Berwick St James Village Meeting 17th January 2013

In Attendance

Neil MacDougall (Chairman) Emma Smith (Parish Clerk) Henry Colthurst (Treasurer) Sarah Humphreys (Deputy Chairman)

Total in Attendance: 31

<u>Agenda</u> Item No	Summary of Issues Discussed and Decisions	Actioned by
1.	Welcome & Introduction The Chairman welcomed the village residents to the meeting. He stated that the main point of the meeting was to agree the Precept for the next financial year which had to be passed to Wiltshire Council by Monday 21 st January 2013.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from: Al Smith, Christian Lange, Veronica Sumner, Mary McDermott, Carolyn MacDougall. Jackie Fisher, Tim Marchant, George Campbell-Johnston	
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 5 th December 2012 were agreed as a correct record ands signed by the Chairman.	
	Matters Arising The entertainment system for the Reading Room, comprising a projector, screen and sound system had been purchased and would shortly be installed.	Christian Lange
4.	Meetings – PolicyThis agenda item concerned dealing with planning matters in the village. At the previous meeting a planning proposal had been discussed and the proposer of the planning application was asked to leave the room after giving a presentation and answering questions, so that the villagers could discuss the subject in private and make decisions. This was regarded as a fair and sensible way of handling planning proposals, and should be the format for any future planning meetings. Nicky Street pointed out that this had happened in the past. Sally Hiscock inquired whether the applicant was informed of the village's decision. The Chairman said that he would write to the applicant directly after the meeting to inform them. Proposer: Richard BrasherProposer: Richard BrasherDecision: Passed Unanimously	
	In addition, the handling or processing of minor planning matters (within the parish) and planning applications that may affect the parish but concern areas outside it was discussed. It was agreed that planning applications such as these would be circulated by email and posted on the two notice boards for comment. People wishing to respond could send their comments to the Chairman, or as Peter Smith suggested, reply individually to the address given on the notice. Comments addressed to the Chairman would form part of a village response that would be sent off to the council. Lyanne Street pointed out that letters from the village had more sway than those from individuals. Alternatively, residents could ask for a village planning meeting to be held, if they believed that the subject should be fully debated. Should a planning meeting be required, in order to give enough notice to convene one, residents should put the request to the Chairman at least one week before the final date	
	Interview Interview for submission to the Council. Proposer: Keith Lovett Decision: Passed Unanimously	

5.	Election of OfficersSarah Humphries had decided to stand down from her position as Deputy Chairman. OliviaMarchant on invitation had agreed to take on the position if selected.Proposer: Henry ColthurstDecision: Passed Unanimously	
	Emma Smith had also decided to stand down as Parish Clerk due to her own full programme of work commitments and other activities. Tricia Burke, also on invitation, had come forward to take over this position if selected.	
	Proposer: Bill Hiscocks Decision: Passed Unanimously	
	Nicky Street proposed a vote of thanks to both Emma and Sarah for their contributions to the management of village activities.	
6.	Noticeboards.Both the village noticeboards were in a poor state of repair, as the timber was rotten inplaces, allowing the ingress of water that damaged the displayed documents. The Chairmanproposed that both noticeboards could be replaced for a total sum of £1,200, with £600drawn from the Community Fund, matched by an equivalent sum from the Wiltshire Council.An application for £600 had already been submitted to the Council, and the result of theapplication was expected to be known at the end of January. It was also proposed to movethe central noticeboard into the bus shelter for protection to both the board and readers.Jackie Webb suggested that the new noticeboards should be fitted with locks but leftunlocked for ease of access.Proposer: ChairmanDecision: Passed Unanimously	
7.	Village Finances (Statement & Policy) Graveyard. The Chairman stated that although the precept could not be used to support the church itself, it was permitted to spend it on the maintenance and upkeep of the graveyard. Many other parishes used the precept this way.	
	<u>Precept.</u> Two proposals for setting the precept were put forward, the first to reduce the precept to £1,000 and the other to maintain it at £1,250. Examples of how the money would be distributed were displayed for both proposals and both included allocations for graveyard maintenance. After a brief introduction from the Chairman as to underlying principles and purposes of the village precept, Henry Colthurst advised that the purpose of the meeting was to agree and set a precept for 2013, plus 2014 as well if possible.	
	Henry explained that the £500 increase agreed in 2012, which was an increase of almost 67%, would result in a "precept surplus" of approximately £1,000 at the end of December 2012. He felt strongly that the village should respond to economic demands for cost saving and explained that "unavoidable" annual expenditure comprising liability insurance premium, membership of the Wiltshire Association and audit fees amounted to approximately £370 per year. He suggested therefore that a "base" figure of £500 would be sufficient to cover these items with a modest margin for contingency over the next two years.	
	Henry then advised that if the village wanted to pay amounts towards either or both of Reading Room insurance costs or churchyard maintenance, that such amounts should come from "additional precept" which he felt strongly should be restricted to an annual aggregate amount of no more than £500. He opined that money was better kept in the pockets of individual villagers and that it would be better to utilise the "surplus" first rather than charge any extra but unnecessary amounts by way of ongoing precept which was easy to raise but by its nature much more restrictive to spend. In simple terms therefore he felt it appropriate to charge no more than £500 additional precept over and above a base figure of £500, which would allow most of the surplus to be used up over the course of 2013 and 2014, still leave a margin for prudence, but result in an overall saving of 20% from current levels. (The suggested distribution with an annual precept of £1,000 is at attachment 1)	

Neil MacDougall put forward his own thoughts on a personal basis, and not as Chairman. He said that a £250 reduction in the annual precept from £1,250 to £1,000 would reduce the annual amount the average household (Band D) pays in council tax by only £3.06, about 25p per month or a fifth of one percent. However the bills that had to be met by the village would remain the same, so it would mean that those residents who gave the village financial support in one way or another would eventually have to dig deeper into their pockets to meet the required financial targets. He believed that the precept was a way of sharing the financial burden fairly and evenly for the facilities that belong to everyone in the parish, and therefore should remain fixed for at least the next financial year. With the suggested distribution (see attachment 2), a fixed precept figure of £1,250 coupled with a gradual drawdown of the current surplus in the precept account would ensure that all financial responsibilities could be met for the next 4 years. (Cost per household for 2013/14 is shown at attachment 3)

During the discussion that followed, a number of views were expressed including requests from Nicky Street and Ian Fisher that the Reading Room should take £500 from the precept. Charles Street was concerned that any future increases to the precept could be capped by the national government at 2%, a regulation that was being considered in the future for parish councils. Therefore if the precept was reduced now, it might prove difficult to raise it again if the village needed to do so.

Finally it was agreed to put the matter to the vote.

Proposer (£1,000): Henry ColthurstVotes For: 11Proposer (£1,250): Neil MacDougallVotes For: 14Abstain:4

Decision: Carried by 14 votes to 11 to maintain the precept at £1,250 for 2013/14. Henry Colthurst said that as a matter of principle he clearly had no choice but to resign as Treasurer and did so with regret.

Note: Due to time limitations, no decision was taken on the actual distribution of the precept. This would be discussed and decisions made at the next village meeting.

8. Activities Review & Updates

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	•	Reading Room Parties - Kate Glyn-Owen, supported by Linda Doggrell and Anna		
		Penkala: She said that as a result of findings from the village survey, more village		
		events were desired. Children's parties had been started, but hopefully further		
		functions would be attractive to everybody. She recommended that community		
		events such as these should be run by anybody for the benefit of everybody. These		
		would occur on an ad-hoc basis rather than on a set day of the week. Halloween &		
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		the Christmas Craft Workshop were the first two events, had proved to be very		
		popular, and was an excellent way of bringing the children in the area together.		
		Slides were shown of activities in both events. With more publicity for future events		
		it was hoped that more people would come and income increased. A request for		
		funding was made, and it was proposed to give the sum of £100 from the Community		
		Fund to offset some of the costs of organising parties in the Reading Room for the		
		period of one year. Kate was asked to keep a record of the accounts.	Kate	Glyn-
		Proposer:Stephen BushDecision:Passed Unanimously	Owen	
	•	Yoga Classes – Sally Hiscock: She informed the meeting that two Yoga classes with a		
		qualified instructor had been arranged in the coming few days as 'tasters' for £5 per		
		session. Both initial classes were full & it was hoped that the momentum could be		
		maintained for the long term. It was planned to hold 2 sessions per week and be self-		
		funding, at a cost of between £7 & £8 per session. Future dates and times would be	Sally	
		decided later, depending on demand and individual availability.	Hiscoc	k
		decided later, depending on demand and individual availability.		ix

	<u>Wine Tasting</u> – Michael Wiessmuller: He said that, due to the significant interest in wine tasting evenings, plans were afoot to house an initial event at the Farm Shop sometime in the Spring. He said that some initial inquires had been made to local wine merchants who might sponsor the events.	
	 <u>Neighbourhood Watch</u> – Keith Lovett: He stated that a Neighbourhood Watch meeting had been held on 16th Jan which was well supported, and a number of residents had volunteered to act as deputies. He stated that the plan was to put a Neighbourhood Watch pack in everyone's mailbox, followed up with a circular email to find out if there were others who would like to be involved. He was very encouraged by the response so far. 	Keith Lovett
	 <u>Speedwatch</u> – Gill Brasher: Since the last meeting the Speeding Group has received a more detailed breakdown of the Metro Count data (number & frequency of vehicles). Further information will be circulated to the village in due course. The group continue to look into Community Speedwatch and are liaising with Shrewton, which has been running a successful Speedwatch campaign for some time now. The B. St J. Group are also still working with the Amesbury Speeding Group. 	
	• <u>Summer Fete</u> – Sarah Humphreys: The fete will be held on Saturday 1 st June. The initial meeting will take place on Wednesday 30 th January to start the ball rolling with ideas on the events to be held, advertising, and other related matters. At this meeting the decision will be taken as to how any profit made by the fete will be split.	
9.	Village Diary. Nicky Street gave a quick run-down of activities due to take place in the village in the near future. The Boot kitchen will be closed between 1 st -13 th Feb. There will be a Coffee Morning taking place at the Farm Shop on 10 th Feb which will include a guided walk – the length of the walk will depend on the weather and the degree of interest shown. Held in the Reading Room, there will be a Film Night on 20 th Feb, showing the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Art classes will start again at the end of February, and sculpture classes (Thursday evenings) are continuing. Jane Rowe was to produce a flier on email to encourage more people to join.	
10.	 <u>Mar Memorial Research</u>: Al Smith was carrying out research on the people named on the Berwick St James War Memorial following the Government's announcement of plans to mark the centenary of the 1914-18 war. Residents were asked to get in touch with him if they had any information on those named. Next Village Meeting is to be in May, the date to be announced later. 	Al Smith

Attachments:

- 1. Proposed distribution of £1,000 precept for 2013/14
- 2. Proposed distribution of £1,250 precept for 2013/14
- 3. Comparison of precepts for each housing band