

Minutes of the proceedings of the Siston Parish Council meeting held remotely via Zoom on Thursday 15th October, 2020 commencing at 7.30pm

Present – Parish Councillors Andrew Stacey (Chair), James Hackett, Alan Bryant, Gloria Smith, Jon Gadsden, (Pippa Maytham and Jonathan Maytham intermittently due to technical difficulties).

21. Apologies for Absence

None received.

22. Declarations of Interests under the Code of Conduct adopted 19th July, 2012

a. Cllr. Hackett declared an interest in items 26. Finance - b. Goose Green footpath improvements and 27. Charity donation requests - a. Friends of Siston Commons donation both in his capacity as Chair, Friends of Siston Commons.

23. Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday 20th August, 2020

Resolved: the minutes were passed and will be signed as a correct record when Covid 19 lockdown restrictions have been lifted and meetings in person can be arranged.

24. Public Participation

Resident - request for a bench.

Members, having received information about the residents' request for a bench to be dedicated to a loved one who had passed, reviewed the possibility of upgrading an existing bench in the War Memorial Garden.

Resolved: members approved a bench and the resident confirmed the family would meet the cost of the purchase of the bench and plaque, Clerk to progress. (The resident then left the meeting).

25. Clerk vacancy

a. Members received the advertisement for the vacancy and were informed the position had been benchmarked by ALCA to determine pay scale and were informed that the closing date for applications was Wednesday 21st October and that to date, five expressions of interest had been received but only 2 completed application forms had been received.

26. Finance

a. Members were provided with the 2020/21 account summary.
b. Members discussed the proposed works to improve the footpath at Goose Green and reviewed the quote received. It was acknowledged the quote at £2,380.00 + VAT was higher than the budgeted amount of £2,000.00 for Commons

improvements but it was noted the £450.00 identified for improvements to the pond at Webbs Heath was available as the pond works would not be arranged this financial year.

Resolved: members approved the works and quote for the improvement works, Cllr Hackett confirmed the work would commence within a month.

c. Members received the External Auditor report on completion of the 2019/20 audit and noted no matters of concern were raised.

d. Members received the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 25th September and were asked to raise any queries or concerns. Cllr Hackett raised concerns regarding the lack of funding arranged to support the Friends of Siston Commons which was discussed by members who affirmed they fully support and appreciate the efforts of the group. It was generally accepted that providing a dedicated funding stream for the group would set a precedent and it would be difficult to justify declining similar requests from other external groups seeking similar terms. Historically, external groups request financial support via donations/grants and it was noted the Finance Committee felt this should continue to apply to the Friends group but also, the Committee had recommended and allowed for the grant funding budget to increase from £2,500.00 to £5,000.00 in recognition of the strain the covid pandemic would put on groups funds generally.

Resolved: members (3 and 1 abstained) agreed that the Friends of Siston Commons should request funding via grant applications.

e. Members received the correspondence from the War Memorials Trust regarding adding plaques to Listed monuments.

Resolved: whilst the War Memorial Trust suggest upholding the original decisions regarding names included on plaques they acknowledged that ultimately it was a local decision and on that basis, members unanimously approved Cllr Bryant's proposal of the addition of a plaque to include the names of those fallen not currently commemorated. Cllr. Bryant to co-ordinate works in the new financial year.

f. Members received the proposed 2021/22 budget and Precept justification documents detailing the Finance Committee's proposals and were asked to raise any queries or concerns. Cllr Hackett felt the budgeted hours/pay for the Clerk was set too low and overall that the budget suggested a lack of ambition. The Clerk explained the Clerk's position had been benchmarked by ALCA to identify the correct pay scale and the hours had been reduced from 21 to 15 due to covid and the reduction in meetings and, looking ahead, the projects identified for the next financial year were not felt to require a high level of input from the Clerk. It was noted there would be an opportunity to review the hours and, if necessary, adjustment made.

No other queries were raised. No decision on the proposed budget or Precept was required, the final decision is to be taken at the full council meeting in December.

27. Charity donation requests

a. Members received the Friends of Siston Commons grant application for £500.00 towards the day to day running costs of the group.

Resolved: members approved the full grant.

28. Planning

a. Planning Applications – see attached.

b. Planning Decisions – see attached.

29. Correspondence

a. Commons Stewardship Officer, South Glos Council – to suggest more research was necessary on the management of common land and ‘a more natural less hands on approach’ ‘not just for financial reasons but also from the ecological and carbon footprint point of view and suggested that brushcutter work by the Friends group should wait and be assessed to see what the SGC grounds team achieve first.

b. Resident to complain about the vandalised bus shelter on Anchor Road and more specifically the delay in the parish council arranging for repairs. The Clerk informed members the delay was due to contractor availability and delivery time of replacement panel but confirmed the work had now been completed.

30. Accounts for Payment

a. Members received the monthly payment approval spreadsheet and authorised the on-line payment of the following items:

1. NEST pension provider – auto enrolment – Direct Debit - £118.29
2. E. Kenny – salary & expenses - £1,396.19
3. PKF Littlejohn – external audit – £240.00 (paid 29.09.20)
4. Mr S Burbidge – bus shelter repair - £220.00
5. Mr A Stacey – Chair’s allowance - £50.00

31. Any Other Business – for information purposes only

a. Cllr. Bryant wished to acknowledge the years of service John Hunt had given to the local area and, following his recent sad passing, wanted to acknowledge not only how he would be missed as a colleague and friend but also how much his experience and knowledge would be missed by the parish council and residents.

Date of next meeting: 17th December, 2020 (subject to change if covid restrictions ease).

Meeting closed at 20.40

Confirmed and signed Chairman.....

Date.....