



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Agenda

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council

held on Thursday 13 June 2024 at 19:30 at

Mortimer Methodist Church Hall, West End Road, Mortimer

Present:

Councillors:

Cllr D Morsley (Chairman), Cllr G Bridgman, Cllr M Dennett, Cllr H Geary, Cllr S Hill, Cllr D Kilshaw, Cllr H Kilshaw, Cllr M Lock, Cllr A Richardson, Cllr M Shaw, Cllr J Wells.

Clerk:

Mrs L Hannawin.

Public/Press:

There were no members of the public and no members of the press in attendance.

Part I

24/022 Public Questions

None.

24/023 To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Marsden and Cllr A Noonan.

24/024 To receive any declarations of interest

To receive from Members at this point or at any point during the meeting, in respect of any items included on the agenda, disclosure of any interests, and gifts and hospitality in line with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

None.

24/025 Minutes of Last Meeting

To resolve to approve the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council of 9 May 2024.

RESOLVED with one abstention that these minutes be approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the meeting.

24/026 Chairman's Remarks

Cllr Morsley:

- Thanked the D-Day Working Party for the event to mark the 80th Commemorations.
- Issued posters advertising Councillor Surgeries for the village noticeboards.

Further to a brief discussion, it was agreed it was not necessary to further consider installing bleed kits around the village and Cllr Hill confirmed he should be visiting the cemetery this weekend to continue with the review of the Custodian's equipment.

24/027 Clerk's Report

To receive a report from the Parish Clerk outlining actions taken following the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 14 March 2024 and other updates.

1. Casual Vacancy

West Berkshire Council have confirmed that the current vacancy may be filled through co-option. This will be advertised with a view to filling the position at July's meeting.

2. Burial Plot Allocation

To date burial plots have been allocated in order running from A to D horizontally across the cemetery but, further to discussions with Burghfield Parish Council Clerk and two stone masons, it is proposed to allocate future plots vertically, issuing all available plots in row A prior to moving on to row B etc. This should assist with ensuring plots and headstones are in line.

The report was received.

24/028 Items to be taken into private session

To determine which items, if any, of the Agenda should be taken with the public excluded.

Cllr Morsley proposed agenda items 24/029 8. Garth Hall Working Party be party taken in Part II. Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

24/029 Reports from Committees, Steering Groups, Working Parties and Outside Bodies.

1. Fairground and Cemetery Committee

Cllr Hill reported:

- The Cemetery tender document has been circulated to the Committee for comment.
- One addition needs to be made to the Fairground Footpath and Utility Square specification prior to it being issued for tender.
- The new Custodian has now started. Cllr Hill thanked everyone for their assistance with keeping The Fairground tidy.

2. Finance and General Purposes Committee

Points to note/ consider are all on the agenda.

3. Planning Committee

Cllr Bridgman reported:

- TA Fisher were successful in their appeal with respect to the original retaining wall in Phase 2b, MOR006 and this is thought to be their preferred option.
- At the Local Plan Review meeting held at Shaw House, the Examiner confirmed that there is no obligation for Mortimer to take more housing.

4. Climate and Environment Steering Group

Foudry Brook is an agenda item.

5. Communications Steering Group

The latest newsletter is out for delivery.

6. D-Day Working Party

Further to the commemorations having taken place on 6 June, the Working Party has been disbanded.

7. Emergency Planning Working Party

A meeting is scheduled for 19 June.

8. Garth Hall Working Party

A meeting has taken place with the Royal British Legion (RBL), trust applicants and Cllrs Bridgman and Carter as SMPC representatives. Further details were provided at Part II.

9. Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath

Cllr Morsley reported there is still a hold up with the project due to the lack of input from WBC Highways. Ridge has sent the plans showing the proposed boundaries to Highways for comment and is looking to arrange an online meeting for next week. The Steering Group has a meeting scheduled for 28 June.

10. Outside Bodies

- Burghfield and Mortimer Neighbourhood Action Group (BMNAG): The Annual Meeting is taking place on Friday 14 June.

24/030 Items for Consideration and Resolution

1. Policies

To consider any policies requiring consideration, amendment or approval:

- Financial Regulations (now including Reserve Policy)**
- Cemetery Regulations**

Cllr Morsley proposed that both sets of regulations are approved.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

2. Neighbourhood Plan

To receive and endorse a written report from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG).

The report was received.

3. Internal Auditor's Report

To receive the Internal Auditor's Reports for the year ended 31st March 2024.

The report was received.

4. Annual Governance and Accountability Return – Section 1

To consider and address each statement and approve the 2023/2024 Annual Governance Statement for signing by the Chairman and Clerk.

Each assertion on Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement was reviewed and agreed. Cllr Morsley proposed Section 1 was approved for signing by the Chairman and the Clerk of the meeting.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 was signed by the Chairman and Clerk in the presence of the Council.

5. Annual Governance and Accountability Return – Section 2

To receive and approve the 2023/2024 Accounting Statements for signing by the Chairman.

The figures were considered.

Cllr Morsley proposed Section 2 – Accounting Statements was approved for signing by the Chairman.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2023/24 was signed by the Chairman in the presence of the Council.

6. Annual Governance and Accountability Return – additional documents.

To receive the following documents which will be submitted to the External Auditor as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return:

- a. Confirmation of Dates for the Exercise of Public Rights 2023/24**
- b. Bank Reconciliation as of 31 March 2024**
- c. Explanation of variances**
- d. Reconciliation between Box 7 and Box 8**
- e. Evidence that the Council has complied with the criteria for general power of competence as part of the immediate review.**

The documents were received.

7. Appointment of the Internal Auditor 2024/25

To resolve the appointment of Mrs. C. Connell as the Council's Internal Auditor for 2024/25.

The Clerk confirmed there is no requirement to rotate internal auditors each year, but internal auditors must have knowledge of the sector, be independent and competent.

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

8. Banning of Pets as Prizes

To receive the letter from WBC and resolve to ban the giving of pets as prizes on all land owned and events organised by SMPC.

The letter was considered.

Cllr Morsley proposed that SMPC should ban the giving of any live animals in any form as a prize on parish council run land and The Fairground hire agreement should be updated accordingly.

Seconded by Cllr Lock.

Resolved with 8 in favour, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

ACTION Cllr Geary to update The Fairground hire agreement.

9. Foudry Brook

- a. To receive an update report and consider the response received from Thames Water
- b. To resolve a further response to Thames Water as required with copies to The Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and our MP.

Cllr Dennett presented a report and summarised information regarding the discharge data over the last two years; the letters sent to various bodies as previously agreed by Council and the subsequent responses received. Cllr Dennett confirmed there were other parties who can assist with analysing the information and drafting a further response to Thames Water. Cllr D Kilshaw also offered to assist.

Cllr Bridgman proposed that the writing of the response to Thames Water is delegated to Cllr Dennett and the Clerk.

Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously.

ACTION Cllrs Dennett and D Kilshaw and the Clerk to undertake the further research necessary and write a response to Thames Water accordingly.

10. Willink Leisure Centre

To resolve:

- a. That the Clerk, on behalf of this Council, shall write to West Berkshire Council's Service Director for Strategy and Governance to establish if the agreement dated 14 August 1996 relating to the Willink Leisure Centre ("the Leisure Centre") between Berkshire CC, Newbury DC, Burghfield PC, Stratfield Mortimer PC, Sulhamstead PC and the Governing Body of Willink School ("the 1996 Agreement") is the most recent agreement relating to the Leisure Centre to which this Council is a signatory (and, if not, requesting a copy/copies of any subsequent agreement/s).
- b. That, if the 1996 Agreement is the most recent agreement, to write to the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council: (1) asking what individual/role within WBC now undertakes the function previously undertaken by the Director of Recreation Services for Newbury District Council, (2) to point out that (according to our research) that individual is the Secretary of the Willink Recreation Centre Joint Board ("the Board"), established in accordance with the 1996 Agreement, (3) that the 1996 Agreement stipulates that the Board (now apparently called the 'Willink Leisure Centre Joint Advisory Committee') shall meet not less than three times a year, (4) that the Secretary has not called any meeting of the Board since October 2017, (5) that there is general dissatisfaction with the way in which the Centre is run and the state of the equipment there, (6) that this Council is minded to remove its annual funding paid in accordance with the Agreement by giving notice in accordance with the provision permitting a party to withdraw from the Agreement, but (7) has resolved to first see what the Chief Executive and/or the Secretary might wish to say about (i) the failure to call meetings, and (ii) the general state of the facility.
- c. That, if there is a/are more recent agreement/s, the Clerk considers the terms of such and, in conjunction with Cllrs Morsley and Bridgman, corresponds further with the relevant officer at WBC in similar terms to the above, but taking onto account anything in any subsequent agreement, about the failure of the Willink Leisure Centre Joint Advisory

Committee to meet and the dissatisfaction with the Leisure Centre operation, including - if they consider it necessary – a warning that funding might be withdrawn.

Cllr Bridgman summarised the background of the previous agreements and the issues were discussed.

Cllr Bridgman proposed the resolution as above.

Seconded by Cllr D Kilshaw.

Resolved unanimously.

ACTION as a) above, the Clerk to write to WBC as the first step.

11. RoSPA Training

a. To receive information regarding routine and operational RoSPA training.

b. To resolve a virement of £500.00 from General Reserve to Training.

The Clerk provided information regarding the type of training available and associated costs and recommended the routine training is booked for the Village Custodian and other interested parties.

Cllr Morsley proposed a virement of £500 from General Reserve to Training.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

ACTION Cllrs Bridgman and Wells and possibly Noonan and the Clerk to undertake the routine training with the Custodian.

12. Transfer of Council Funds

To resolve the purchase of shares to the value of £90,000 in the Public Sector Deposit Fund to maintain the balance in the Unity Trust Bank Account in line with the Investment Strategy.

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

13. Personnel

To receive an update.

Cllr Morsley confirmed:

- The appointment of Mr J Sylla as Village Custodian.
- Finance and General Purposes agreed increasing the working hours of the Assistant to the Clerk from 28 per week to 30.

24/031 Finance

1. Accounts for Payment

To receive and approve items of expenditure - Schedule A i.

Item	Date of Invoice	Payee Details	Amount £
1.	01/05/24	G Bridgman: travel & light for Office shed	29.64
2.	22/05/24	RoSPA Play Safety: Annual equipment inspection inc VAT	312.00
3.	27/05/24	Tactical Facilities Ltd: Fairground footpath vegetation clearance inc VAT	294.00
4.	29/05/24	Ridge & Partners LLP: Updating the design & liaising with bridge suppliers, WBC & SMPC inc VAT	4800.00
5.	31/05/24	Clare Connell: End of year Audit	260.00

6.	31/05/24	Sportsturf Design (TGMS Ltd): Cemetery extension design	2568.00
7.	03/06/24	Alebrije Consulting Ltd: NPSG admin assistance - May	100.00

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Kilshaw.

Resolved with one abstention.

2. Payments made with the authorisation of Chairman/Vice-Chairman and the Clerk

To receive and note a summary of payments made - Schedules B i and B ii.

Schedule Bi

Item	Date of Payment	Payee Details	Amount £
Electronic Bank Payments			
1.	09/04/24	St John's Hall: BMNAG hall rental 14/06/2024	32.00
2.	14/05/24	Clear Councils: annual insurance premium (card payment)	1397.74
3.	26/04/24	Tree World Services: Fairground replacement trees	1347.00
4.	29/04/24	Alebrije Consulting Ltd: NPSG admin support - April	350.00
5.	30/04/24	Ridge & Partners LLP: post planning design & project management services inc VAT	1800.00
6.	30/04/24	Dads Shop: Tape inc VAT	3.79
7.	13/05/24	Life Education Wessex: grant for St John's & St Mary's schools	740.00

Schedule Bii

Item	Date of Payment	Payee Details	Amount
Card Payments			
1.	13/05/24	SLCC: ILCA – S Taylor	144.00
2.	21/05/24	Amazon: stationery inc VAC	5.13
3.	21/05/24	DVLR.IT: Annual fee for auto social media from SMPC website	102.11
4.	22/05/24	Amazon: wireless keyboard & mouse inc VAT	21.65
5.	27/05/24	Amazon: printer cartridge inc VAT	99.58
6.	30/05/24	Amazon: printer cartridge inc VAT	99.58
7.	30/05/24	Nothing But Padlocks: additional security & compound locks inc VAT	109.99
8.	01/06/24	Google: DNS network services	.40
9.	03/06/24	Lloyds: monthly card fee	3.00

The payments were received and noted.

3. Subscriptions and Continuous Payments

To receive and note a summary of payments made – Schedule C.

Item	Payment Date	Payee Details	Amount £
Electronic Bank and Card Payments			
1.	17/04/24	David Sturt: IT monitoring & support – March	105.00
2.	26/04/24	Tactical Facilities: dog waste empties & litter bin emptying inc VAT - April	279.84
3.	01/05/24	Tactical Facilities Ltd: cemetery pillbox grounds maintenance 01/05 inc. VAT	79.57

4.	07/05/24	Tactical Facilities Ltd: cemetery pillbox grounds maintenance 07/05 inc. VAT	79.57
5.	13/05/24	SLCC: annual membership L Hannawin	288.00
6.	30/04/24	Salaries: Month 2 May 2024 inc. pension contributions	4222.46
7.	30/04/24	HMRC: PAYE & NI for Month 2	1188.00
Direct Debits			
8.	01/05/24	OVO: Electricity inc VAT	16.00
9.	01/05/24	OVO: Electricity inc VAT	33.00
10.	08/05/24	Smart Pension: admin fee inc. VAT	26.40
11.	08/04/24	BT: Quarterly rental inc.VAT	255.08
12.	10/05/24	EE: mobile phone charges & WiFi hotspot	33.64
13.	23/05/24	OVO: Electricity inc. VAT	6.00
14.	31/05/24	Suez: Waste collection April	107.78

The payments were received and noted.

24/032 Items for information only

1. To note the meetings that have taken place of the following committees and to receive the draft minutes, where available:

- a. **Planning 23/05/2024**
- b. **Fairground and Cemetery 16/05/2024**
- c. **Finance and General Purposes 04/06/2024**
- d. **Planning 13/06/2024**

The meetings were noted and minutes received where available.

2. District Councillor Reports

It was noted that the report had not been added to the meeting papers on SharePoint. Dist Cllr Carter confirmed he has included an update on hedge cutting.

3. Correspondence.

1. Life Education Wessex

Thanked us for our donation of £740 for their work with St John's and St Mary's schools. Life Education Wessex aims to give every primary aged child in Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Hampshire and Thames Valley the opportunity to benefit from their programme of health and drug prevention education and equip them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make healthy choices and to lead healthier lives.

2. Safety of Lithium-ion Batteries used in e-bikes and scooters

Lord Foster and Electrical Safety First are asking the Council to support their campaign to improve the safety of lithium batteries used in e-bike and scooters and their disposal. They aim to get their bill into Law as soon as possible. Lithium battery fires are on the increase.

4. Planning decisions and information from West Berkshire Council.

23/02038/FUL: 9 Windmill Road Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3RN

Erection of 4 no. 3 bed dwellings.

APPROVED subject to conditions – 29 May 2024

SMPC Comments: The recent comments of WBC Highways regarding what is said to be compliance with P1 are noted but the Committee wishes to point out what appears to be a

lacuna in the policy relating to parking and thus a policy question, and also a specific question for Highways on their response.

If an existing property has the benefit of parking in accordance with P1, but then transfers that parking area to a developer to form part of a new adjacent development site - such that the new site has parking spaces in accordance with P1 but having lost its parking, the donor property no longer complies with P1 - how does WBC treat the loss of parking from the donor property?

In the instant case the applicant says: *“The new plans show 9 car parking spaces to the new development and also a space to No.9 Windmill road. By providing this additional space to No.9, in effect a tenth space is being provided so the net effect is the same as what is being asked for and a betterment is created given the existing dwelling has no parking at all. We believe that this is actually a better solution to just providing 10 spaces to the new development. Any future owner of No.9 in all likelihood is going to own a car and if we did not provide off street parking then they would be parking on the street (as in all probability the previous owner was). We believe that this is actually a better balance overall because looking at census data only 8% of households locally have 3 cars or vans whereas statistically 38% of homes locally have only 1 car or van. So, this is more likely to provide a better balance to the scheme as a whole and the surrounding area.”*

(First, of course, the applicant appears to be seeking to re-write P1 by reference to statistics. The Committee suggests that P1 should be strictly adhered to unless there are exceptional circumstances - as allowed for in the policy - which doesn't appear to be the case here. The applicant has chosen to put four houses on this site whereas they could easily put (eg) three and increase the space available for parking.)

The applicant can't have it both ways. Either the tenth space is for No 9, in which case the new development has nine spaces and fails to comply with P1, or the new development has ten spaces and complies, but No 9 has no parking (and if it does have parking it should have at least two spaces for compliance with P1). On this point, it is disingenuous when the applicant says that No 9 didn't have any parking – it benefitted from off-road parking on a field large enough for (now) four houses!

24/00262/HOUSE: 16 The Crescent Mortimer Common Reading RG7 3RU

Single storey rear extension, garage conversion and front extension to garage to provide covered car port with associated fenestration and new chimney flue.

APPROVED – subject to conditions - 23 May 2024

SMPC Comments: The planning committee does not understand the comments from Highways. According to the plans there appears to be a garage door at the front of property not set back within the car port space. Also, the car port together with the remaining drive does not appear to be long enough to accommodate two cars in a row. Other than this there are no further objections.

24/00455/HOUSE: 17 Damson Drive Mortimer Reading RG7 3WZ

Retrospective: Application for the erection of 2 no. outbuildings in the rear garden of the house to be used for storage and chicken coop.

APPROVED – 6 June 2024

SMPC Comments: The planning committee do not see any objections to the sheds in planning terms. Any questions as to what they are being used for we do not consider a matter for planning but rather a matter for Environmental health.

24/01040/NONMAT: 60 Stephens Firs Mortimer Reading RG7 3UY

Non material amendment to approved 22/01414/HOUSE - Erection of front porch, re-roof front elevation of garage, conversion of garage to habitable accommodation, minor internal alterations and erection of garden room. Amendment -change to false pitch roof.

APPROVED – 6 June 2024

24/00762/TPW: 93 Victoria Road Mortimer Common RG7 3XD

2x Oak: Reduce height and spread of trees by approx 25% (equal to 3-4m crown reduction), leaving cuts no greater than 50mm and finishing height of trees at 16m.

APPROVED – 7 June 2024

The planning decisions were received.

5. Neighbourhood Action Group report

The Annual Meeting is being held on Friday 14 June.

6. Health and Safety

Nothing to report.

7. Councillor Surgeries

One member of the public talked with Councillors at the recent surgery. Posters advertising the next six sessions are being added to the noticeboards.

8. Minor Matters

- It was confirmed the community boards have been removed for updating.
- Cllr Morsley confirmed the Awayday will be held on 31 August. Topics to date are a review of the committee structure and a look at community events. Other suggestions are welcome.

24/033 Communications

To identify items for communicating.

New Village Custodian.

24/034 Future Agenda Items

To identify future agenda items

None.

24/035 Exclusion of Press and Public

To pass a resolution under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting at Part II, items identified at 24/028 on the Agenda, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

Part II

24/029 Reports from Committees, Steering Groups, Working Parties and Outside Bodies.

8. Garth Hall

Cllr Bridgman confirmed that at the RBL meeting two applicants had presented their cases for taking on the trusteeship. Further to the meeting, a report will be presented to the Legion's board in mid-August following discussions with RBL's solicitors as to whether either bid meets the requirements for a transfer of the trust. If one or other applicant is proposed, the successful one will probably be issued with a letter of intent (which will enable them to go out for funding). There will be criteria that either applicant will need to meet as part of taking on the trust.

The meeting closed at 21:30

Date of next meeting: 11 July 2024.