



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council Agenda

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held at Mortimer Methodist Church Hall on Thursday 4 June 2024 at 19:30.

Present:

Councillors:

Cllr D Morsley (Chairman), Cllr N Carter, Cllr H Geary, Cllr S Hill, Cllr A Noonan, Cllr A Marsden, Cllr A Richardson.

Officers:

Mrs L Hannawin

Public/Press:

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

Part I

24/001 Public Questions (for agenda items only)

None.

24/002 To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr G Bridgman.

24/003 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.

24/004 Minutes of Last Meeting

To approve and sign the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 25 April 2024.

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

Chairman's Remarks

Cllr Morsley confirmed the Council Awayday is booked for the 31st August and the 80th D-Day Commemorations are taking place this Thursday.

24/005 Clerk's Report

To receive a report from the Parish Clerk outlining actions taken following the meeting held on 25 April 2024 and other updates.

1. Insurance

The insurance has been renewed through Clear Councils. The new policy starts 1 June.

2. Local Council Award Scheme

Feedback was received on the initial submission on 24 May and Cllr Richardson and the Clerk addressed the minor changes highlighted. The application was resubmitted the application well ahead of the deadline of 7 June. The deadline for the panel to issue their decision is 2 August.

3. Website

The site has been upgraded to run on Drupal 10, which is the latest version of the Drupal content management system. Whilst undertaking the Drupal upgrade, and as part of the providers SME Climate Pledge work to reduce their carbon emissions, the site was moved to a new UK datacentre which is 100% powered by renewable energy. The supplier continues to monitor for updates in the Government Design System which will be applied as they occur - this is already covered by the agreed fees. The internal auditor recently used the SMPC website as an excellent example for transparency with regards to meeting documents.

In addition, the Clerk reported that

- The Royal British Legion and the Scouts are holding a short ceremony at the War Memorial on Thursday in recognition of the 80th D-Day Commemorations.
- The current BT phone and broadband package expires in October and the office has started to look at alternatives including Gigaclear.

The report was received.

24/006 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 5b. Personnel: Increasing the Assistant to the Clerks weekly working hours to 30, 6. Village Custodian and 8. Willink Leisure Centre be taken in Part II.

Seconded by Cllr Noonan.

Resolved unanimously.

24/007 Steering Group and Working Party Reports

1. Communication

The next newsletter is with the printers.

2. Emergency Planning

Cllr Richardson is setting up a meeting.

3. Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath

Cllr Morsley confirmed that a meeting had taken place between the Council, Ridge and West Berkshire Council (WBC). For Ridge to finish the detailed design of the cycleway, which is needed so a tender may be issued, further information is required from Highways regarding the design of the works they will be undertaking; in particular

details of where the exact highways boundary is needed. To date the response has been limited. Ridge have issued the proposed plans to Highways, showing where the various sets of works will potentially meet and where Ridge think the highways boundary is, for comment. There is also concern regarding the crossing Highways are proposing and how it will fair in a Road Safety Audit. The dormouse survey is underway and will run all summer through to the autumn. The Steering Group will be meeting shortly.

24/008 Items for Consideration and Resolution

1. To consider any Policies within the ambit of the Committee requiring consideration, amendment, or proposal to Full Council:

a. Financial Regulations (now including Reserves Policy)

Cllr Richardson proposed the Financial Regulations should be recommended for approval by full Council.

Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously

2. Internal Audit Report

To receive the Internal Audit Report for presentation to Full Council on Thursday 13 June 2024.

The report was received.

3. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

To receive and consider:

a. AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 for presentation to full Council on 13 June 2024.

b. AGAR Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/34 for recommendation for approval by full Council on 13 June 2024.

AGAR Section 1 and 2 were received.

4. Annual Governance and Accountability Return: additional documents - [CLERK](#)

To receive the following documents which will be submitted to the External Auditor:

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 Intermediate Review.

The documents were received.

5. Personnel - [DM](#)

To resolve:

a. The appointment of two members to the Personnel Sub Committee.

Cllr Morsley proposed that Cllrs Geary and Richardson be appointed to the Personnel Sub-Committee.

Seconded by Cllr Hill.

Resolved with 2 abstentions.

b. Increasing the Assistant to the Clerks weekly working hours to 30.

Minuted at Part II.

6. Village Custodian

To receive an update on the recruitment process undertaken and resolve the:

- a. Appointment of the Village Custodian.**
- b. Starting date**
- c. Starting salary.**

Minuted at Part II.

7. Bank Reconciliation and Quarterly Internal Financial Control

To appoint a Supervising Councillor or Councillors to undertake the quarterly:

- a. Internal Financial Control**
- b. Verification of the bank reconciliations for all accounts.**

Cllr Morsley proposed Cllrs Richardson and Noonan for the above roles respectively.
Seconded by Cllr Hill.

Resolved unanimously.

8. Willink Leisure Centre

To review the current contract and agree any recommendations for consideration by the Council on 13 June 2024.

Minuted at Part II.

24/009 Items for information only

Minor Matters

- Further to Cllr Hill's queries it was:
 - confirmed that the Community Boards are about to be updated.
 - The overgrown vegetation along the footpath by Spratleys has been reported to WBC.
- Cllr Hill reminded the Committee that the Council need to confirm as soon as possible should they wish to have a gazebo at the forthcoming event, "Transport Through the Ages". He confirmed a that a member of the public had mended the fence in the conservation area and will be putting up some wire to stop dogs entering.
- Cllr Richardson reported that arisings from the hedge cut remain in West End Road car park.
- Cllr Carter has contacted the landowner directly regarding the overgrown vegetation on the left-hand side of The Street just past Mortimer Hill. The Clerk confirmed the office had reported the overgrown hedge on The Street by Mortimer Hall.
- The Clerk reported that the Exclusive Right of Burial holder of plot D24 has failed to remove the astro turf and flowerpots by the agreed deadline of the 31 May. Cllr Geary shall contact the ERB holder.

24/010 Communications

To identify items for communicating

None.

24/011 Future Agenda Items

To identify future agenda items.

None.

24/012 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 24/006 on the Agenda, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Hill.

Resolved unanimously.

Part II

24/008 Items for Consideration and Resolution

5. Personnel - **DM**

To resolve:

- b. Increasing the Assistant to the Clerks weekly working hours to 30.**

Proposed by Cllr Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr Geary.

Resolved unanimously.

6. Village Custodian

To receive an update on the recruitment process undertaken and resolve the:

- d. Appointment of the Village Custodian.**
- e. Starting date**
- f. Starting salary.**

Cllr Hill and the Clerk had interviewed two candidates for the role. A third candidate was unable to attend due to personal reasons. Further to a discussion, Cllr Morsley proposed that, subject to satisfactory references and DBS check, the position be offered to Mr J Sylla, to commence on Thursday 6th June at scale point 6 as per the Local Government Service National Pay Agreement.

Seconded by Cllr Geary.

Resolved unanimously.

7. Willink Leisure Centre

To review the current contract and agree any recommendations for consideration by the Council on 13 June 2024.

The issues regarding the Willink Leisure Centre were discussed. It was agreed for 1) public opinion to be sought, for example, via the Councillor Surgeries regarding experiences of using the service and 2) recommend the Council write to WBC requesting the Willink Leisure Joint Advisory Committee be reinstated as soon as possible, so that the issues can be conveyed to that committee; the possibility of giving notice of not paying next year's contribution was raised.

The meeting closed at 21:15

Date of next meeting: 4 July 2024.