

MERTON PARISH COUNCIL.

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting

Held on Monday 9th March 2020 in the Clinton Hall, Merton at 7:30pm.

Parish Councillors Present: Steve Papworth (Chair), Bill Brown (Vice-Chair) Paul Scantlebury, Rob Nancekivell, Laura Twomey & Brian Stacey.

Parish Clerk: Alice Turner

No members of the public in attendance:

BUSINESS TRANSACTED

1.3.20 Welcome: – Cllr Papworth welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

2.3.20 Apologies for absence: Resolution required to approve apologies (with reasons) made to the Clerk prior to the meeting. And to record the resignation of Cllr Jill Malcolm as of 20/01/2020.

The Clerk reported that she had received apologies from Cllr Lang who is away and apologies from County Cllr Saywell and District Cllr Wiseman.

Cllr Papworth proposed that the apologies from Cllrs Lang (away) be approved, seconded Cllr Nancekivell. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/097)

3.3.20 Minutes of the Last Meeting – to consider the approval of the Minutes of the meeting held 13th January 2020.

Cllr Brown proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th January 2020 be signed as a true and accurate record, seconded Cllr Nancekivell. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/098)

4.3.20 Declarations of Interest: No Interests declared.

5.3.20 Public Speaking Time – None

6.3.20 District / County Councillors & Police Reports.

a) County Cllr Andrew Saywell – Written report received.

Coronavirus update: DCC has set up a dedicated Coronavirus page on its website

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/document/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/>

Public Health England, Devon County Council, Torbay and Plymouth Councils and local and national NHS colleagues are working closely together to respond to this situation locally and plan for any further cases.

As of the time of writing (4 March 2020), the UK Chief Medical Officer has announced a total of 85 cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK, and you will probably be aware that cases have now been confirmed in South Devon (in the Torbay area). These individuals are getting all the necessary support from the relevant agencies that they need.

Public Health England (PHE) has contacted anyone who may have had close contact with the confirmed cases. Close contacts have been given health advice about symptoms and emergency contact details to use if they become unwell in the 14 days after they had contact with the confirmed cases. This tried and tested method will ensure that any risk to them is minimised and the wider public is protected.

The County Council has contingency plans in place to ensure that vital front-line services are able to continue, and that our most vulnerable residents are kept well and safe. DCC are advising our staff to take the necessary hygienic precautions in line with PHE advice, providing extensive information and links to national guidance, both on our external and internal websites.

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The Council is also in daily contact with colleagues across the NHS, Public Health, Police and other public services to ensure continuity of messaging, approach and response. I have made enquiries about the procedure regarding school closures – currently a school will only be closed on the advice of Public Health England and PHE will liaise directly with the schools on any suspected cases.

If anyone suspects they are suffering from coronavirus symptoms please use the NHS 111 number. People are asked **NOT** to turn up at their GP surgery or other health services (e.g. hospital). If people have trips planned, they should follow the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>.

To stay in touch with the national situation and response and any advice PHE is giving, you can visit the website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>. Alternatively, you can follow the Department for Health and Social Care on Twitter - [@DHSCgovuk](https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk)

I would encourage everybody to keep you up to date through the national information being made available, and on our Devon County Council website (address above).

The Plough: As you will have seen, The Plough Arts Centre is in some financial difficulty. It is essential that we keep this key facility going – it is more than just a local arts centre, it will be key to the health and wellbeing agenda in the coming decade and I regard it as an asset for Devon, let alone Torrington Rural.

I am working with The Plough and DCC to see whether the Council can support their Crowdfunder initiative... hopeful we can but will involve some technical changes (the project has to become ‘all or nothing’ for it to be supported by DCC).

In the meantime if you want to donate please visit <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/power-the-plough>

DCC Budget: DCC’s Budget for 2020/21 was approved in February. It will not be a harsh budget. The overall revenue budget will increase from £498m to £541m. Of the three principle services, Adult Care and Health sees a £23.7m increase (10%), Children’s Services £11.5m (8.5%) and Highways £2.8m (5%) increase, along with an extra million for drainage. These increases take into account inflation pressures. The next financial year also sees in Children’s Services the launch of the ‘Edge of Care’ service which is designed to stop children from being taken into care. Previous financial investments in the last few years have started to have an effect with children being able to come out of high cost placements which is good news – both for the children and also financially as high cost placements were the main drivers behind previous overspends.

On schools funding, the coming financial year will see a very large increase in the Schools Funding budget of £47.7m.

Council tax – DCC’s share of the precept will go up by 3.99% - with 2% specifically for Adult Social Care. I would rather we did not increase the council tax but with the growth in demand for our services to Adults and Children’s – along with Highways – without increasing the precept we won’t be able to fund the services adequately.

Highways – Potholes: There is a new feature on the ‘Report It’ website, when a pothole is reported it goes out to the Pothole Inspector to look at. If it meets the safety defect criteria it will then have a ‘roadworks’ sign placed on it which you can see on the website along with an estimated repair time.

Example:

Potholes with Contractor for repair

Instruction Reference: D203505018

Created Date: 05 February 2020 10:22

Expected Repair Date: 04 March 2020 23:59

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Detail: POTHOLE (Safety)

There is a still backlog at the moment so it is taking time for repairs to come through. Extra gangs have been put out on pothole repairs though recent inclement weather conditions will not have helped. I would say though if you have reported something and after a month nothing has happened then please tell me and I will investigate!

To report potholes, blocked drains, fallen trees, etc. visit <http://devon.cc/report-it>.

b) District Cllrs Richard Wiseman: No report received.

c) Police report: No report received.

7.3.20 Matters Arising From the January Meeting:

a) Freedom of Merton – update on cabinet – Cllr Papworth

Cllr Papworth is still looking. – Deferred.

b) Update on work to Flowerbed in the square. – Clerk

The Clerk has contacted the contractor and left messages but has still not had a quote or copy of public liability insurance. She will continue to chase.

c) Playground issues – Clerk

The Clerk reported that she has been in contact with Kompan to arrange a site visit with one of their engineers. Kompan have agreed to spray a sealant on the matting to help prevent colour transference to clothes (date pending).

8.3.20 New Items

a) One Casual Vacancy to be filled by Co-option – Clerk

Notices in Parish Council noticeboards and on Website and on noticeboard at Clinton Hall.

Action: Clerk to put notice into the Merton Monthly.

b) VE Day 75 Friday 8th May 2020.

The Chair reported that he has discussed the matter with the Chair of the Clinton Hall committee who are hoping to organise something.

c) Invitation to TDC Climate Emergency Workshop” Saturday 21st March – 10am - 4pm at Caddsdawn Business Support Centre, Bideford. – The Clerk reported that TDC have cancelled the workshop due to current Coronavirus situation.

d) Letter from Torrington Town Council re Plough Arts Centre (see agenda support document).

Following discussion Cllr Scantlebury proposed that the Council give £100 to Plough from 2020-21 budget, seconded Cllr Papworth. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/099)

e) Completion of Review of Internal Audit in compliance with MPC 019. – Clerk
Cllr Brown proposed that the Review of Internal Audit document be completed and signed, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/100)

9.3.20: Planning.

a) New Application: 1/0132/2020/OUT – Proposed Conversion of workshop and shop to up to two dwellings - Barometer World, Merton, Okehampton, Devon – Mr & Mrs Collins.

Following discussions Cllr Nancekivell proposed that the Council respond that have no objections to this application, seconded Cllr Brown. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/101)

10.3.20: Council Policies: to consider the approval and ratification of the following Policies:

a) MPC 020 Disciplinary Procedure V1.0

Cllr Papworth proposed that MPC 020 Disciplinary Procedure V1.0 be approved and ratified with immediate effect, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/102)

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b) MPC 021 Training Policy V1.0

Cllr Papworth proposed that MPC 021 Training Policy V1.0 be approved and ratified with immediate effect, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/103)

11.3.20 Clerks reports to include:

a) Approval of Clerks hours - to be submitted at the meeting.

The Clerk presented PM2020/039 for payment for hours worked between 10-02-2020 and 08-03-2020 & a schedule of basic hours for payment during the next financial year for preapproval.

Cllr Brown proposed that the Clerk's hours as submitted on sheet PM2020/039 be approved for payment and that the Clerks basic hours be approved as per schedule presented at the meeting, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/104)

b) I.C.O Renewal – to approve payment of renewal fee and consideration of setting up of direct debit payment.

Cllr Scantlebury proposed that the Council approved the annual renewal of the ICO fee of £35 (including £5 reduction) by Direct Debit, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/105)

c) Approval for purchase of Norton 360 standard £24.99.

Cllr Brown proposed that the Clerk purchase Norton 360 standard for the Council laptop at a cost of £24.99, seconded Cllr Papworth. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/106)

d) Appointment of internal Auditor for the 2020-21 year (including year-end 2019-20) (see Agenda support Doc.)

Cllr Papworth proposed that Mrs Melanie Bickell be appointed as Internal Auditor for the 2020-21 financial year including year-end 2019-20, seconded Cllr Brown. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/107)

The Chairman signed the Contract.

e) Play equipment inspection - update.

The Clerk reported that the Annual ROSPA inspection has been booked to secure the reduced rate and retrospective approval is required.

Cllr Twomey proposed that the Council retrospectively approve the Clerk to book the ROSPA inspection of the Play are equipment, seconded Cllr Papworth. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/108)

f) Approval of Annual planner for 2020-21. (See agenda support Doc.)

Cllr Papworth proposed that the annual planner 2020-21 as per agenda support document be approved, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/109)

g) SLCC training webinar on document compliance £30+Vat – Request for council to pay half. The Clerk reported that this was on the 21st April 2020.

Following discussions Cllr Papworth proposed that the Council approve the Clerks attend and agree to pay half of the SLCC webinar cost, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried. (RR2019/110)

12.3.20 Cllr reports and Items for future agendas: Nothing raised

13.3.20 Finance: Clerk

a) To approve financial schedule of payments as presented by the Clerk at the meeting. (see Appendix A)

Cllr Scantlebury proposed that the Financial Schedule and Bank reconciliation as presented by the Clerk at the meeting be approved, seconded Cllr Papworth All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/111)

b) Approval and signing of Vary Mandate as presented by the Clerk at the meeting.

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Cllr Twomey proposed that the Lloyds bank Vary Mandate removing former Cllrs Laughton & Malcolm as presented by the Clerk be approved and signed, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/112)

c) Approval of report on agreed budget and precept for publication as presented at the meeting. (Appendix B)

Cllr Nancekivell proposed that the report on the budget and precept for 2020-21 as presented by the Clerk be approved and submitted to the Merton Monthly, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/113) **Action: Clerk to submit report to Merton Monthly. Chair to post of Village Facebook page.**

14.3.20 Confirmation of next meeting date:

The next meeting of the council will be on Monday 11th May 2020 at 7.30pm.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 27th April 2020 at 7.30pm.

15.3.20 Confidential matters (PART II) *Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2)*

Cllr Papworth proposed that the meeting move to Part II as it contains information covered under GDPR and of commercial sensitivity, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour. Motion Carried (RR2019/114)

a) Website accessibility regulations and new Website. To Receive Quotes

b) Parking Concerns (contains data covered by GDPR) – Cllr Papworth

c) The Chair returned the meeting to public session.

d) Resolutions on items

Item a) Deferred

Item b) Clerk to report the matter to the Police

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.35pm

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Appendix A: Financial Schedule

Merton Parish Council Financial Schedule

Agenda Item 13.3.20(a)

Meeting date: 9th March 2020.

Payments made (pre-authorised) since last meeting 13th January 2020

Pymt Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Expenditure approval Minutes Ref & RR
PM2020/036	£274.32	Alice Turner	Salary 9.12.19 - 12.01.20	LGA 1972 S.112	11.1.20 a) RR2019/093
PM2020/037	£162.56	Alice Turner	Salary 13.01.20 - 09.02.20	LGA 1972 S.112	11.1.20 a) RR2019/093
PM2020/038	£143.51	Alice Turner	Clerks Expenses	LGA 1972 S.112	11.1.20 a) RR2019/093
	£580.39				

Payments for authorisation

Payments for authorisation				
Pymt Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power
PM2020/039	£177.80	Alice Turner	Clerks Salary	LGA 1972 S.112
PM2020/040	£54.00	Alice Turner	Clerks Expenses	LGA 1972 S.112
PM2020/041	£50.00	Colin Jones Design	Website & email hosting	LGA 1972 S.111
PM2020/042	£25.64	Steve Jennings	Grass Cutting	Highways Act 1980 S.96
TOTAL	£307.44			

Transfer Between Budget Headings for Authorisation.

RECEIPTS SINCE 13th January 2020

Payment ref	Pymt method	Details	Amount
TOTAL			£0.00

Monies held as Reserves

Amount	Details
£1,500	Election cost
£10,000	Square Improvements
£250	Defibrillator replacement
£636	TAP Fund
£12,386	TOTAL

09/03/2020	Bank Total	£13,037.74
	Payments presented	£307.44
	Less Money in resev	£12,386.00
	Availiable Balance	£344.30

~ Minutes of meeting held 09-03-2020 ~ Initialled as a correct record: SP

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Appendix B: Budget & Precept Report.

Report on Budget and Precept for Merton 2020-2021

On Monday 13th January 2020 Merton Parish Council approved a budget of £10,405.00 for the financial year from 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021. The Council then agreed the Precept request for the same period of £8000, this is an increase of £3000 on the previous 2 years and relates to an increase in council tax of £23.50 for a Band D property in Merton Parish.

The Parish Council did not undertake this increase lightly.

In recent years the precept was kept at £5000 with the Council using its General Reserves to cover expenditure.

Examples:

2018-2019:

Precept £5000, other income £1511 = £6511

Expenditure £8039.30 (net) (+£840.97 VAT which was reclaimed from HMRC)

Over spend of £1528.30 which came from General Reserves

2019-20:

Precept £5000, other income £456 = £5456

With expenditure to end of January as £8650.57 (net) and predicted year end expenditure £8993.01 (+£470.04 VAT which will be reclaimed from HMRC)

Predicted over spend of £3537.01 which will come from General Reserves.

As such the Councils General Reserves are all but gone. This meant that in order to meet next year's budget the Council had to increase the precept to £8000 and have agreed to take £2000 from a restricted Reserve to help alleviate the pressure on the Council tax bill of its Parishioners.

If you have any questions about the Parish Council portion of your Council Tax Bill please contact the Clerk (contact details below).

Alice Turner: clerk.mertonparishcouncildevon@gmail.com or 01837 83484

Signed as a true record: S. Papworth Chair/Vice-Chair

Date: 19-05-2020