

PRESENT – Geraldine Shepherd (GS), Annabella Scott (AS), Colin Baber (CB), John Hatherell (JH), Simon Wilson (SW) and Parish Clerk John Shepherd (JS)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Carolyn Nicolle (CN)

MINUTES (10th September 2014 Meeting) – Read and APPROVED

Proposed: AS, Seconded: JH – Agreed unanimously.

MATTERS ARISING

Parking. The continuing problem of parking in Westonbirt Village Street and one-way system was again discussed. It had been hoped that the change in parking arrangements at the Arboretum would reduce the problem and for a period in the summer it had done so. However, the parking problem was now as bad as ever, with cars parking on the pavement on the right-hand side of the road.

It was agreed that as this involved Gloucestershire Highways, GS should take the matter up with our GCC Councillor, Anthony Hicks. The Parish Clerk would also raise the issue at a senior level at Gloucestershire Constabulary County Police HQ. If that too, failed to deliver results, GS would raise the matter with the Police Commissioner.

Parish Party. One of the consequences of the decision at the last meeting not to hold a Parish Party in 2015 would be the lack of the contribution of £50 towards the cost of the PC Insurance Policy and this shortfall would need to be found from next year's precept.

Stipend for Parish Clerk. JS had received the Parish Clerk stipend of £480 for the period 1 April to 30 September 2014.

Advertisement for Parish Clerk. GS reported that an advertisement for the Parish Clerk had been drafted and posted on both Parish notice boards. Copies of the advertisement were circulated and all agreed that it was appropriate and suitable.

New Planning Application at Aldacre House GS reported that, as tasked at the last meeting, she had written to CDC expressing the views of the PC as recorded in the minutes. CDC had recently permitted the development.

Parochial Parish Council (PPC) Involvement with Community. AS reported that the C of E Badminton Benefice is holding a 'Bring your Own' supper in Badminton Village Hall on 16 May 2015. It will be an opportunity for all the 7 parishes within the Benefice, including Westonbirt with Lasborough, to get together and it is hoped it will be well supported. A raffle will be drawn. More details from the individual PCCs early in 2015.

BANK RECONCILIATION

A bank reconciliation was carried out by the Chair and no discrepancies were identified.

PRECEPT FOR 2015/2016

JS provided a breakdown of Income and Expenditure as in last year's audited accounts. He pointed out that that the income was only 2 pence greater than necessary outgoings and that next year, without a 2015 Parish Party, no contribution of £50 would be received towards the cost of the PC Insurance Policy. Furthermore, the outcome of advertising for the Parish Clerk was not yet known. Whilst acting as Parish Clerk JS had not used the Parish Ink-jet printer, nor claimed any expenses for using his own laser printer that was much less expensive to run. The list price of a set of Parish printer ink cartridges is £41.49.

GS was concerned that without an increase in precept the council would be unable to meet next year's projected necessary expenditure without depleting its very modest reserves of just over £200. Furthermore, that would leave insufficient reserves to deal with even a small unexpected contingency. She felt that notwithstanding Councillors unanimous desire to keep the precept as low as possible, an Increase of £100 was necessary as a minimum. Whilst this was an increase of about 9% it was in reality a very small amount when shared between the Council Tax payers in the Parish.

In discussion, there was general agreement that such an increase was necessary and it was RESOLVED that there should be an increase in precept of £100, from £1,120 in 2014/2015 to £1,220 for 2015/2016.

Proposed: CB, Seconded: AS – Agreed unanimously.

REVIEW OF DRAFT RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND DISCUSSION OF OTHER DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

JS reminded Councillors that, in the audit of our Financial Return for the FY ending 31 March 2014, whilst the External Auditor, Grant Thornton, made no observations on the return itself, they did draw our attention to various supplementary matters relating to Financial Regulations and Internal Controls. Those observations relating to Financial Regulations were dealt with at the previous PC meeting: the Draft Risk Management Policy that he had prepared and circulated proposes appropriate Internal Controls.

It is based upon the Risk Management Policy of another Parish Council and was obtained through our membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), as had been our Financial Regulations.

The Impact and Likelihood of the Risks identified have been reviewed in the light of the (small) size of our budget, and the fact that the Council owns no property and very few physical assets. In general, this review has resulted in many Risks being reduced to Low in both Impact and Likelihood. Risks, particularly those that remain High, are mitigated by the Internal Controls that are proposed, many of which are already in place.

After discussion Councillors RESOLVED to adopt the Risk Management Policy, as presented.

Proposed: JH, Seconded: SW – Agreed unanimously.

JS said that, while preparing the Risk Management Policy, he had identified other documents that the PC ought to have in place, in particular a Freedom of Information (Fol) Publication Policy.

Councillors tasked him with preparing such additional documents as necessary, the Fol Publication Policy to be prepared for review at the next PC meeting.

PROPOSAL TO ARCHIVE DOCUMENTS AT GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES

JS stated that he had inherited a large amount of documents (two removal boxes) from the previous Parish Clerk. He had noted the requirement to safeguard important documents in the Risk Management Policy and had made enquiries with the Gloucestershire County Archivist regarding the possibility and procedure for doing so. He had also ascertained that the County Archives were already holding copies of old minutes of PC meetings, dating back to the middle of the 19th century, but they had nothing recent. There was a national protocol for determining which documents must be retained, which might be retained and those that should be destroyed.

In response to a query, he confirmed that there was no charge by the Gloucestershire Archives for storing the PC's documents.

He asked if it was the PC's wish that he go through these documents and deal with them in accordance with the national protocol. It was AGREED that he should do so.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR PARISH CLERK

This had been dealt with under MATTERS ARISING.

PLANNING

There had been no new applications since the last meeting. However, GS stated that she was in the process of submitting a minor variation to her existing approved application for the new drive at Woodlands House to allow putting ball finials on the two gate posts, as they look very bare and unfinished with plain flat tops. No one had any objections,

AOB

People for You, Prior to the meeting, JS had been contacted by Sue Black on behalf of People for You regarding a "free befriending service for the older, isolated and housebound members of the community". She had wanted to come to the meeting but could not owing to a prior commitment. She sent copies of the People for You leaflet and poster asked for them to be drawn to your attention.

Bearing in mind the size and nature of the Parish, and its strong community spirit, Councillors could not think of anyone in the Parish for whom such a service would be applicable. JS was tasked with informing Sue Black accordingly.

Correspondence Received by Parish Clerk by Email. JS drew attention to a range of information that he received as Parish Clerk. It was mostly informative and not requiring formal action. Examples are Cotswold Careline, Warm & Well, Free Christmas Parking Concessions. Other correspondence included notification about various funding streams available for projects such as Community Activities, Active Together, Healthy Together and Children's Activity Fund. Finally there were invitations to various meetings such as the quarterly Chartered Parishes meeting held by GCC, and periodically for Parish and Town Councils to meet the CDC Leader and Chief Executive. He sought guidance as to how to respond to this correspondence.

After discussion, it was agreed that, as all Councillors were now on email, he should forward those he felt were of interest or might require action to all Councillors for their information, or action as necessary. GS, as a Trustee of the Village Hall Fund, provided a further informal update regarding the fund. Again, informal discussion ensued.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was AGREED that the next meeting would be held at Woodlands House at the usual time of 7pm, on Wednesday, 11th February 2015.