
LITTLE SOMERFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting 3 December 2019 in the Village Hall

Present

Cllr P Cameron (Chair)
Cllr Z Carruthers

Cllr J Frayling
Cllr D Orchard

Cllr D Sharp
Cllr G Webb

In Attendance

2 members of the public

Wiltshire Cllr Sturgis

T M Chapman (Clerk)

Public Question Time

The Chair of Little Somerford Village Hall Committee updated the Parish Council on the parking issues that were reported at the last meeting.

Reports from Unitary Councillor and Council Representatives

Wiltshire Cllr Sturgis confirmed that the definitive route for Footpath 8 is as per the Wiltshire Council website map. He also discussed certain local drainage issues.

19/12/1 **Apologies for Absence** - Cllr S Orchard

19/12/2 **Declaration(s) of Interest** – None.

19/12/3 **Minutes & Matters Arising**

i **Minutes**

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 October 2019 were **approved** and **signed** by the Chair as a true record. Proposed Cllr Carruthers; seconded Cllr Webb.

ii **Matters Arising/Action Register Review**

It was **agreed** that those items shaded green had been completed. It was noted that all items other than those with no specific time line (WCAG or Cemetery headstones) or those not yet due had been completed apart from the Councillor review of the Cemetery map. The Finance Regulations are for this meeting to review and include the de minimis £100 for new items on Asset Register.

Cllr Cameron had met Westlea Landscaping at the Allotments to discuss the scope of works to be quoted. See minute 19/12/5.3. The Chair requested that a reminder be emailed to potential Grass Maintenance Contractors reminding them to submit quotes by 15 January.

Action: Clerk

19/12/4

Planning Matters

<http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/ApplicationSearch.aspx>.

i **Planning Applications between meetings – ratification of the Parish Council view**

19/10139/TCA Pound House - Reduce Oak to 12 Metres and Reduce Lateral Branches to 5 Metres (1) Reduce 1 Low Branch on Ash to Give 2 Metre Clearance from Yew Trees and Prune 1 Low branch to Give 3 Metre Clearance from Conservatory (2). **No Objection.**

ii **Planning Applications for consideration**

19/09859/CLE The Bungalow, Russell House - Certificate of Lawfulness for the Existing Use of Premises as Self-Contained Class C3 Dwelling House. **Objection.** The Parish Council was not persuaded by the evidence and found it ambiguous and long-winded; it would like to have seen tenancy agreements to support the residents' statements of occupancy.

iii **Applications Determined by Wiltshire Council since the last meeting.**

19/07231/FUL Forge Mill Stables - Single storey pitched and flat roof extension to the side of property and alterations, including replacing existing rooflights. - New Car Barn. **Approved with conditions.**

19-09172-TCA Harcombe, The Hill – Fell one ash tree. **No Objection.**

iv **Planning determinations by Wiltshire Council notified after issue of the agenda**

19/10139/TCA Pound House - Reduce Oak to 12 Metres and Reduce Lateral Branches to 5 Metres (1) Reduce 1 Low Branch on Ash to Give 2 Metre Clearance from Yew Trees and Prune 1 Low branch to Give 3 Metre Clearance from Conservatory (2). **No Objection.**

v **Planning Applications for consideration received on day of meeting**

19/11533/TCA Somerford House Barn – Fell 2 cedar trees. **Objection.** The Parish Council did not support the removal of mature trees in a conservation area unless they posed a health and safety risk to persons or property.

19/12/5 **Finance**

0 **s137 donations**

A letter requesting a donation had been received from the Signpost magazine, which prints the Parish Council monthly reports and disseminates them to all householders in this and surrounding villages. After discussion it was decided to make a donation to the magazine of £100. Proposed: Cllr Cameron; seconded: Cllr Frayling. The cheque was raised and signed at the meeting. No donations to other local community causes were proposed or made.

i **Finance report**

The Finance report was **received** and the Parish Council **ratified** and **approved** payments of £1,007. The bank balances stand at £16,677 after these transactions.

The Parish Council further approved payments of wages, quarterly home working allowance and reimbursement of stamps purchased totalling £225 to the Clerk and HMRC, to be made at the end of December as there is no Council meeting next month.

Proposed: Cllr Carruthers; seconded Cllr D Orchard.

ii **Receipts & Payments to 30 November 2019 & Bank Reconciliation**

The report was **noted**. The year to date surplus is £4,905. The forecast outturn has been updated and the explanation for budget variances year to date was noted. The bank reconciliation appended to the report was checked and signed by the Chair.

iii **Quote for clearance works in the Allotments**

The quote from Westlea Landscaping (the current grounds maintenance contractor) had been circulated between meetings and amounted to £3,420 + VAT to clear all debris into a skip and to remove all green waste from the individual allotments. This figure did not

include phase 2 of the works to install fencing and re-seed. A request for volunteers to carry out this work had yielded no results, nor had advertising via Involve Swindon. The Parish Council felt the quote before them was rather expensive so decided to obtain alternate, comparative, quotes to ensure Value for Money. Councillors should send these to the Clerk in time for the February meeting.

Action: All Councillors

Cllr Cameron has approached Wiltshire's Penny Bell about the potential therapy benefits offered by unused allotments for those with mental health problems.

iv **Early draft budget for 2020/21**

The Parish Council had before it two budget models, one including a modest £250 uplift to the Precept and the other leaving the Precept figure blank for the Parish Council to determine. In both cases the budgeted expenditure for 2020/21 was £14,620 and included normal recurrent spend plus clearance work on the allotments. It did not include £319 for an Auto Speed Watch Device plus annual subscription of £84. It was **decided** that the Auto Speed Watch device should be added into the financial forecast for 2021/22

The rolling three year forecast to March 2023, which included only £300 additional capital investment in the Cemetery in 2022/23, was noted.

Subject to the above amendments the Parish Council **approved** the draft expenditure budget for the purposes of determining the 2020/21 Precept Request. Proposed: Cllr Carruthers; seconded; Cllr Webb. The final budget and financial forecasts will be signed off in February. Any updates must be communicated to the Clerk by mid-January.

Action: All Councillors
Agenda February

v **Precept Request for 2020/21**

The paperwork issued by Wiltshire Council's Financial Planning Department on 5 November had been circulated to all Councillors and paper 19/10/5.3 received at the October meeting also covered the matter.

A table of different Precept rates was considered based on the draft tax base figure of 185.88. The table showed the annual cash difference per band D household of different levels of possible Precept. It was noted that, given the reduction in tax base (from 186.20 to 185.88), the precept would have to fall to £8,985 if there was to be no increase to a band D householder.

The Parish Council reluctantly recognised the need to increase its Precept given the level of planned investment in the allotments and ongoing recurrent expenditure. It was **determined** to set the Precept Request at £9,500 which equates to an annual rise for a band D household of £2.77. Proposed: Cllr Cameron; seconded Cllr Webb. The Clerk was tasked to submit this to Wiltshire Council by 24 January.

Action: Clerk

Keeping the Precept Request down to £9,500 does mean that the Council is approving a budget deficit for 2020/21.

19/12/6 **Governance**

i **Finance Regulations**

The 2018 Regulations with tracked changes incorporating new Best Practice Guidelines from NALC had been circulated to Councillors 24/10/19 and 24/11/19 for comment and a copy with tracked changes was included in the pack.

The main changes included

- the requirement for a non-cheque signatory Councillor to review and sign off the bank reconciliations at least once a quarter, reporting any discrepancies to the full Council;
- appointment of the Clerk as Service Administrator where internet banking arrangements are in force;
- list of exempt categories of purchases not requiring more than one quote;
- requirement for the Council to have regard to the NALC/ Local Government pay scales and any cost of living awards;
- threshold of £100 for individual items to be included in the Fixed Asset Register.

The amended Finance Regulations were **approved** (proposed: Cllr D Orchard; seconded: Cllr Carruthers) and a clean copy signed by the Chair.

ii **Community Emergency Plan**

The existing plan had been re-issued to Councillors 24/10/19 and 24/11/19 for comment and none was received. It was **agreed** that the only changes needed to the Plan at this annual review were the identification of Cllr Cameron as Parish Council Chair and the substitution of Cllr Greg Webb for Charlie Gawthrop as the contact for supplies of salt and grit.

Action: Cllr D Orchard

iii **ROSPA inspection report on the Play Area**

The report had been sent to Councillors 14/10/19 & 24/11/19 and a summary sheet outlining recommended actions had been included in the meeting pack. It was **agreed** that four bags of bark should be procured by Cllr Cameron from Travis Perkins to increase the depth alongside and under the slide, the junior swing and the toddler swing.

Action: Cllr Cameron

The damaged goal posts had been repaired and connecting nuts on the swing tightened. The other items were to be kept under review or tolerated where standards post-dating the equipment had been introduced and did not impose retro-fitting.

iv **Development of a Neighbourhood Plan**

Pellegram Consultants had provided the Parish Council with a web link to sources of funding (up to £9,000) that might be secured should the Parish Council wish to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. See minute 19/10/6.1 for the pros and cons of having a plan for the village. After debate it was **decided** NOT to proceed at this juncture but to review the situation next summer.

Agenda August 2020

v **Pensions Auto-Enrolment Re-declaration deadline**

Councillors **noted** the requirement for the Chair as Employer Representative to set up re-enrolment for LSPC staff on the 3rd anniversary of the Council's staging date (1 May 2020); deadline for redeclaration 30 September 2020. The matter would need to be reconsidered in any case with the change of Clerk.

Action: Cllr Cameron

19/12/7 **Highway Matters**

i **Meadow Lane street sign** - Cllr Webb has fixed this.

ii **Report on the Autumn Litter Pick**

Cllr Cameron reported that the event had been well attended and quantities of rubbish collected. She thanked those who turned out to support the village.

iii **Roadside hedge works**

Mr & Mrs Baines, Pound House, were thanked for the comprehensive work on their roadside hedge which had vastly improved pavement access to the village hall.

A letter of thanks will be sent to Robert Simmons for cutting the cemetery, paddock & allotment hedges.

Action: Clerk

iv **Run-off from ditch running parallel with cemetery and paddock**

This problem had been reported between meetings. Cllr Cameron is organising volunteers to dig it out.

Action: Cllr Cameron

v **Carols round the tree 20 December @ 7pm**

Cllr Cameron reported that arrangements were well in hand.

19/12/8 **Items brought forward by Councillors from the previous meeting – none.**

19/12/9 **Clerk's Report/ Correspondence Received**

i **Local Electricity Bill**

The Chair had requested that a draft resolution reinforcing the Parish Council's commitment to reduce greenhouse gases and create sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity, be laid before the meeting. It was **felt** that, whilst sympathetic to the principles behind the bill, the Parish Council had insufficient involvement or experience in such matters to justify passing a supportive resolution.

ii **Letter of resignation from the current Clerk**

The letter dated 06/10/19 had been circulated to all contemporaneously and it was **noted** that the tenure of office of Mrs Chapman as Clerk would cease 31 December 2019. See minute 19/12/12.

iii **Invoice from the Village Hall**

An invoice for £30 for use of the hall 4 June – 3 December 2019 inclusive was handed in at the meeting. It was **agreed** to pay the invoice today and a cheque was raised. Proposed: Cllr D Orchard; seconded: Cllr Webb.

19/12/10 **Update from Councillors on Standing items**

i **Allotments and paddock – see minute 19/12/5.3.**

ii **Broadband – now installed in the village so this item is to be removed from Standing Items going forward.**

iii **Cemetery**

A map of the cemetery is available for upload to the website and sending to local Funeral Directors subject to sign off by Cllr Sharp or Cllr Webb. Once done it can be submitted alongside the map of the Garden of Remembrance. However it was noted although the map correlated to the Burial Registers as to plot numbers, the location of some of the plots which was based on the 1983 hand drawn map, was not 100% accurate and needed revision. Cllr Webb will liaise with a local grave digger to come up with a physically more accurate representation.

Action: Cllr Webb

iv **Emergency Planning – ref minute 19/12/6.2. Supplies of salt and grit have been collected by Cllr Webb and are stored in various bins around the village.**

- v **Defibrillator** - The new sign at the pub is now in situ.
- vi **Footpaths & Rights of Way** – minute 19/12/Wiltshire Cllr report refers.
- vii **Malmesbury Area Board** – the Board’s minutes had been circulated to all. The suggestion that teenagers be encouraged to attend and speak at Parish Council meetings was noted.
- viii **Play Park** – minute 19/12/6.3 refers.
- ix **Speed Watch** – no update.
- x **Telephone Book Exchange** – nothing to report.
- xi **Website**
WCAG legislation: there are a few items to be fixed before September 2020.

19/12/11 **Councillors’ Observations and Items for Next Meeting Agenda** –none.

19/12/12 **Appointment of Parish Clerk to serve from 1 January 2020**
The Chair and Vice-Chair reported that they had interviewed two exceptionally strong candidates and they recommended that the post be offered to Rachel Nuttall, a local resident. This was **approved** unanimously.

19/12/13 **Dates for Future Meetings**
The next meetings of the Parish Council will be held at 7.15 p.m. on Tuesday 4 Feb, 7 April, 5 May Annual Parish Meeting & APCM, 2 June, 4 August, 6 October and 1 December.

The meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

Approved

.....PCamer.....
Chair

Date

4/02/2020
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