: Councillor Louise Hillier-Wheal (Chair)
Councillor Geoff Harris (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ralph Candy
Councillor Andrew Daly
Councillor Dave Francis
Councillor Martin Lyon (from para 59)
Councillor Mike Thornton
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.

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55 Apologies for Absence

55.1 Apologies were noted from Cllrs A Dean, R Dean, Kirby, C McKeone, D McKeone, Moore and Tidridge.

56 To adopt and sign Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14 November 2023

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

56.2 Cllr Hillier-Wheal noted that in Minute 52.2 the sentence should read “either spent OR allocated”, not “of”.

56.3 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Thornton, **RESOLVED** with five in favour and two abstentions due to absence that the amended minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14 November 2023 be adopted as a true record.

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

57 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

57.1 There were no such declarations or requests.

58 Reports from Committees, Working Groups, Officers and Councillors

58.1 The resolutions from Council Committees were noted, as was the Clerk’s report.

Cllr Lyon arrived at this point.

59 To receive a report on the provision of youth services within Bishopstoke and determine the appropriate funding levels for 2023-24

59.1 The report on youth services provided at the Y Zone had been included with the supporting documents for the meeting.

59.2 Several Councillors raised concerns that this was the second year in which the Council was being asked to pay a bill without being given any detailed justification for the amount. The invoice had been paid in the year 2022-23 on the understanding that a new agreement would be reached between Bishopstoke Parish Council, Fair Oak & Horton Heath Parish Council and Eastleigh Borough Council for the funding of both the Y Zone building and the services provided by Youth Options within Bishopstoke but that has not yet happened. Additionally, there have been no figures provided on the running costs of the building for several years. As such Councillors felt there was no way to tell whether value for money is being provided.

59.3 Additional concerns were raised regarding the lack of information regarding the revenue raised by the hiring of the building which was always intended to replace as much of the Parish funding as possible. Councillors sought assurances that this situation is being addressed.

59.4 Councillors supported the provision of youth services within Bishopstoke as a valuable resource for the teenage population and as a means of helping reduce crime and raise awareness, but felt that without concrete information on the costs incurred, revenue raised and target audience reached they could not authorise payment at this time.

59.5 The Clerk was requested to obtain figures for the current and immediate past financial years for the costs associated with running the building, the revenue raised by hiring the building and confirmation of the value of the Youth Options provision in Bishopstoke, as well the numbers of those reached by the services provided. The Clerk was further requested to recommend an appropriate figure for Bishopstoke Parish's contribution both in 2022-23 and 2023-24, and then bring this item back to the agenda at a future meeting.

Action: Clerk – to obtain detailed figures and information to allow the Council to properly determine the levels of funding needed

59.6 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Francis, **RESOLVED** with seven in favour and one abstention to defer any decision on payment for the Y Zone and Youth Options until detailed information can be obtained.

60 To decide the youth services budget for 2024-25

60.1 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Francis, **RESOLVED** with seven in favour and one abstention leave the youth services budget for 2024-25 unchanged.

61 To approve the expenditure budget for 2024-25

61.1 The draft expenditure budget had been included with the supporting papers for this meeting.

61.2 The Council noted the work put into the budget by Officers and Councillors over the preceding months which had resulted in the budget being considered at the meeting. Councillors were also aware that the country is still suffering from higher inflation and for many families money is tight. Councillors acknowledged that it would be possible to reduce the Bishopstoke portion of Council Tax but only by removing some of the services provided by the Council which had already been examined in detail during the budget process.

Initial: _____ Date: _____

61.3 The Clerk noted that the guidance on proper practices given by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance indicates that Councils should keep a reserve on hand and that this reserve should be between 25% and 100% of net revenue expenditure. In practice Bishopstoke Parish Council has adopted a reserves policy stating that the target is for reserves to be between 25% and 40% of the annual precept at the end of the financial year.

Clerk's note: The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) is responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities. Its membership consists of sector representatives from the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and the Association of Drainage Authorities, together with stakeholder partners representing the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the National Audit Office, and a representative of the external audit firms appointed to smaller authorities. Bishopstoke Parish Council is a "smaller authority".

61.4 The Clerk demonstrated that there were a range of possible funding options that would satisfy the reserves target for the 2024-25 financial year, but that opting for a smaller precept rise for that year would lead to problems meeting the reserves target in following years. Additionally, a decreasing curve of precept changes produce a smaller Council Tax burden going forward than a small rise in one year followed by a necessary larger rise the following year.

61.5 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Thornton, **RESOLVED** with six in favour and Cllrs Lyon and Francis abstaining (Cllr Francis due to concerns over the cost of living crisis and the comparison with other Councils on the Council Tax information leaflet) to approve the expenditure budget for 2024-25.

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

62 To approve funding arrangements for 2024-25, including the precept request

62.1 Details of how the 2024-25 expenditure budget is proposed to be funded were included with the supporting papers for the meeting.

62.2 The Clerk noted that expected income for 2024-25 is £3,000 from interest received, £20,300 from burial grounds, £6,250 from allotment fees and £2,000 from events run by the Council. In order to facilitate the remaining expenditure as well as the planned transfer of funds into earmarked reserves and to ensure remaining within the reserves target for the medium term the Finance Committee recommended a precept rise of 15% for the year 2024-25. This will raise the Band D Council Tax for Bishopstoke from £94.06 to £108.17 and provide £384,728.24 of funding for the Parish Council.

62.2 Proposed Cllr Harris, Seconded Cllr Candy, **RESOLVED** with seven in favour and Cllr Francis abstaining (due to concerns over the cost of living crisis and the comparison with other Councils on the Council Tax information leaflet) to fund expenditure as described in 62.2, including a 15% rise in precept bringing the Band D Council Tax to £108.17 which will provide £384,728.24 funding.

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

63 To approve amendments to Financial Regulations regarding purchase orders

63.1 A memo on the agenda item had been included with the supporting papers for this meeting.

63.2 Proposed Cllr Thornton, Seconded Cllr Winstanley, **RESOLVED** unanimously to amend Financial Regulations to require purchase orders be raised for any item of capital expenditure.

Action: Clerk – amend Financial Regulations and publish updated version

Initial: _____ Date: _____

64 To consider content for the next press release

64.1 The Council agreed that the next press release would include the expenditure budget and precept request, the vacancy for an Allotments Officer, the installation of the Cemetery gates, the date of the next Carnival meeting and the search for a Bishopstoke Champion.

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

65 To agree the date, time and place for the next meetings

65.1 The next meeting will take place on Tuesday March 12th 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 March 5th 2024.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:40pm.

Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____

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