

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair A Aylott

Clerk D Northover

Minutes of the ordinary Parish Council meeting held on 14th March 2023 at 7.00pm at Stratton Village Hall

Present:

Cllrs A Aylott (Chairman), M Garner, C Hobbs and S. Joslin and two members of public.

22-63 To receive apologies of absence

An apology for absence was received for D. Northover, Clerk.

22-64 To receive declarations of interest on agenda items - None

22-65 To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 10th January 2023

Councillors agreed to the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting.

22-66 Public Participation

It was suggested that the Parish Council could have improved its interaction with residents by making an announcement after the Precept meeting on 8th November, explaining why council tax was to increase by around 10%. Those at the meeting clearly saw the reasoning behind the decision but anyone not present would be unaware. The recommendation was accepted by Councillors, and an appropriate announcement will be made on the Parish website regarding the 2023/34 increase and borne in mind in future years.

22-67 Finance

a) To consider receipts and payments due or paid since the last meeting.

To acknowledge the necessary payments made and monies received.

Accounts as at 14 March 2023

Monies in the Village Green Account cannot be used for any other purposes.

Year to date totals

Account	Parish	V/Green	Parish Plan	VAT	Balance
Balance b/f	15,017.60	37,164.32	750.00	2,228.07	50,703.85
Receipts	1,800.00	147.78	250.00	2,228.07	4,425.85
Payments	2,195.00	0.00	0.00	386.60	2,581.60
Balance c/f	14,622.60	37,312.10	1,000.00	386.60	52,548.10

Receipts

Parish

Donation - Defibrillator 1,800.00

Playing Field

United Trust Bank – Fixed Bond Interest 147.78

Parish Plan/Computer Reserve

Computer Reserve – Contribution for 2022/23 250.00

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair A Aylott

Clerk D Northover

VAT

HMRC – VAT Refund

2,228.07

TOTAL

£ 4,425.85

Payments

(inc VAT)

Parish

Southwestern Ambulance – Defibrillator Lease

2,160.00

Mrs C Hobbs – Microsoft Licence

12.00

Double D Computers – Repairs to Laptop

120.00

Computer Reserve – Contribution for 2022/23

250.00

Jetpack – Software security for Web-site

39.60

TOTAL

£ 2,581.60

b) To receive the Budget Monitoring report

The budget monitoring report was received and noted. Amount spent on un-budgeted items was explained and noted against un-budgeted donations received.

c) Fixed Bond – Investment of Funds

The Chairman confirmed that a Six-Month Bond had matured in late February, and after discussions with Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Garner, the amount maturing had been reinvested in a One-Year Bond. A further bond was due to mature at the end of March. Discussions to determine what should be done with the monies and it was agreed by all Councillors to re-invest in a further One-Year Bond to ensure that a reasonable amount of interest was earned.

d) Parish Council laptop

Discussion regarding the Parish Council laptop crashing in mid-February and the resulting great difficulty in ensuring its data was safely recovered took place. The whole laptop had to be rebuilt afresh, resulting in a number of vital software packages having to be set up from scratch, causing delays and difficulties. The Chairman thanked Double Drive Computers in Dorchester for their assistance in managing to recover the data. Discussion about how no future loss of data could be ensured, over and above the two existing USB sticks which were used to store back up runs. Cllr Garner agreed to investigate and see what other systems might be useful and suitable to be linked with the Council's laptop.

22-68 Planning – There were no new applications to consider nor any updates to report.

22-69 Code of Conduct for Councillors – Update on whether a new Code had been introduced.

No information had yet been received about whether there was a new Code in circulation, or whether the last Code adopted by the Council was still valid. This still to be checked.

22-70 Review of Council Policies – Update held on previous agreed improvements to Council Policies

The list of improved practices was discussed at length by Councillors :-

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair A Aylott

Clerk D Northover

- a) Update to Microsoft Office programme – done,
- b) More up to date spreadsheet for finance – declined as not required,
- c) Agenda items to have supporting reports sent with Agenda – agreed, had been done where required,
- d) On-line banking – almost complete,
- e) Use of Fixed Term Bond for Councils cash assets – done,
- f) Signing of invoice by Councillors – recommendation for internal audit to be checked, as remote on-line banking does not allow signing of invoices by Councillors,
- g) Look to make website more user friendly – declined, as all appropriate information was included on the web site or the Parish Council’s Facebook pages – check to be made to see level of contacts made with the Councils web site,
- h) Bi-monthly finance reports to be put on website – declined, as not required, as existing information provides sufficient detail (minutes),
- i) Pictures of assets to go on web site – done, especially with the Parish Council’s Facebook pages,
- j) Drive to engage new Parish Councillors – done, and the Council will continue to try and attract new councillors,
- k) Ensure all Councillors do the basic New Councillor Training with DAPTC – done,
- l) Review of policies in place – continuous,
- m) Councillors to copy external e-mails to Clerk to ensure transparency and that Councillors are acting within Parish Council policy – done, where required.

22-71 To receive reports on General Maintenance

a) Tree and Shrub pruning works

It was confirmed that work had been carried out on the large willow tree on the playing field and overhanging branches around the streetlight close to the entrance of the playing field cleared.

b) Tree Report – Review Recommendations

The recommendations received in the Tree Report were discussed and priorities agreed. Councillors agreed to proceed immediately with phase 3 - removal of six dead trees around the playing field and the cutting back of overhanging vegetation at the top of the embankment, and phase 4 – crown raising of trees on the village green, remove suckering and ivy and clearance around street lights. Recommended phase 5 and 6 would be held in obedience for the present.

Regarding phase 3 – local residents to be advised that work was taking place shortly, and that grass cuttings from their property should NOT be disposed of on Parish Council land.

c) Play area

Chairman confirmed that some minor repairs were still required in the younger children’s play area - two posts, the gate, and a set of steps. This has not been arranged yet, or the necessary wood purchased.

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair A Aylott

Clerk D Northover

22-72 Highways and Rights of Way

a) A37 under Railway Bridge – road and pavement

The Chairman confirmed that a recent e-mail had been received from Dorset Highways stating that a further review was to be held in late spring/summer of the A37 road under the railway bridge, to include the Wrackle stream, and identify how water was entering the roadway. A re-evaluation of the existing sump and pump system is to take place as well. Once discussed with the landowner, the mound on the meadow side of the Wrackle is to be reduced to allow water to enter the flood meadows much earlier. Other investigations to identify how water is penetrating the roadway will also take place. Councillors noted the review and that, finally, comments made by the Parish Council during site meetings, that the riverbank should be lowered to reduce the volume of water in the Wrackle at times of flood, had been accepted.

b) Car parking in Stratton

It was reported that inconsiderate and possibly illegal car parking was happening in several location around Stratton, with vehicles being parked part on pavements for long periods of time. causing difficulties for pedestrians. It was agreed that the legality of this would be checked with Dorset Police.

22-73 King's Coronation arrangements

The Chairman confirmed the known arrangements being made for the King's Coronation. A voluntary group was planning a family picnic event on the Village Green. The Village Hall Committee has already promised free use of the Village Hall on Sunday 7th May to the group. Private fundraising in the form of two General Knowledge quizzes was to take place. Councillors agreed to provide a back up budget of £200, to cover any unexpected costs that came to light. It was also confirmed that the Council's insurance would cover any event on the Village Green up to a maximum of 500 people.

22-74 Correspondence

a) Update on the defibrillator lease arrangements.

Arrangements had now been finalised. The council is awaiting a formal VAT invoice from the South Western Ambulance Service.

b) Waste Bin by the Bus Shelter (next to Manor Close)

An e-mail had been received requesting removal of the waste bin next to the bus shelter at the top of Manor Close due to the nasty smell caused because dog owners are using it to dispose of dog waste. Discussion by Councillors covered factors that would result if the bin was removed. It was agreed that the Council would replace previous signs informing people not to use the waste bin for dog waste as it was next to a bus stop and used by children awaiting school buses. Position to be reviewed if no change of dog owners' habits occurred.

c) Section 137 Grant

STRATTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chair A Aylott

Clerk D Northover

A late application had been received from a new Toddler Group setting up in the village requesting funds to help the group to develop. As no bank account was held by the group, Councillors agreed to cover the hire charge for four sessions at the Village Hall by making a direct payment to the Village Hall Committee. An amount of £36.00 was agreed.

d) Professional Services

The Chairman lead a discussion on the need for the Council to be able to receive prompt professional advice if circumstances required it. Normally the full council would need to meet to agree such a move, but it was felt that prior approval for at least the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to agree would be more helpful so the Council can ensure prompt and necessary action is taken. Councillors agreed to this course of action and all councillors would be informed if such a move occurred between full council meetings.

e) Register of Interest

An e-mail had been received from DAPTC which seemed to indicate that several Councillors had not completed the on-line Register of Interest. All had thought that they had completed the Register correctly. The e-mail to be circulated to those Councillors where it appeared they had not.

22-75 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 16th May 2023 starting at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall. This meeting is the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

Other dates at present for 2023/24 are Tuesday 11th July 2023, 12th September 2023, 14th November (Precept Meeting) 2023, 9th January 2024 and 12th March 2024.

Items for consideration would be: - Tree report phases 5 and 6; Register of Interests, and Data Retention - Protection.

22-76 Public Participation

Mentioned that the Parish Council needed to continue to contact Dorset Highways regarding the safety of the road and pavement on the A37. Especially if a major improvement scheme was ever to take place. This would be even more important as elections would be coming along for both the National Government and the Dorset Council shortly.

Meeting ended at 08:45.