



Boughton Malherbe Parish Council

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 22nd January 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllrs B Adams; T Andrews; N Eastwood; R Turner

In attendance: Cllr Z Trzebinski (Maidstone Borough Council); Clerk Mrs Vickie Ford

In the absence of the Parish Council Chairman, the Clerk opened the meeting at 7.30 pm

M01/01/24 Chairman

RESOLVED: in the absence of Cllr Galton, Cllr Turner to chair the meeting.

Anybody filming or recording this meeting kindly requested to declare it: Cllr Adams declared that he would be recording the meeting.

M02/01/24 Apologies

Apologies from Cllr R Galton were received and accepted.

M03/01/24 Declarations:

Any lobbying: none declared

Any interest in items on the agenda: none declared

Any changes to the register of pecuniary interests: none declared

M04/01/24 Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED: the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed as being an accurate record of the proceedings.

M05/01/24 Public Session: two members of public present:

The members of the public raised objections to the proposed rise in precept (from £7,113 in 2023/24 to £10,000 in 2024/25), pointing out that that it represented an increase of 40%. The draft minutes from the Finance and Staffing Committee meeting held on 15th January 2024, which would have alerted other members of the public to the proposed increase, had not been published.

Cllr Turner stated that the proposed rise was high in percentage terms but it represented a very small amount in monetary terms.

A member of the public asked for clarity on reserves, stating the view that emergency reserves and general reserves were just reserves.

Cllr Turner stated that the Parish Council was continually drawing on its reserves to cover regular revenue payments.

A member of the public expressed the view that the Parish Council should not be holding reserves unless it had a good reason for doing so; that the Quinn money had been intended to be used to benefit the community and could be used to give precept-free years.

Cllr Adams asked the members of the public why they had not attended the Finance and Staffing Committee meeting on 15th January. A member of the public said there had been no indication in the meeting papers that the precept might be raised by 40%. Cllr Turner answered that at that stage it had not been discussed. He added that some very good points had been made and further discussion would take place under agenda item 14.

M06/01/24 Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) Report

Cllr Trzebinski reported that MBC members had begun to look ahead to the forthcoming elections but it was still “business as usual”. MBC was pushing forward on acquiring 1,000 houses for Maidstone residents and their adult children. The houses would be available for rent or purchase and, as houses were bought, more would be acquired by MBC. Cllr Andrews expressed concern about what had happened in Lenham, where London borough councils had bought up new housing stock for their residents. Cllr Trzebinski explained that MBC would own 1,000 houses so they would not be available for sale on the open market. He stated that there were approximately 350 families on the MBC housing list, some in temporary accommodation, so the strategy should result in savings for the Borough.

Cllr Trzebinski reported that two beat Police Officers were now covering the Headcorn, Marden and Staplehurst area. He had given Parish Council meeting dates to the Officers and they would be attending at some point. The Officers had already had some success with shop-theft prosecutions in the area.

The electoral boundary changes in May would see the Headcorn Ward extended to become Headcorn and Sutton Valence Ward. There would still be two councillors covering the new Ward as MBC was cutting the number of Borough councillors. The new Ward would form part of the new Weald of Kent parliamentary constituency.

Two significant developments had been proposed for Ulcombe, both sites at the end of Eastwood Road. Some parishioners had expressed concern about the possible increase in traffic. Cllr Trzebinski explained how the Local Plan would give a reasonable amount of protection against anything outside it. Cllr Andrews expressed concern that there was already too much traffic on the main roads.

M07/01/23 Planning Outcomes since 6th November 2023

Noted that:

23/504792/FULL Erection of a single storey side extension to existing triple garage, with store in roof space at Grey Cottage, Coldbridge Lane, Egerton, TN27 9BP had been decided.

The Clerk apologised for the absence of further information, which she undertook to provide at the earliest available opportunity.

M08/01/24 Local Policing/Community

Police/Crime Report: It was noted that 1 crime had been reported since 6th November 2023.

M09/01/24 Community Wardens

The Clerk had circulated correspondence with Headcorn Parish Council regarding their possible hiring of a warden. The correspondence indicated that they would be open to the warden taking on any cases in other parishes on an ad hoc basis in return for a simple payback of time spent and possibly fuel, depending on associated mileage. The Parish Council indicated that it may be interested.

RESOLVED: The Clerk to request further information from Headcorn Parish Council.

M10/01/24 Water Leaks

RESOLVED: the Clerk to report a water leak on Liverton Hill.

M11/01/24 59 Bus

A member of the public congratulated the Clerk on securing a grant from the National Lottery Awards For All scheme to cover the cost of the 59 bus service throughout the coming fiscal year.

M12/01/24 Litter

RESOLVED: the Clerk to obtain quotations for the installation of the rubbish bin supplied by MBC for the Lengthsman's use.

M13/01/24 Councillor Reports on any External Meetings

Cllr Turner reported that he and the Clerk had attended a meeting with Helen Whately MP, which had mostly concerned the Leeds bypass. The next meeting would be held in Lenham at the beginning of February.

FINANCE

M14/01/24 Balances at the Bank: Balances as at 16th January 2024 were noted:

Lloyds current	£8,242.94
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Lloyds business saver	£7,162.94
Lloyds 32-day notice*	£40,686.46
NatWest current	Nil
NatWest business saver	Nil
Nationwide	£14,465.77
Cambridge and Counties	£24,165.11

*Balance at 11th January 2024

The Clerk apologised for the omission of the date of the bank reconciliation on the agenda.

M15/01/24 Receipts since last meeting: Lloyds Bank interest £193.88; HMRC VAT refund £559.09; MBC Parish Services Scheme £131; National Lottery Community Fund (59 bus) £7,800

M16/01/24 Bank Reconciliation

The statement prepared by the Clerk was accepted and signed. The Clerk apologised for the omission of the date, which should have read "16th January 2024".

M17/01/24 Statement of receipts and payments against budget

The statement to 31st December 2023 prepared by the Clerk was accepted.

M18/01/24 Cheques to sign: Clerk's expenses £65 (removal and disposal of Christmas tree)

M20/01/23 Authorisation of any payments since the last meeting: Clerk's expenses £57.50; Amesis Ltd £60.67; Mr R Tew (Christmas tree) £275; Mr J Thompson (Christmas Carol event) £489.84; Amesis Ltd £60.67; V J Ford £1,117.48; ted Learning Ltd £40.79

BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2024/25

M21/01/24 Budget 2024/25

Members had before them a revised draft budget, in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance and Staffing Committee. Cllr Eastwood observed that many items in the revised draft budget also included a contingency. Cllr Turner explained that his thinking was that regular revenue payments should be covered by the precept. He expressed his view that an increase in precept should be regarded in terms of actual sums of money rather than in percentage terms; that the regular revenue payments amounted to almost £13,000, which far exceeded the 2023/24 precept of £7,113. He stated that increasing the precept to £10,000 would lead to a rise of £10.95 per annum (91 p per month) per Band D equivalent household. Cllr Eastwood expressed his view that the recommendation of the Finance and Staffing Committee (£10,000) represented a radical increase in precept, which would normally be preceded by public consultation. He asserted that funding for the Christmas event and the lengthsman had been approved on the basis of using Quinn donation money; and that funding for the repairs to the Village Green fence could be taken from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) held as a ringfenced reserve by the Council. The Clerk was asked to check on the latter.

Cllr Adams proposed increasing the precept to £8,000.

Cllr Eastwood proposed an increase of 3% on the previous year (£7,326).

RESOLVED: subject to the precept being amended to £7,326, to adopt the 2024/25 budget as presented.

M22/01/24 Precept 2024/25

RESOLVED: to set the 2024/25 precept at £7,326.

M23/01/24 Parish Council Domain Name/Email Addresses:

The Clerk reported on the "Parish Helper" webinar she had attended.

RESOLVED: the Clerk to pursue adoption of a .gov.uk domain name in line with the Parish Helper scheme on offer from the (Government) Cabinet Office

M24/01/24 D-Day 80:

RESOLVED: to invite the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Church to consider commemoration in the Parish; and, if they were to decide to hold an event, to ask the Parish Council for funding.

M25/01/24 CPRE Grant:

The Parish Council had paid a subscription of £36 in the year so far but they had been asked by the CPRE to

consider making an additional grant due to a shortfall in the organisation's funding.

RESOLVED: to raise the 2024/25 subscription to £100.

M26/01/24 Clerk's Salary

RESOLVED: to increase in Clerk's salary 2024/25 by £1 per hour, in line with NJC pay scales and in accordance with the recommendation of the Finance and Staffing Committee

Cllr Turner closed the meeting at 9.06 pm

[Date of the next meeting: 4th March 2024]