

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 9th January 2023

Present:

Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
Clare Bamforth	Councillor
Cindy Creasy	Councillor
David Butler	Councillor
Nick Jones	Councillor
Steve Rawlings	Councillor
Shelley Whitehead	Councillor
Julian Beames	Clerk

1. Apologies for absence: None

2. Agreement of Minutes

The draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 14th of November 2022 were agreed as a true record and were signed by Dean Cowley - Chair.

3. Following the advertising of the vacant position on the Council, Shelley Whitehead had applied to take up the position. Being the only candidate, the Chair proposed a motion that she be co-opted which was seconded by Councillor Creasy and passed unanimously. Councillor Whitehead then took her seat on the Council and was warmly welcomed by all Councillors.

4. Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

5. Report from Wiltshire Councillor

Jerry Kunkler reported that Wiltshire Council were in the final stages of setting the budget for the coming year and that as expected this would be a challenging year financially due to the pressures the Council is facing.

The next area board meeting will be on the 27th of February and Jerry advised that if there were any projects that required funding then local groups should make submissions. It was noted that the recreation ground committee may want to make a submission for funds towards improvements that are being planned as they relate to youth services.

The subject of Wiltshire Council charging for elections was raised by Councillor Creasy and she was concerned at the lack of consultation on this policy. And the fact it has been imposed with no explanation and sets a precedent where potentially more costs might be passed onto local parish councils. Jerry stated that this policy change had not yet come to the notice of Wiltshire Councillors in their budget discussion but that when it did reach that stage, he would take note of the comments.

6. Advise from SSE

Prior to the meeting Helen Robertson from SSE had sent here apologies as she could not attend as planned. The Clerk will contact her and ask if she can send information for distribution to residents

7. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i) Relocation of the Railway Ticket Office – A second meeting was held to discuss the project. This aimed to further define what would be required and likely costs, and what should be done regarding planning. It was agreed that the recreation ground committee should provide the overall proposed layout of the facilities including the changes to the children’s play area and other potential new facilities and this would then allow the positioning of the hut to be defined. Once this was known a pre-planning submission could be made. In addition, an approximate budget for work required to create a base and patio area would be defined.
- ii) Recreation Ground Tree Survey - The agents for St John’s College have notified the Parish Council that the tree survey has taken place and we await the outcome of the report.
- iii) Following concerns expressed by residents concerning the BEAM price the Clerk contacted the Burbage group leader Martin Hamer, to discuss their experience of the BEAM price. Martin strongly believes that the price offered by Ford Fuels is always competitive and he regularly checks it. He stated that many online sites quote a per litre price but fail to show mark-ups and commissions which are then added to that price meaning they appear better than they really are.

8. Planning - Nothing to report

9. Roads & Drainage

An up-coming road closure is planned for early February which is to allow the road to be surface dressed in tar and chippings. Concerns were expressed by members of the public that the recent patching of the road was of a very poor standard and that more should be done to repair the road prior to this being done.

Concerns were also raised over the recent works on the drains which while seeming to be effective in clearing surface water seem not to have provided any significant improvement regarding potential blockages by silt, leaves and other debris. The large backing slabs which have been placed behind some of the drains were also criticised as being ugly and not in keeping with the village scene.

The issue of several blocked drains was also raised.

Action: Clerk to contact the Highways team to request an explanation of how the works carried out will improve the drainage. Photos of the works will be sent to highlight the issue of the slabs and the blocked drains will be reported again.

10. Finance Report

The Clerk reported that the bank balances were as follows:

Treasurers Account	£1224.45
Business Bank Account	£6,576.56

Payments to be approved since the last meeting were:

Julian Beames – Clerks Annual Salary	£1292.00
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HMRC – PAYE payment	£323
IdVerde – Grass Cutting (Jul-Sep)	£276.38
St John’s College - Recreation Ground rent	£175.00

Payment to be authorised:

IdVerde – Grass Cutting (Oct-Dec) £276.38

The payments were approved and authorised unanimously

Budget & Precept

A draft budget had been circulated prior to the meeting to all Councillors and this was presented to Councillors by the Clerk. The budget included all the likely costs expected in the coming financial year including increases, where expected due to inflation. To have a balanced budget an increase in the parish precept of 6.5% would be required.

Councillors then discussed the need to take account of the fact that the revenue which the village receives from BEAM is likely to continue to fall over time and that the Council needs to reduce its reliance on this going forward. It was generally felt that the precept should in the future cover all the mandatory spend and that any BEAM income would be then used for other improvement projects.

In addition, the Council needs to take account of Wiltshire Council's announcement that election costs will have to be paid from parish funds starting in 2025 and so we must take account of this and build our reserves to meet this cost.

Given these objectives the Chair proposed that the precept be set at a level of £4,098 which would reduce the reliance on the BEAM income by 50% this year, as a first step towards the longer-term objective of the precept covering the entire spending. This would provide a cushion of £270 in this year's budget assuming the BEAM income does not change. This would equate to an annual increase in the parish precept of £3.88 per household for a Band D property.

A motion to approve the budget and set the parish precept at £4,098 was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Rawlings and this was passed unanimously

11. Report on Police Matters

Nicholas Mitchel-Briggs reported that there had been a domestic burglary in the village in November as had been reported to residents.

12. Correspondence Received – None

13. Any other Matters

Councillor Creasy raised the subject of the National Planning Policy Framework. Changes to this are being consulted on and WALPA are responding on behalf on Wiltshire councils. Councillor Creasy proposed that she and the Chair provide input to WALPA for consideration towards their response.

14. 2023/4 Meeting Dates

The provisional dates for scheduled meetings in 2023 will be 13th of March, 15th of May, 10th of July, 11th of September, 13th of November and 8th of January 2024

Signed as a true record.....Date

Dean Cowley – Chair