

## MINUTES OF CHARLTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 2 NOV 23

### **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF CHARLTON PARISH COUNCIL** **Held on Thursday 2 November 2023 at 7pm in the Village Hall**

Present: Cllrs Marion Adkins (Chairman), Philip Baffour, Tom Blanden, David Rawlings, Lord Suffolk, Jenny Walker; M Bromley Gardner (Clerk); Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall; 1 member of the public.

1. Apologies. Cllr Liz Garforth-Bles, Hannah Piet, Philip Thompson.

2. Public Questions/Receipt of Petitions. None.

At this point Wilts Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall was invited by the Chairman to give her update.

3. Declarations of Interest. None.

4. Urgent Items at Chair's Discretion. None.

5. Minutes of Last Meeting. The Minutes of the PC meeting of 7 Sep 23, having been circulated in advance, were approved and signed. No outstanding actions.

6. Finance. Currently £28,538.69 in the account. The following payments were authorized, after which the account balance would be £25,987.96.:

- cheque 567, Neil Medland, contribution to mower running costs, £25.
- 568, PKF Littlejohn LLP, audit fine £48.
- 569, Charlton Recreation Centre, insurance, £1377.33.
- 570, Royal British Legion, Remembrance wreath donation, £150.
- 571, PCC of Charlton, grant towards churchyard maintenance, £1000.

7. Review 'Urgent Matters'. The PC considered the analysis prepared by the Clerk on the usage of the 'Urgent Matters' agenda item. Decision – to keep it on the agenda.

8. Re-Glazing the Book Exchange. The question on the agenda was whether it was time to pay someone to do the work. In fact Tom Blanden had started re-fitting the glazing today, and was now about half way through, so the question was not put. In discussion, the point was made that the PC should not in future attempt self-help for such a time-consuming task but should engage and pay professionals to do the work, but this was not voted on.

9. Highways Matters.

a. The Wilts Council proposal for new and improved signage etc had been agreed at LHFIG on 3 Oct. It wasn't possible to predict with any accuracy when the work would be done.

b. The Clerk had agreed with Wilts Council before the LHFIG that the additional measures the PC wanted on the western approach – white gates and yellow backing to the first speed limit sign – should be considered separately in order not to delay the main package. He had since submitted the request form for these measures.

c. VAS at Double-bend. Wilts Council's policy was that VASs were only approved for use where there was a record of injury to be resolved. The Clerk

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presented the argument for a VAS looking eastward down The Street, and said that the new rules for SIDs would allow the PC to deploy a SID to do the job. The RFO pointed out how much was being spent in this area of the parish. The decision was to wait until the £60K had arrived and then consider the subject again.

d. 2<sup>nd</sup> SID. The plan for a 2<sup>nd</sup> SID had not been rejected by Wilts Council, however deploying an additional pole and socket was taking time because of understaffing and sickness among the Local Highways Engineers. We needed to be patient. The Clerk had not yet placed the order for the 2<sup>nd</sup> SID, waiting until there was certainty about the pole and socket.

e. Cutting the Verge East and West of the Village. This year the white gates had been invisible, and thus a waste of money, as the grass had grown to hide them. The Clerk proposed that the PC should pay a contractor to cut the verges 100 metres or so before the white gates, both on the east approach and also on the west approach if we got them there; and the latter would double as keeping the southern verge walkable. He was meeting a contractor on-site next week to get a quote.

10. Clearing Vegetation Behind Bus Shelter. Quote obtained from Nick Durnford Landscaping for clearance up to 2 metres, at £150 + VAT. PC agreed, also agreed that Clerk could negotiate deeper clearance up to £250. **Action: Clerk**

11. Footpaths. TORs for the Footpath Group were agreed by the PC. **Action: Clerk**

12. Improving Footing at Gate on CHAR 7. At the last meeting the PC had agreed to do the work and had accepted the quote. Since then it had taken so long to negotiate access with one of the 2 landowners that the ground was now too wet to do the best job. Other than the possibility of a prolonged dry period sometime in the winter, the work should now wait until next year. The landowner had sent his conditions for allowing the work, which the Clerk had sent to our insurers and to Rights of Way for advice. It looked as if we would need to take legal advice, and that it might not be possible to use our intended contractor (as, being retired, he didn't have work insurance). The Clerk would use the delay imposed by the wet ground to investigate other courses. **Action: Clerk**

13. Poppy Wreath. The PC agreed a donation of £150 to the Poppy Appeal. The PC Chairman would be away on the day so Marion Adkins would see whether Philip Thompson could lay the wreath, or failing that would do it herself. **Action: Marion Adkins**

14. Precept 2024/25 – 1<sup>st</sup> Look. Marion Adkins as RFO produced and talked through in detail her budget forecast. The Tax Base information was not yet available, nor was the Clerk's pay rate for the current year, let alone next year. The precept would be decided at the January meeting.

15. Investing the £60K. The Clerk explained that his intention today was to introduce the subject with no decision needed yet. The basic options for the PC to decide between were to invest to maintain value over time, or to invest to increase the value. The latter was the riskier as the value could decrease in this sort of investment. If the PC were minded to take the former course the Clerk proposed CCLA as a suitable vehicle. There was some discussion but no decision was needed, ultimately until the March PC meeting.

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16. Great Western Community Forest Tree Planting. The Clerk introduced the subject briefly. The idea seemed to involve no budget expenditure. Given that the PC owned no land it wasn't clear how we could participate. Clerk/PC Chairman would find out more.

17. Planning. Report on Planning Applications:

- Considered by the PC since the last meeting:
  - Land to East and South of Minety Substation – grid connection cable – no objection.
- Decided by Wilts Council since the last meeting:
  - 1 Perry Green – replacement of hedge with fence - refuse.
- Not yet decided:, Land off Pond Lane (BESS), Land at Somerford Farm (BESS), Land at Stonehill (BESS), Purlieus House (removal of Agricultural Occupancy restriction), Minety Sub-station extension. Minety Solar Farm variation of conditions, New House Farm, Land North of Queen Street.

18. Councillors' observations and items for the next meeting. None.

19. Dates of Next Meetings. 4 Jan, 7 Mar, 9 May, 4 Jul, 5 Sep, 7 Nov. APM Sat 6 Apr.

The meeting closed at 8.42pm.

Chairman