

# BISHOP'S ITCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting 24 January 2022 at 7.30pm

### Present

Cllr Dugmore (Chairman)    Cllr Christian-Carter    Cllr Gates    Cllr Kettle  
Cllr M Mann    Cllr Thomas

### Absent

3 Vacant seats

### In Attendance

Andrew Maliphant – Project Officer  
Karen Stevens - Clerk to the Council

### Public

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### 22/14 Apologies:

Cllr Tressler

### 22/15 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Kettle raised the fact that all the members of the parish council are council tax payees and therefore a dispensation is required regarding the budgets/precept for 2022/2023. All Councillors declared an interest as taxpayers in the village.

### 22/16 Dispensations:

It was **RESOLVED** to grant a dispensation to all parish councillors present for the discussions regarding budget and precept because of the impact on them as council taxpayers. (Proposed Cllr Christian-Carter, seconded Cllr Mann, all in favour).

### 22/17 Public Forum:

No members of the public were in attendance.

### 22/18 Planning Application:

#### 21/00066/FUL

Butchers Close, Bishop's Itchington – Construction of a single storey front and side extension.

Due to Stratford District Council (SDC) declaring the planning application invalid as it appears that part of the land that they wish to build on is amenity land, the item was withdrawn from the agenda.

Cllr Dugmore advised that he had received a request to amend the order of the agenda to bring forward the discussion around the Recreational Community Facility as this could potentially feed into the discussions regarding the budget for 2022/23 and the precept level for 2022/2023. This was agreed by all.

## **22/19 Recreational Community Facility Project:**

### **1 To approve the revised project timeline.**

The revised timeline has been circulated based on the dates discussed at parish council meeting on 10 January 2022.

Finalising the flyer - complete

Order flyer's – complete

Papers to HS2 – complete

Contractors asked for cashflow – complete

Apply to Royal Mail for Reply Paid License – complete

Report to Scene including public meeting date – there was a mention in the Scene, but the date had not been finalised when it went to print

Briefing for Finance Group – complete

Revised Draft Survey Form

Text for website

Extraordinary council meeting to conclude precept for 2022/23

Distribution of the flyers 28/29 January 2022.

Cllr Kettle stated that it would be better to agree the survey after the public meeting as we will be better informed as to what should be included. Once we have heard from people that gives us the opportunity to ensure that the survey reflects that information. Stage one is in progress in that we are set to distribute the flyer that will get the ball rolling and get residents to attend the public meeting. Stage two therefore having heard from the public is to review very quickly the feedback from the meeting and determine what issues the survey should cover both in terms of questions and information provided.

Cllr Dugmore advised that he understood where Cllr Kettle is coming from but he was concerned that the survey is about an objective canvass of opinion and is not trying to persuade people based on what we see.

Cllr Christian-Carter stated that the council has been through the content of the leaflet so many times and we must represent what we think the people are going to want to hear, and not on whoever happens to turn up at the public meeting, as that could be a biased/skewed population.

Cllr Dugmore was concerned that a set of questions written after the event could be read as slightly leading as they will have responded to a behaviour or demonstration of feeling.

Cllr Gates stated that the questions were primarily to do with the PWL, so it is not necessarily about what people think in terms of more abstract thoughts and feelings.

Cllr Gates's understanding is that this is whether we have a public mandate to take out a PWL and no matter what people say, the questions must basically remain the same as originally discussed.

Cllr Mann stated that if you change it at this juncture, it will delay it by 'x' amount of time and there is then the possibility of losing the HS2 funding as we will not be able to start the build in time. Therefore, to move the project forward, the parish council need to stick stringently to the timelines. Even if the questions on the survey form are changed, this is about borrowing money in the form of a public works loan, but it will be about public support that gets this project over the line, it will not be whether you have asked the right questions in the right way. If you have public support, it will go forward, without public support it will not go forward but without asking you will not know.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the first third of the timeline as proposed. (Proposed Cllr Christian-Carter, seconded Cllr Mann, all in favour).

**2 To receive the cash flow forecast from the contractors.**

This has been received from the contractors which is month by month forecast. The last three payments are increasing in quantity in sum. Depending on when the loan would be drawn down, the funds would be the available to service the payments. Cll Gates advised that from a non-accountant perspective, all we can do is to tie back the total to what they have quoted. What it does show is a potential exposure of £112,000 VAT. It does come down to when you make payments and when you claim back VAT and it may be useful to discuss options with the contractors.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the cash flow forecast from the contractors as it includes all the information required. (Proposed Cllr Gates, seconded Cllr Christian-Carter, all in favour).

**3 To confirm the Public Works Loan amount.**

Based on the background of the information of the amounts we know are available e.g., we expect funding to be available from HS2, s106 funding from Vistry Homes and some from reserves, it is the question of the sum that that loan comes to. Cllr Mann advised that some of the money that became available from the solar farm was to be used to enhance the entrance of the playing field.

Cllr Gates asked if there was an option to repay the loan early. A Maliphant advised that they do charge a smaller interest fee if you do pay early, and this is outlined on their website hence there would be a cost incurred to re-pay early.

Following discussion, it became obvious that the parish council would not be able to service a loan over a ten-year period and therefore a longer period would be required. Due to the figures involved, Cllr Kettle suggested that an independent auditor should be used to verify the figures and he said that he would contact the external auditor regarding this.

It was **RESOLVED** that the parish council apply for a loan of £1,170,000 if there is a village mandate for the project to proceed. (Proposed Cllr Kettle, seconded Cllr Gates, all in favour).

**4 To approve the text of the survey form and website information.**

Following the resolution 22/19. 3. the loan repayment chart needs to be updated by taking out the 10-year loan repayment option.

Cllr Kettle advised that the issue he has is on the first page and refers to the community centre and the very short lease notice period as he believes nothing has changed on the lease and it is on the same basis as it has always been with Folletts saying they are highly unlikely to do anything until 2026 which is when they take retake possession as freeholder and the British Legion disappears.

Cllr Christian-Carter stated that we now dealing directly with the property owner Follett Property Holdings, as opposed to going through the British Legion, and Folletts have given us no indication whatsoever that they are going to pull 'the plug' so the wording should be amended.

Cllr Dugmore advised that as councillors may recall, the use of solicitors was discussed and one of the areas of work was to sort the lease and agree a fixed lease with Folletts.

It was suggested that we do need to convey to residents that the building is leased, it is not owned and therefore its' future is not in the hands of the parish council.

Cllr Kettle advised that he feels that the sentence 'materials and labour have increased .....' should be removed and substituted with the cost of the playground and cost of the pavilion only. Cllr Christian-Carter advised that the thinking behind it was to 'soften the blow' by explaining the reason that over the last two years, the cost of building materials have risen exponentially. Cllr Kettle suggested then that the order is reversed by saying 'the cost of the playground is, the cost of the building is and part of the reason for this high cost is the considerable rise in building materials'. How can we fund that? The last point should be amended to read 'The parish council also has reserves which may be used to support the project.'

Repayment options needs to have the 10-year loan repayment line removed. Figures need to be updated on the 20 year and 35-year loan lines. The sentence 'The shorter borrowing period .... Payments' to be deleted.

Survey questions – Cllr Christian-Cater said that presumably we are going to give them two options of 20 and 35 years and this is the way we are going to obtain the village mandate. In which case, you can get an opinion on questions 1, 2 and 3 but questions 4 and 5 need to be yes/no/don't know answers (yes/no/don't know could be used as the answers to questions 1 to 5).

It was suggested that question 5 be re-worded to say 'As a council taxpayer, I would accept an increase in my precept to pay for this project: Yes or No. If yes, a). I would be prepared to an increase in the precept over 20 years or b). I would be prepared to an increase in the precept over 35 years.' This would the give the parish council a mandate as it is an absolute explicit.

Cllr Kettle advised that he feels that on page three, it needs to reflect that the amount you will pay will be different if you are not in Band D therefore requires a cavate saying payments will be different for different band housing.

It was also suggested that a different picture be used of the current pavilion. Cllr Christian-Carter agreed to forward the pictures she has previously taken of the pavilion.

It was also suggested that the last sentence on the survey page reads 'Please return this page by Friday 4 March 2022, in the envelope provided'.

Cllr Dugmore agreed to make the edits to the survey form and then to circulate it for final approval.

Following the suggestion that the precept costs of all the relative Bands A-F should be shown, it was agreed that this would be more appropriate for presentation at the public meeting where the question is likely to be raised.

**5 To approve proposal and cost for survey form and reply-paid envelope printing and distribution.**

As previously agreed, this will be undertaken via the clerks' delegated responsibilities.

**6 To agree order of events and presentation at the public meeting on 7 February 2022.**

This section is about the format of the evening, for example where, who, what is the layout, who is introducing what section, who will present the slide pack etc. Cllr Dugmore asked if there was a framework of this to look at to which the answer was 'no'.

Cllr Mann suggested that all councillors go away from this evening, give it some thought and put something together by the end of the week via email. Cllr Mann agreed to be the contact point for this.

Cllr Christian-Carter advised that the slides do need to be amended as there is no mention of the current pavilion having asbestos inside it.

Cllr Gates suggested that the public meeting should be led by a parish councillor and that he feels Cllr Mann would be most appropriate and then the architect be bought in to do his presentation. It would also be useful to have members of the working group present/possible future users. Cllr Dugmore advised that he was happy to do the welcome to the meeting, but the thrust of the content should come from the engaged, passionate face of the community in the form of Cllr Mann.

**7 To consider a common response to expected public comments on Facebook,**

Cllr Thomas suggested that we should wait until we have all the comments then issue a Q and A.

**22/19 Bishop's Itchington Budget 2022/23:**

**i. To approve the council's budget for 2022/23.**

The proposed budget has been circulated therefore councillors were asked if they had any questions. Cllr Christian-Carter asked if the projected salaries for 2022/23 included 25 hours for the parish clerk. Cllr Dugmore advised that this has been included. An uplift of approximately £7,000 has been included for the playground to help replace equipment that was removed. If people are happy with the budget, then the precept would be £104,500.00 which equates to a 2% increase on a council tax base of 1137.38 which equals £1.73 extra annually on a Band D property.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2022/23 parish council budget be accepted as prepared and presented. (Proposed Cllr Kettle, seconded Cllr Christian-Carter, all in favour).

**ii. To approve transfers to/from reserves.**

This cannot be undertaken until the end of the financial year.

**22/20 Precept 2022/23:**

It was **RESOLVED** to increase the parish council precept rate by 2% for 2022/23 giving a precept of £104,500.00. (Proposed Cllr Dugmore, seconded Cllr Christian-Carter, all in favour).

**22/21 Date of Next Meeting**

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council is scheduled to take place on Monday, 14 February 2022 at 7.30pm at the Community Centre.

**Meeting closed at 21:20**

Signed.....Chairman Date.....