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PORLOCK



Parish Council

Parish Room
Old School Centre
West End
PORLOCK
Somerset TA24 8NP

Signed:

Date:

Minutes of the Porlock Parish Council Meeting
Porlock Village Hall, Wednesday 13 December 2023, 7pm
Copies of minutes and non-confidential reports are available on request

Councillors Present:

Cllr S Colson, Cllr D McCanlis (Chair), Cllr S McCanlis

Also present: Don Heath (applicant for Co-option) and 5 members of the public in attendance for part of the meeting

1) Apologies for absence were received by the Council

Cllr L Bloys, Cllr D Thornton, Cllr L Thornton, Cllr Frances Nicholson (Somerset Council), Cllr Steven Pugsley (Somerset Council)

2) Declarations of Interest and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dispensations

Cllr D McCanlis and Cllr S McCanlis declared an interest in agenda item 12 iv) as they are High Bank car park permit holders.

3) To agree any items to be dealt with after the public, including the press, have been excluded.

Agenda item 18 ii) and iii) as the Council will be discussing draft tender documents.

4) Public Participation – there were 5 members of the public in attendance.

Members of the public were reminded that the Public Participation session was restricted to 15 minutes with individuals having 3 minutes each.

Denise Sage

I would like to thank the Parish Council for funding the batteries for the Christmas Lights and advise that this will be the last year that the 'Light Up Christmas' group will be organising the Christmas Lights and lunch.

Council noted that the total cost of the Christmas Lights was £1800.

Nigel Lamacraft

Can the War Memorial agenda item be brought forward for discussion?

COUNCIL: This item appears early on the agenda anyway.

There were no marshalls present for the Santa Dash at the Late-Night Shopping event.

COUNCIL: The appropriate road closures were in place and there were 4 marshalls in attendance.

David Hancock

Will the LNS budget be made public and does it include provision for the batteries? Are the budget figures inclusive of VAT?

COUNCIL: The LNS budget (allocation of £1500) is included in the Schedule of Payments for December document which is publicly available on the website (the draft document will be replaced with the final document approved by Full Council). The LNS budget does include the cost of the batteries. The LNS budget showing actual expenditure will be published on the website in January with a breakdown of VAT where appropriate.

Will Raynor

Speeding vehicles are causing a significant safety concern in West Porlock. Is it possible to have Speed Awareness Signs installed?

COUNCIL: Cllr S Colson will follow this up. There is no active Community Speed Watch group in Porlock so any speed checks would need to be carried out by the PCSO. It was noted that the results of the Traffic Survey will be published in the New Year.

Street light number 3 is currently not working.

COUNCIL: This will be reported.

5) To receive reports from Somerset Council

Cllr F Nicholson and Cllr S Pugsley were not in attendance at the meeting. Cllr S Pugsley had previously circulated a report on Somerset Council service devolution for Parish Council consideration.

6) To approve the minutes for the Full Council Meeting held on 8 November 2023

Cllr S Colson proposed an amendment to the wording of agenda item 10 ii) – that the resolution to discontinue the use of a petty cash system should be deleted as this was not agreed by Council. *See agenda item 11 iv) of this meeting regarding the review of the petty cash system.*

Council RESOLVED to approve the Full Council Meeting Minutes of 8 November 2023, subject to the amendment above. The Clerk amended the minutes by hand (deleted second sentence and resolution in full) and the Chair initialled the amendment and signed the minutes.

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

7) Parish Council vacancies – to receive an update

There are currently 5 vacancies.

- i) By-election (4 vacancies) – Somerset Council scheduled a by-election in early December but there were no nominations received. A further by-election will be scheduled in the New Year.
- ii) Co-option (1 vacancy) – one application has been received from Don Heath. The application form had been previously circulated to councillors.

Council RESOLVED to approve the co-option of Don Heath.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.

Cllr Don Heath signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting as a voting member of the Parish Council.

8) Assets & Property Portfolio – report previously circulated

i) Village Hall car park tree works – Council noted that the quote received was below £1K so it was not necessary to obtain further quotes, in line with Financial Regulations. The contractor was able to schedule the work promptly and it was carried out in early December.

ii) St Dubricius churchyard tree works – Council had previously approved a quote for works to the yew tree at the front of the churchyard. It was noted that the contractors will also carry out the approved works to the yew tree at the rear of the churchyard within the same contract price. As the quote is below £1K it will not be necessary to obtain additional quotes. The contractor will organise the necessary planning consents and schedule the work for Winter 2024.

iii) Cemetery – to consider purchase of mapping software (report previously circulated)

The Clerk had previously suggested the purchase of digital mapping software to help ensure the accuracy of the cemetery map and to improve the efficiency of cemetery administration. Cllr L Thornton has been working with the Admin Officer to review the cemetery record keeping systems and a progress report had been previously circulated to Council. The report recommends that mapping software is not suitable at this point as all the records need checking by hand in detail. Council agreed with this approach.

iv) War Memorial – to receive the report and consider the proposal for funding (report previously circulated)

A pre-application for funding for restoration works has been submitted to the War Memorial Trust. The report to Council summarises the advice provided by the War Memorial Trust regarding the proposed works to the War Memorial. Council agreed to create a Working Group to review and prioritise the works required and obtain additional quotes as necessary in line with Financial Regulations. The next deadline for grant applications to the War Memorial Trust is 29 February 2024. Cllr L Thornton has agreed to be the lead councillor on the Working Group. Nigel Lamacraft expressed interest in joining the Working Group.

Council RESOLVED to create a Working Group for the War Memorial restoration.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr D Heath. ALL IN FAVOUR.

9) Environment & Community Portfolio – report previously circulated

i) Event update

a) LNS – to receive a report

The LNS event went well with lots of positive engagement from local traders. A formal review of the event will be conducted in January.

b) Wassail – to consider arrangements for the Porlock Wassail on 6 January

The Council agreed that the event could be organised on behalf of the Parish Council. A Working Group will be created to help facilitate the event. A Risk Assessment will be necessary to comply with Public Liability Insurance requirements. Cllr S McCanlis agreed to be the lead councillor on the Working Group.

Council RESOLVED to create a Working Group to help facilitate the Porlock Wassail.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR.

Council RESOLVED to allocate up to £150 for costs (refreshments etc) for the Porlock Wassail.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR.

Cllr D Heath abstained from the votes due to a lack of awareness of the event.

Council thanked Chris De Vere Hunt and Joe Mallinson for their help with arrangements for the Wassail.

10) Somerset Council asset transfer and devolution opportunities for Parish Councils – to consider letter received from SC Leader and approve Parish Council response (see also agenda item 12 ii)

Somerset Council is currently facing enormous financial challenges due to the rising costs of social care, inflation and the reduction in central government funding for local authorities over recent years. Somerset Council is working to develop a programme for the devolution of assets and services over the coming months and years and is asking Town and Parish Councils to consider if there are services which they think their communities would like them to support financially. Somerset Council's budget will not be available until February so there is currently limited information available regarding which discretionary services Somerset Council will be able to continue to provide next year.

Council noted the limited financial detail currently available regarding service costs but agreed that the Parish Council should respond to the letter from Somerset Council and register interest in the following services: Highways Steward (in conjunction with the Local Community Network), the Library (already a Community Library Partnership) and the number 10 bus service from Minehead to Porlock Weir.

At the Chairman's discretion, a member of the public asked whether the Parish Council would be expected to fund any new services that it took on and what would the consequences be if the Parish Council decided not to take on the services? It was noted that the implication is that if the Parish Council took on a service it would also be required to fund or contribute financially to the service and if it did not take on the service, the community may well lose it.

Council agreed that more time was necessary to consider the implications of asset and service devolution on the Parish Council's budget for 2024/25. The Fin Com meeting of 4 December had been postponed and Council agreed that it should be re-scheduled in early January to enable further consideration of the budget for 24/25. Council also agreed to put back Full Council from 10 January to 17 January. More financial data will hopefully be provided by Somerset Council in the New Year. Council noted that the deadline for informing Somerset Council of the Parish Council's precept request for 24/25 had also been put back to 2 February.

The letter from the leader of Somerset Council is available on the Parish Council website.

11) Finance – supporting documents previously circulated

i) To approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end November 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end November 2023.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained as he had not had sight of the financial documents.

ii) To receive the Detailed & Summary Receipts & Payments reports to end November 2023

The Chair signed the Summary Receipts & Payments reports to end November 2023.

iii) To approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for December 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for December 2023.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained as he had not had sight of the financial documents.

iv) Petty cash – to review use

The Parish Council currently has a petty cash facility in line with Financial Regulations. Council agreed that £50 should be made available for the petty cash facility. The use of the petty cash facility should be kept to a minimum. The Clerk will organise an encashment facility via Unity bank to enable cash to be drawn out from a local bank for the petty cash float. Cllr D McCanlis and Cllr S Colson signed the Unity Encashment Form.

Council RESOLVED to approve £50 for the petty cash facility.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained as he had not had sight of the financial documents.

v) Risk Management review

a) Annual Fixed Asset Review process – to receive an update

Annual Asset Review forms have been completed and all of the information and potential costs assimilated into the budget setting process.

b) Risk Assessment Review process – to receive an update

Risk Assessments are currently being completed or reviewed and updated for each land or building asset.

c) Asset Register – to review updates

Asset Register values need to be updated regarding the flood equipment, the benches and the new metal bookcase at the Old School Centre.

vi) Library expenditure – to consider for approval

a) Fast Track book scheme – additional funding of £150 from EMR

b) Bug Hotel event – funding of £100 from EMR

Council RESOLVED to approve funding for a) and b) above out of the Library EMR.

PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained as he had not had sight of the financial and supporting documents.

vii) Grant applications – to consider for approval

a) Village Hall – application for heating system upgrade

Council reviewed the grant application and expressed support in principle for the heating system upgrade. The request is for £5K with one quote provided. Council agreed that an additional quote was necessary in line with Financial Regulations but acknowledged how difficult and potentially costly it was to obtain quotes. Council agreed to offer funding to enable the Village Hall Committee to meet the cost of an additional quote if a contractor wished to charge for this service.

Council RESOLVED to offer funding up to £250 for an additional quote.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.

b) St Dubricius Primary School – application for curriculum enrichment

The Clerk advised that the Council did not have any powers to provide a grant direct to the school for curriculum enrichment as the Local Authority is responsible for funding the curriculum. The Clerk will liaise with the Headteacher to explore other ways the Council could provide grant funding for the project.

viii) Internal Auditor – to consider for approval the appointment of Paul Russell of Microshade VSM for 2023/24

Council RESOLVED to approve the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2023/24.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained.

12. Draft budget for 2024/25 – previously circulated

i) Draft budget for 24/25 – to consider for approval including precept request

An updated draft budget had been circulated following a Fin Com Working Group meeting held in late November. Council agreed to defer final approval of the 24/25 budget and precept figure until Full Council in January.

ii) Devolution opportunities – to consider for approval budget allocation for 24/25

Council agreed to defer as above. A Fin Com meeting will be scheduled in early January to enable further consideration of asset and service devolution in light of updated information available from Somerset Council.

iii) Grants to community groups – to consider for approval the annual allocation for 24/25

Council noted that in view of the existing level of financial reserves, the draft budget for 24/25 did not contain a budget (precept) allocation for community grants. Community grants will be funded out of the Environment & Amenities EMR or the Porlock Project Fund EMR and no total annual figure will be allocated for community grants in 24/25 (£137 limit to be observed).

The Allotment Trust EMR is also available to provide grant funding for those projects which meet the criteria. Historically, the Council has allocated the annual dividend from the Allotment Trust account for grants each year.

Cllr D McCanlis and Cllr S McCanlis declared an interest in agenda item 12 iv) as they are High Bank car park permit holders.

iv) High Bank car park fees – to consider 24/25 fees for approval

Council agreed to defer agenda item 12 iv) as there were insufficient voting members remaining to enable a quorum for decision making.

v) Cemetery fees - to consider 24/25 fees for approval

Council RESOLVED to approve a 4.7% increase in cemetery fees for 24/25 in line with CPI.

PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

vi) EMR for 24/25 – to consider for approval

Council approved the following new EMR for 24/25:

War Memorial £10K

Doverly Manor £20K

Devolution £tbc

Village Hall car park – top up to £2K

Cemetery – top up to £1.5K

Council RESOLVED to approve the EMR for 24/25 as above subject to on-going review as necessary

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained as he had not had sight of financial/supporting documents.

vii) Charging Schedule for use of Old School Centre grounds – to consider implementation

Council had previously approved an application form for events to be held on Old School Centre grounds. A sample charging schedule for events had been previously circulated for consideration.

Council RESOLVED to introduce a charging schedule for events to be held on OSC grounds as follows:

- **Events/activities on behalf of community groups/charities (Porlock based & other): Free**
- **Events/activities on behalf of commercial groups (Porlock based & other): A nominal charge of £10 per hour**

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

Council agreed that the OSC grounds were under-utilised and should be advertised as available for events. A booking system will be introduced as necessary and the application form and charging schedule will be available on the website.

13. Somerset Association of Local Councils – to consider letter from SALC Chairman regarding SALC service provision and approve Parish Council response

Council agreed that the Clerk would reply to the letter providing positive feedback about the training and advisory services provided by SALC. Council also agreed that SALC had a useful role to play as a neutral body supporting Town and Parish Councils to navigate the asset and service devolution process.

14. Planning

i) To approve Cllr M Stenning as a member of the Planning Committee

Council RESOLVED to approve Cllr M Stenning as a member of the Planning Committee.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. MAJORITY IN FAVOUR. Cllr D Heath abstained from the vote.

ii) To note any other planning matters – no other matters raised.

15. Reports from outside bodies – to receive reports previously circulated

Council noted the following reports: Library.

There were no questions raised. Reports will be available on the website.

16. Arrangements (including legal agreements) with other bodies

i) PVCIC lease – to receive an update

Council noted that the draft lease was sent to the PVCIC solicitor week commencing 13 November and the Council is awaiting feedback.

17. Employment – to receive an update

i) Parish Clerk/RFO – to receive an update regarding recruitment

There have been 15 enquiries regarding the position of Parish Clerk, 11 requests for application packs and 2 completed application forms. The closing date is 15 Jan 2024. Council may consider interviewing suitable candidates in advance of the closing date.

ii) OSC Caretaker – to receive an update and consider arrangements for holiday/sickness cover

Council noted that holiday and sickness cover is still to be arranged. Council to explore whether the Caretaker and Cleaner could provide cover for each other.

iii) Pension provision – to consider employer contributions for the Admin Officer

The Admin Officer will not be automatically enrolled in the pension scheme but can opt in. There is no legal requirement for the Council to make employer pension contributions for the Admin Officer due to the earnings threshold.

Council RESOLVED that it would like to make employer contributions for the Admin Officer. The Clerk will liaise with the pension provider.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR.

18. Council Tender documents

i) To agree the process for the review of tenders and award of the contracts, in line with Fin Regs

Council noted that the Internal Auditor had advised that the Grounds Maintenance contract was overdue for review and recommended that it should be put out to tender for 2024/25. The Clerk advised that the Council needed to approve the draft tender document and agree the contract price over the full-term including VAT. The Council's Financial Regulations stipulate the procedure and procurement rules if the contract price is over £25K.

In view of the fact that the meeting had already exceeded 2 hours, Council agreed to defer agenda item 18 i), ii) and iii) to January Fin Com/Full Council. Council agreed that it would be useful to implement a monthly invoice template for the Grounds Maintenance contract, in order to develop a clear idea of the Schedule of Works to be included in the tender document.

ii) Grounds Maintenance - to consider for approval the draft tender document and contract price DEFER

iii) Toilet Cleaning – to consider for approval the draft tender document and contract price DEFER

The meeting closed at 9.18pm