

Merton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 30th March 2023 at 7:30pm at the Clinton Hall, Merton.

Cllrs Present: Steve Papworth (Chair), Laura Twomey (Vice-Chair), Nigel Lang, Giles Kops, Rob Nancekivell, Brian Stacey, & Paul Scantlebury

Also in attendance: Alice Turner (Clerk), County Cllr Andrew Saywell, District Cllr Richard Wiseman & 5 members of the public attended.

BUSINESS TRANSACTED

1.3.23 Welcome:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that the meeting was being recorded by the Clerk to assist in the preparation of the minutes. The recording will be deleted once the minutes are drafted.

2.3.23 Apologies for absence:

Resolution to approve apologies (with reasons) made to the Clerk prior to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Brown (work) [Cllr Twomey proposed that apologies for absence be approved from Cllr Brown \(work commitment\), seconded Cllr Nancekivell. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2022/054\)](#)

3.3.23 Minutes of the Last Meeting (Chair): [draft minutes can be found on the website from 26-03-23.](#)

Cllrs to consider the approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2023 & 13th February 2023 – Extra-Ordinary Meeting.

[Cllr Twomey proposed that the Minutes of the meetings held on 23rd January 2023 & 13th February 2023 – Extra-Ordinary Meeting be signed at a true and accurate record, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2022/055\)](#)

4.3.23 Declarations of Interest: None declared at this time.

5.3.23 Public Speaking Time:

A member of the Jubilee committee raised concerns of the money raised for the jubilee (approx. £1436 in jubilee fund) being diverted to coronation celebrations and felt that it be used for an item to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

6.3.23 District / County Councillors Reports.

a) County Cllr Andrew Saywell

Potholes

- Since January 1st a total of **15,528** safety defects have been repaired. Over 40 gangs have been deployed and the Dragon Patcher also used in Torrington Rural to help with the repair backlog. From the anecdotal evidence I'm seeing locally they seem to be finally catching up, though where there has been big delays have been on patching repairs – which involves planing off the top road surface and resurfacing it, not a basic pothole repair.
- Of the 15,000 repairs – circa 6,000 of those were **additional** defects identified by safety inspectors when responding to public reports.
- To give you an idea of the weather impact this winter has had... in December 2,431 potholes were repaired verses 7,376 for January. In January 2022 3,494 defects needed repair in comparison with 2023.
- Non-safety defect repairs (i.e. small or shallow potholes) have been suspended pending catching up on the backlog. The service seems to be confident they can resume non-safety defect repairs next month in April.

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- **In addition, in the Budget the Government awarded DCC over £9.4m of additional capital funding, the highest amount for any local authority in England.** This will be used to fund further patching and resurfacing schemes. I have asked for the A386 in the village to get considered...!

Devolution

- The Government have given outline approval for a Devon-wide devolution deal which could bring greater local control and allow partners to tap into additional resources to help tackle key local priorities such as affordable housing, better public transport and connectivity, and providing for the skills that the local economy needs.
- More details to be confirmed but this will not involve the creation of an elected Mayor for Devon or a change to the existing democratic structures.
- Local partners across Devon have now been invited to work together to prepare a Final Business Case to present to Government for final approval later in the year.

Councils to receive additional funds to help support households with rising food and energy costs

- Devon has secured additional funding to help households weather the rising costs of living, to help pay for food, energy and other essential items.
- The latest bid amounts to a little over £10 million, to cover the period from April 2023 until March 2024. It will take Devon's total level of Household Support Funding received so far to just over £25 million.
- The funding is to support households in most need that are struggling to pay for food, energy, water bills and other related essentials. And specifically, those households that may not be eligible for other support that is already available from the government.
- More details online here - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/councils-to-receive-additional-funds-to-help-support-households-with-rising-food-and-energy-costs-2/>

Growing Communities Fund

DCC has announced another round the Growing Communities Fund, and are encouraging not-for-profit groups, charities, church or faith groups, schools and councils to bid for grants. Typically these are grants of between £500 and £1,000, although funds of up to £3,000 will be considered for exemplary projects that will receive their funding when their project is completed.

The Growing Communities Funding is to support projects that:

- could offer warm safe spaces, something to eat and drink, and a place to work, learn, socialise or encourage healthy activity, or that address hardship such as food or fuel insecurity
- build greater degrees of self-reliance and community resilience, for example offering advice, peer support or guidance on budgeting, cooking low-cost nutritional meals
- tackle loneliness and isolation and build self-esteem
- and that have a clear and direct community and environmental benefits

More information can be found online here - www.devon.gov.uk/communities/growing-communities-fund

That's it for this month. Please let me know if there is anything locally that you would like me to look into.

Cllr Papworth asked about closure of adult care centres, Cllr Saywell responded that was not about removing care for individuals but is about delivering care in a more efficient way.

b) District Cllr Richard Wiseman

Cllr Wiseman gave a verbal report which covered the following topics:

- Elections – Photo ID is needed if you want to vote, more information on TDC website.
- Council tax bills have been sent, out.
- Village Hall rates –this will be reviewed next year.
- Consultation period for floating wind turbine array, this is 50KM off Hartland.
- Levelling up fund TDC bid clean maritime centre.

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- Balanced budget has been set without compromising on services.

7.3.23 Current & New Business:

- a) **To discuss S.106 funding application in relation to 1/0728/2014/OUT towards the provision and/or improvement of play space facilities – to include discussion on who would be best suited to apply for the Funding. (Clerk)**
The Clerk reported that following further investigation into this matter and discussions with the Playground fundraising committee it was felt that the Parish Council should take the lead on this matter and pursue funding, Cllrs discussed the matter and [Cllr Papworth proposed that the Council apply for the S.106 funding once quotes have been sought to allow an installation and maintenance plan to be compiled, seconded Cllr Kops. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2022/056\)](#)
- b) **Discussion on Monies held by the Jubilee & Playground committees (Chair)**
The Clerk reported that during discussions regarding the S.106 funding the Playground Committee have agreed to transfer their funds to the Parish Council towards the ongoing costs of the Playground.
- c) **Drainage Issues with the Square - update (Cllr Nancekivell)**
Cllr Nancekivell reported that the contractor has been appointed and we are waiting implementation.
- d) **Arrangements to review/update the 2012 Emergency Plan (Chair)**
[The Chairs initial thought/discussion points can be found using this link.](#)
Cllrs discussed the emergency plan and how to proceed the Clerk reported that she could out together a template document for Cllrs to work from which was well received, it was agreed that the Chair & Clerk to review and bring to a future meeting for further discussion.
- e) **Hedgehog Highway Project (Chair/Clerk)**
Please read about the project here: <https://hedgehogsrus.co.uk/hedgehog-highway-project>
[The letter](#) and the following video should also tell you all that you need to know: <https://fb.watch/iWlKaErY73/>
Noted by Cllrs.
- f) **Coronation of King Charles III inc. Celebration and Commemoration (Chair)**
Cllr Papworth reported that he had hoped that there would be volunteers to take on organisation of a celebration, but this had not come to fruition, Cllrs discussed the idea of Commemorative coins and decided not to go down that route.
It was agreed that no celebrations would be organised.
- g) **Norton Anti-Virus renewal – Norton 360 Deluxe (£29.99) 1yr licence for up to 5 devices to be shared with 3 other Councils Cost to MPC £7.50 inc. VAT (Clerk)**
[Cllr Papworth proposed that the Council approve the purchase of Norton 360 Deluxe \(£29.99\) 1yr licence for up to 5 devices to be shared with 3 other Councils Cost to MPC £7.50 inc. VAT, seconded Cllr Lang. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2022/057\)](#)
- h) **Update to Website to meet WCAG 2.0 requirements (Clerk)**
The Clerk reported that the website is in need of upgrading to meet current WCAG 2.0 requirements and following discussions the Clerk was authorised to liaise with the Website host to get a quote for the works to bring the website update date.
- i) **[Letter from Dolton '20 is Plenty' campaign group](#) (Chair/Clerk)**
The Chair gave a summary of the letter received.
Cllrs discussed the matter in detail offering a range of opinions and views as to the merits of the scheme and the practicality of implementing such as scheme in Merton.
Following the discussion Cllrs felt that at present the installation of new 30MPH sign would be of greater importance than trying to pursue a 20MPH speed limit given that the main road is an A road.

8.3.23 Finance: Clerk to present documents for this item at the Meeting.

a) To approve financial schedule as presented by the Clerk.

The Clerk presented [the financial schedule as found in Appendix A.](#)

Cllr Papworth proposed that the Council approve the payment £50 for Guest Speaker from staff costs/salary budget under the LGA 1972 S.137 power and approve the financial schedule as presented at the meeting, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2022/058)

Power to spend: LGA 1972 s.137. (Expenditure in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure.)

b) Banking Checks for period 23-01-2023 to 13-03-2023.

The Banking Checks were carried out by Cllrs Scantlebury and Lang and all documents were signed.

c) Payment of Clerks Salary 23-24 Financial Year.

Cllr Papworth proposed that the Council approve the payment of the Clerks salary monthly within the contracted 4-6 hours/ week subject to PAYE deductions, seconded Cllr

Twomey. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2022/059)

9.3.23 Clerks/Cllr reports and Items for future agendas:

Cllrs are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.

a) Update on relocation of Post Box in the Square (Chair)

The Chair reported that the new Post box is to be installed at the corner of Grange Lane – installation is due by May 7th 2023.

b) Reminder of Road Closure “Limers Lane” in connection with the new development.

The closure will be from Monday 17th April – Friday 28th April 2023. (Clerk) – Noted.

c) [Notification of Road Closure “Limers Lane” \(FROM NEAR SUNCREST TO NEAR COACH HOUSE\) from Friday 28th April to Friday 12th May 2023](#) (Clerk) – Noted.

d) Notification of I.C.O renewal by Direct Debit 26/03/2023 (Clerk) – Noted.

e) Notification of Completion of Grass Cutting Contract for 2023-2024 (Clerk)

The Clerk reported that the Contract had been completed and submitted for £429 towards grass cutting for 2023-24.

f) Notification of additional Employment (Clerk)

The Clerk informed that Council that she has accepted a post as Clerk & RFO to Parkham Parish Council. The Clerk reported that she is currently working out her notice with Drewsteignton Parish Council.

g) [Elections Information and reminder of Key Dates and requirements](#) (Clerk)

Deadline 4pm on Tuesday 4th April, with statement of persons nominated to be sent to Clerk 4pm on 5th April.

h) Update on new police engagement scheme (Clerk)

The Clerk reported that as the PCSO's are often unable to the Parish Council Meetings that a Teams meeting would be hosted by them approximately every 5 weeks to maintain an open dialogue between Police and Councils. The Clerk will attend and circulate the link to Cllrs for them to attend if they are able.

10.3.23 Confirmation of next meeting date:

The Annual Council meeting will be on WEDNESDAY 10th May 2023 at 7pm in the Clinton Hall.

Please note that any changes to the meeting date or venue will be updated on the [Website](#).

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

a) Resolution required to move the Council into Part II.

Cllrs did not move to Part II as no correspondence was received.

- b) To discuss any Parishioner correspondence – (*Information restricted by GDPR*).
- c) The Chair to return the meeting to public session to hear resolutions.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9.06pm.

Appendix A: Financial Schedule as approved.

Pre-authorised payments made since last meeting:

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Mins Ref & RR
PM23/037	£232.60	Alice Turner	Salary (January 2023)	LGA 1972 S.112	12.5.21 b) RR2021/015
Total	£232.60				

Payments for authorisation (retrospective approval):

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Funding Source
PM23/038	£35.00	I.C.O	Direct Debit for annual subscription	LGA 1972 S.111	Prof fees/Subs
(PM23/039)	£150.00	Kompan Ltd	Quarterly Inspection fee	LG(MP)A 1976 s.19	Assets/Play Equipt.
PM23/040	£279.12	Alice Turner	Salary (February 2023)	LGA 1972 S.112	Staff Costs /Salary
PM23/041	£96.81	Alice Turner	Expenses (Feb & March 2023)	LGA 1972 S.111 & S.112	Staff Costs /Salary & / Office exp
PM23/042	£182.00	S. Jennings	Grass Cutting & Village Maintenance	Highways Act 1980 S.96	Running Costs/Grass Cutting
PM23/043	£14.40	The Clinton Hall	Hall Hire (Jan 2023)	LGA 1972 S.111	Admin/Hall Hire
PM23/044	£14.40	The Clinton Hall	Hall Hire (Feb 2023)	LGA 1972 S.111	Admin/Hall Hire
PM23/045	As agreed at Meeting.	Alice Turner	Re-imbusement for donation to Alan Mitchel (guest speaker APM)	LGA 1972 S.137	As agreed at Meeting.
TOTAL	£771.73	Excluding PM23/045			

Receipts for Information:

Payment ref	Method	Details	Amount
PR23/009	Bacs	Grant for Grass Cutting (DCC)	£415.00
TOTAL			£415.00

Virement between budget headings for approval:

Amount	FROM	TO
£67.40	Prof. Fees / Audit	Running Costs/Grass Cutting

Monies held as Reserves (after payments): EMR = Earmarked Reserve

Amount	Details
£1,500.00	Election cost (EMR)

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£8,000.00	Square Improvements (EMR)
£2,305.62	Defibrillator Fund (EMR)
£636.00	TAP Fund (EMR)
£238.30	Defibrillator Supplies (EMR)
£667.88	Assets Fund (EMR)
£100.00	Hall Hire (EMR)
£2,500.00	Precept Contingency (EMR)
£1,250.00	General Reserve
£4,300.00	Play Equipment Fund (EMR)
£328.64	Staff Costs & Training (EMR)
£21,826.44	TOTAL

Bank Situation

Bank Total 30/03/2023	£24,458.75
Less Payments pending	£586.73
Plus receipts Received (if after Bank date)	£0.00
Less Money held as reserves	£21,826.44
Available Balance	£2,045.58

Signed: Steve Papworth Date: 12th June 2023.