

BISHOP'S ITCHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Parish Council Meeting 6 December 2021 at 7.30pm

Present

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

Absent

3 Vacant seats

In Attendance

Karen Stevens - Clerk to the Council
Andrew Maliphant
Ed Whiting (AT Architects)
Tom Cooper (Pavilion Working Group member)

The Chairman made the following announcement:

Given the last meeting discussing this subject, he would like to mention a quick reminder or two. Can we all please ensure to leave personal differences at the door, remember we are here to consider the matters proposed on the agenda. We are not here to shoot the breeze about something that happened years ago or that you may think should have happened instead of what we are doing right now unless you are looking to make a recommendation. This project has clearly divided opinion and those divisions are extremely polarised. Please have a look at what you have in front of you objectively, considering its merits as it stands today and be constructive about the way forward. You may feel that the view opposed to yours is not right and that is fine, please be constructive. By all means, challenge the proposal and feel free to propose an alternative. However, personal attacks are not for this room and will not be tolerated. Please keep the focus on making progress, changing direction if needs be but not re-visiting matters already exhausted and digging up stories alliterated numerous times. That said, if you do wish to visit something resolved in the last six months, you have section 7 of the Standing Orders, which will tell you how to do just that.

21/165 Apologies

None

21/166 Declarations of Interest

None

21/167 Dispensations

None.

21/168 Pavilion and Playground Project:

i. Design:

Cllr Mann advised that the project is no longer just a Pavilion but encompasses other items within the scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scheme be referred to in future as the Recreational Community Project. (Proposed Cllr Mann, seconded Cllr Christian-Carter, all in favour).

Cllr Kettle stated that there had been two previous proposals to this:- one timber framed; and two a brick-built facility that was rejected as it was seen as too expensive (approx. £450,000). Cllr Kettle asked who had designed the current proposal and when they were given the remit for this and was a maximum budget included. Ed Whiting (AT Architects) advised that he had been responsible for the design and no budget was given. There were parameters of design set, and these were taken into account together with the requirements of Sports England, current building regulations, current health and safety standards, community 'wish list' and environmental aspects. What the original competition fee was based on is not what you now see as the project evolved. A budget was not set as the brief was based on the items outlined. Also, the fact that we knew the use of the community centre building would come to an end at some point meant that the community element of the plan was included. Also, due to the emergence of Covid-19, regulations for ventilation/circulation were considered.

Cllr Kettle advised that it appeared that the majority of the project will have to be funded by the council payers of Bishop's Itchington. On that basis, if there were opportunities to reduce the cost what changes could be made to bring the costs down to nearer the region of £450,000 (plus inflation)? Sports England, on its website, quotes a four changing room facility with an additional room as that in the region £600,000 as a guide and a constructors website suggests that the cost for a sports pavilion with ancillary facilities should be in the region of £2,000m² which, on approximately 200m², comes out at about £400,000. What is so special about this proposal that justifies it costing at least double? Ed Whiting advised that he was not involved in the tender process as it is a design and build solution and some of the tendering parties invited his company to bid in terms of architects' facilities to be ongoing. From the point of view of tendering and cost analysis, what we have is an up to date (as of September 2021), real-life, real-time value of an open tender. It does not matter if you look at any website guidelines on building costs as you have an up-to-date tendering process that was open and hence a real time cost. To build this at this moment in time it will cost you whatever the cost comes in at and it was a competitive tender that was completely open. Ed Whiting suggested if that if we really wanted further guidance, he recommended that we engage with a qualified Quantity Surveyor who will then pick up the regional variations and the expected inflation. What is different about this? This building is a timber frame construction (an economic and effective design) and is efficient in both its design and layout. In some

respects it can be value engineered, and this has been pointed out and discussed but effectively it is not complicated.

Cllr Dugmore advised that we have received five competitive tenders all of which tell us this is the price for building this design. AT Architects came up with the design, the cost aspect has been handled by the information we put together in the tender pack to the candidates who have given us their quotes at the time. If the issue is with the cost, then maybe that should be taken up with the prospective constructors or if it is with design that led to that cost, what elements would we like to change?

Cllr Kettle would like to know what we can do to reduce the cost of the building to bring it back into line with something we looked at five years ago that was costing approximately £450,000. Ed Whiting advised that size is the function of cost therefore the size is reflected in the cost and if we wanted to reduce the cost significantly then the only way was to drastically reduce the size. Currently the design includes two large changing rooms, but these meet the standard that is required to achieve certain sports. An accessible WC from the outside has been included that gives numerous community-based opportunities whereby people can come and use facility without having to open the whole building, for example running clubs, cycle clubs etc. The number of toilets has been future proofed in case the community room needs to be added to in the future. The size of the proposed building has been driven by Sports England and has not been over engineered.

Cllr Tressler asked for clarity in that what ever the floor print is, there is a cost per m² and should there be a cost consideration, if the property is reduced in size it will be relative per m² on calculation. As the answer to this was no, Cllr Tressler then asked what the most expensive part of the build is. Ed whiting advised that it was still the size of the building as you do not necessarily get a straight-line reduction because what you will do is change the floor area, but you do not actually change the perimeter. Cllr Tressler asked that if the size of the building was halved, would this simply half the cost? Ed Whiting stressed that this would not be a straight-line reduction and as he is not a quantity surveyor he can only say that if you halved the size, you could expect to see a significant reduction in cost.

Cllr Mann advised that the previous application that had planning permission was objected to by Sport England on the basis that it was not big enough and they are a statutory consultee. Also, within that design we have had to take onboard airflow and enough space for internal circulation due to Covid-19. A reduction in size is therefore not an option, as it would not be fit for purpose or future-proofed.

Tom Cooper advised that, the working group, factored in as a village need, the outdoor access to a toilet, particularly with small children using the play area and people using the field for recreational activities. This facility would make the building more welcomed by villagers. The use of a toilet is requested on a regular basis.

Cllr Thomas stated that we clearly have a dilemma. We have seen the tender process, we have all been aware of the cost since September although we

were all taken slightly aback by the monies involved, but what we have here is a facility that will serve the whole village. If we talk about reducing its size and changing the design all we will end up with is a changing room for the football teams. Whatever happens we are going to have to ask the villagers to pay for this, so it seems to be a choice of paying half million pounds for a changing room for the football club or more for this facility that will serve the whole of the community. The public of this village will have to make the decision. We have to sell the benefits of this design/building for the whole community and the possibilities it can encourage in the future. If we do not go with it we still need to demolish the current pavilion as it is not fit for purpose.

Cllr Kettle disputed that it was for the whole village as there is only one social room apart from the changing rooms and there are currently approximately 4,000 inhabitants (including children) of the village and there is a significant number of people who would not use the facility. There is a limited capacity to the facility so it will meet a demand but will not be a facility that the entire village can use 24/7 because it is only one room and in terms of the changing rooms, as there are no lockers, it can only be used by one sporting group at a time. It is a limited scope at any one point in time. Although we say it is for the whole village, the capacity is not sufficient to meet all the different aspirations of all the residents.

Cllr Tressler stated that if we go with the design we agree to it, it has to go to the village and it will either get approved or turned down by the village. The consideration for a smaller cost base/smaller unit is down to whether it will be more palatable. The fact is that we run the risk of sending this out, with the cost base as it is, but more importantly is we either approve it, move forward and send it to the village although Cllr Tressler thought this would frighten a lot of people and there is more chance of it being a “no” than a “yes” but what we have to decide is are we prepared as a council to put that in front of the voters in the village.

Cllr Christian-Carter would like to see what cost savings/valued engineering could be, as this could make a difference in what must be borrowed. Cllr Christian-Carter agrees with Cllr Tressler and has the feeling that we could receive a resounding “no”, and if this is the case, we must have in our minds a ‘Plan B’.

Cllr Gates stated that notwithstanding any minor cost reductions, if we do not put this forward, we will never know. If people say no, the project is not dead in the water, we can go back to the drawing board and come back with a Plan B. If we over think it for fear of what people might say and push a second-rate design that is smaller, not really fit for purpose and get a ‘yes’, we will not know what we have missed out on. There is a vast gap between what we can speculate people want at a price point and, what we have here, and therefore he thinks that we should pitch it as it is, and if it is a “no”, then at least we know and can take onboard the feedback and pitch something that is more palatable if this is not, but we may all be surprised and find that people will be behind it.

Tom Cooper addressed the issue raised about multiuse for the village and advised that not everyone will want to do the same thing at the same time. Sports are seasonal, there are 24 hours in a day, not everything is done at 3.00pm on a Saturday so although you may be saying there is not the capacity for the village, it is a multi-use, multi-purpose venue that is hired in advance with time slots allocated. It will be used by a wider reach of people. Tom Cooper agreed about the valued engineering and felt this is something that should be worked on bearing in mind the rise in the cost of raw materials, particularly in the last six months, has rocketed. We do not know what we are going to get if we do not ask, but the parish council needs to be smart in how it asks the questions and, this cannot be a straight yes or no. There needs to be a Plan B as there needs to be some facility down there, as we all agree that what is currently down there is not fit for purpose and, therefore, we need to be smart in how we go forward.

Cllr Mann advised that he had been involved in the previous design and three tenders had been received that ranged from £360,000 to £480,000 and these did not include a car park or landscaping – an additional £140,000 at least, would need to be added to any of these previous tender figures to include this part of the current design. It was also stated that the very first proposal from a working group was valued at £450,000 by a quantity surveyor. Cllr Mann advised that he totally agreed with what Cllr Gates said, as if you do not ask the question, you do not know the answer so producing a Plan B at this stage without actually going to the people and asking them what they think is giving them the option of saying we will go with Plan B as it is a lot cheaper even if it does not meet the needs of the village. The current design is built for 50 years and Tom Cooper's point we have worked quite hard about producing information for the village that makes them aware of what this project is about. It is not just a pavilion, it is a recreational facility as well as the community centre will not be here in the future and the Memorial Hall cannot cope with anything else so people within the village are going to have to go elsewhere to hold children's parties, participate in sport etc.

Cllr Christian-Carter clarified that she was not suggesting that went out with a Plan A and Plan B, all she was saying is that if it is a resounding "no", we should have a Plan B as a fall-back position.

The question was raised as to whether the timings and when this is done be part of the business plan as what this does is that it will present a case before the parishioners are hit with potentially some increase in their council tax anyway off the back of a parish precept and increases in cost increase for district, county, police and crime commissioner and adult and social care. Cllr Dugmore advised that there is no item on the agenda tonight regarding the increase of the precept but acknowledged that there would be a rise in the parish council precept to cover the cost of the project if the village agreed to proceed with it. Cllr Tressler stated that there will be an increase in council tax bills and the parish council precept and that these sums added together will compound to a figure and if we are asking for an answer to this before the figures are set, surely this can be seen as a 'double whammy'. Cllr Gates

advised that it all came down to context. Cllr Christian-Carter stated that the problem is if we do not ask the question and do not get the response, if it was yes then this has to then go in our precept and, we have a very strict timeline for that. Cllr Dugmore advised that, if we are being completely realistic it is unlikely to go in this coming years precept.

Villagers will make the choice and we need to be very clear about giving them the information so they can make an informed choice. We need to be transparent and include the fact they are likely to be a further increase and for some years the cost of maintaining running costs of the building.

It was **RESOLVED** to proceed with consulting the village on the proposal that was designed and approved including the use of the new project name as resolved earlier in the meeting and including everything we know regarding finance. (Proposed Cllr Gates, seconded Cllr Mann, all in favour).

ii. Business Plan

Cllr Tressler said as there is without a doubt the need for it to be used on the proposal that put in place on a regular basis gradually 'cranking' it up over the years it has been presented to a point where the top end figure was £10,000 for running costs. Cllr Tressler's biggest concern is that the facility does not get used and what will happen is that the cost has got to paid and the running costs have to be costed into potentially the parish council paying for it. There is a worse case for the business plan and a best case. As we have done with the interest charges we have put down and variables, people can choose for the precept. Any business plan should put together a worse case as well and he is not convinced that we have looked for worse case in this business plan on the financials. This has a knock-on effect to the parish council and funding it for the duration of the loan period hence the need for a worst-case scenario in the plan.

Cllr Christian-Carter concurred with this view as it will take a while to get all these other potential sports up and running.

Cllr Kettle stated that one of the fundamental problems is that football come to date has paid nothing and if they expect to continue on this basis of paying nothing then why should the netball club, the cricket club, etc. expect to pay a fee for the use of the facilities, so what we have to do is work out what fee for the clubs is an acceptable level and whether that is in line with markets in other villages where they have a similar facility. Cllr Kettle advised that this has already been looked at this and we have bench marked ourselves based on the information obtained. This has been passed onto the football club committee and they understand what is paid is a reflection of the facility to be used. Cllr Kettle suggested that in the plan it needs to be set out what the annual revenues are likely to be and how you get to these figures.

Tom Cooper advised that discussions have been held regarding automated booking systems, floodlight usage, how usage can be monitored and charged fairly for usage.

Cllr Mann advised that the working group have covered a lot of this work, but the business plan evolves - this business plan was originally drawn up as a requirement to allow the parish council to apply for HS2 grant funding. Up until this point, when the business plan has been discussed before, has anyone mentioned the inclusion of a worst case scenario. The working group has said for some time that over the first few years it is likely to cost the parish council money until the building use is established.

Cllr Kettle stated that we need to know what the worst-case scenario is and set out the most likely scenario, because that has a direct impact once again on the precept. There may also be caretaking/cleaning costs to be picked up. We need to be in a position where we are able to make reasonable assumptions both in terms of revenue and cost (year one will cost us more than year four because by year four we should have established usage) so that this is what we need to put out to parishioners that it is going to go up but in three to four years' time, as it begins to operate and possibly make a profit, it will start to reduce.

Cllr Gates wished to put forward a different perspective on the business plan. Cllr Gates agreed that a business plan needs to be robust, but it also comes down to value and optimally it is going to be a building funded by tax payers for tax payers predominantly or the families thereof. To look at it in a black and white when is it going to break even, is it going to wash its face in year one into year two, into year three into the future is fine but we also have to consider alongside this, what value does it bring. This is difficult to quantify and maybe that the parish council has to absorb a cost because we are asking the village "do you want this facility, e.g. it is going to cost 'X' in your precept, do you want to keep this facility running as efficiently as it can over this 35 years, then it is going to cost you 'X' in your precept".

The business plan has not only to be robust, it also needs to be transparent and professional.

Cllr Christian-Carter stated that the business plan needs a decent risk assessment as what is currently in the plan is not sufficient. Cllr Christian-Carter volunteered to help with this section of the business plan.

It was agreed that we are not minded to approve the business plan as fully adopted and ready to go but constructive suggestions for inclusion have been raised.

Andrew Maliphant advised that the other issue is about the parish council 'owning' this business plan as there are feelings that there are parts missing from it currently but once these parts are included then it must become the parish council's business plan and kept up to date. Andrew's suggestion is that a member of the parish council becomes the secretary for the business plan to progress it and update it as necessary. Andrew advised that he would fill in the areas discussed tonight to produce a revised draft for approval/adoption at the January parish council meeting. The parish council is also aware that in going for a Public Works Loan, a business plan is required, and the government will need to do its own due diligence.

It was agreed to send updates to Andrew Maliphant by Friday 10 December 2021 so that the updated business plan can be presented at the parish council meeting on 10 January 2022.

iii. Working Group

Cllr Dugmore explained that as he understands it, this is just a revisit and a confirmation in the spirit of the point that was made regarding the greater involvement of the parish council.

Councillor Christian-Carter clarified that this has always been a working group and never a steering group.

Councillor Dugmore advised that there is a draft term of reference has been circulated which outlines quite clearly what group will be working on although the area outlining resources and budget may be challenging to agree. The discussion paper regarding this stated that "So far there has been a project steering group of interested residents chaired by Cllr. Michael Mann. As there now needs to be more parish council direction, it is recommended that there be either regular extraordinary meetings of the full council, or a formal parish council working group with greater councillor membership and agreed decision-making powers". Therefore, he understands that the question is fundamentally the working party, could it be re-constituted as a committee and have decision making powers with a broader parish council membership.

Cllr Tressler expressed the opinion that due to the size of the current membership of the parish council and the scale of the project we are dealing with, it was generally thought that the whole of the council should be involved. Cllr Christian-Carter pointed out that working groups have a very distinct and limited remit which means certain decisions must come back to the full parish council.

Tom Cooper advised that members of the working group have tried to get a greater involvement from other residents in the village.

It was **RESOLVED** to hold extra ordinary parish council meetings plus members of the associated working group, specifically for recreational community facility business. (Proposed Cllr Tressler, seconded Cllr Kettle, all in favour).

21/169 Exclusion of Public and Press

Confidential matters, including those identified during the course of the meeting, to be discussed here following a resolution to exclude the public under Sec 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

- i. Pavilion and Playground Project – use of Jayne Warman’s time
- ii. Pavilion and Playground Project Funding - To consider the use of parish financial reserves, and review fundraising opportunities
- iii. Pavilion and Playground Project Publicity – to approve the publicity leaflet and survey

- iv. Pavilion and Playground Project Timeline – to agree a timeline leading up to a Public Works Loan application submission

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1982 for the remainder of the agenda. (Proposed Cllr Mann, seconded Cllr Dugmore, all in favour).

Recreational Community Facility Project:

- i. Recreational Community Facility Project - use of Jayne Warman's time
Currently, Jayne Warman has been allocated 20.5 days split 5.5 to work on the Public Works Loan (PWL) and 15 days working funding applications. It is proposed to combine all the days to include funding applications for the recreational community facility, playground equipment, outdoor gym equipment and PWL.
It was requested that, if possible, she focuses on it fairly intensely because of the timelines involved.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to allocate the full 20.5 days over recreational community facility, playground equipment, outdoor gym equipment and PWL (Proposed Cllr Gates, seconded Cllr Dugmore, all in favour).

- ii. Recreational Community Facility Project Funding –
The Council has reserves (in excess of the amount recommended for a parish council to have) and the question is whether some of the reserves should be used to reduce the burden. Some of the reserves are specific to other projects. The use of reserves in principle is agreed with but until we know exactly where we stand financially with our year to date figure, it is difficult to quantify what is a reasonable sum to earmark. In summary there is agreement on the principle of its use, there is an open question on the amounts that we would need to keep aside the principle being we do use a portion of the reserves

It was **RESOLVED** that we are prepared to de-allocate at least some of those reserves from the current projects that they are held under because in some cases those projects are obsolete. The total sum to be released is to be determined by the budgeting process that will take place over the next two months. (Proposed Cllr Dugmore, seconded Cllr Tressler, all in favour).

- iii. Recreational Community Facility Project Publicity - to approve the publicity leaflet and survey.
Concerns were raised that the draft leaflet, although conveying all the required information, is a bit too 'texty' for a leaflet. Additional images could be added if necessary.

It was **RESOLVED** that the information leaflet and survey would be two separate documents and that information document is sent out first and once residents have digested the information, the survey will be circulated. (Proposed Cllr Dugmore, seconded Cllr Christian-Carter, all in favour).

Following discussions, additional information to be included in the leaflet/survey was put forward and Andrew Mailphant will update the draft documents to reflect this and bring it back to the next meeting.

There is a paragraph in The Scene stating that information would be coming out to the village regarding the project. Following discussion, it was agreed to send out a one page 'appertizer' to introduce the subject and advise that the large document would be coming. Cllr Gates volunteered to put together a short flyer that will 'grab' the public's attention, tell them what we are doing and tell them what the implications for them will be, so that they start getting interested in finding out how they feel about it. The leaflet will have all images on one side and there will be a link to the parish council website for people who want more information (those without internet connection will be able to obtain 'hard copies' from the parish council office).

iv. Recreational Community Facility Project Timeline:

It was RESOLVED that as the meeting has been in progress for two and a half hours, the Standing Order be set aside to allow the meeting to continue to its conclusion. (Proposed Cllr Kettle, seconded Cllr Thomas, all in favour).

Following discussion it was decided that the proposed time line is not achievable as it stands therefore a new timeline will have to be put forward at a forthcoming parish council meeting.

21/170 Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council is scheduled to take place on Monday, 8 October 2021 at 7.30pm at the Community Centre.

Meeting closed at 22:04

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