

Melchet Park & Plaitford Parish Council

Minutes of meeting held at the Post Production Studio on 18th November 2024

Present

K Curtis (Chairman)
N Curtis

S Bowles
CS Stacey

PJ Cross

55/24 Apologies

- a) Apologies were received from Cllrs AW Porter (PC) and G Bailey (TVBC).
- b) On learning that Cllr Porter's absence was unavoidable due to his being indisposed Cllr N Curtis and Cllr K Curtis proposed that his absence should be considered "reasonable": this was agreed.

56/24 The minutes of the 16th September 2024 meeting were agreed and signed.

57/24 Interests

No interests were declared.

58/24 Matters Arising - Footbridge at Botley's Ford

- a) The NT ranger has reported that although HCC RoW team accept that the repair of the footpath is their responsibility they have no money left this financial year but suggested that she should apply to HCC for a "Countryside Access Parish Delivery Partnership" grant which she has done.

59/24 Clerk's Report

- a) HCC have disease- resistant elm trees available for landowners etc to apply for.
- b) HCC has stated that the £500 million the Govt is making available for the repair of potholes etc is about the amount HCC alone would need to bring its road into a good state of repair.

60/24 Members' Reports

- a) Cllr K Curtis informed the Council that he had noted the state of the kissing gate at the church end of "church path" and circulated photographs to show the damage which looked like vandalism. The finger on the finger post had also been broken off.

61/24 Consultations

- a) It was agreed that the Parish Council should support the NALC's attempts to persuade parliament to legislate so that councils could legally hold meetings fully in person, fully remotely or some combination, and that individual councils should be able to decide what was most suitable for any particular meeting.

62/24 Staffing

- a) Cllr K Curtis proposed and Cllr Stacey seconded that the Clerk's salary should be increased in line with the nationally agreed increase: this was resolved.

63/24 Finance

- a) Cllr Bowles proposed and Cllr Cross seconded that the revised Financial Regulations should be approved: this was resolved.
- b) The Budget Control Report was received. The Clerk explained that the potential under-spend on Admin and over-spend on Publication arose from the changes of domain name, email and website provision.
- c) No income had been received.
- d) The D/D already processed: of £164.80 to HMRC (second quarter PAYE) paid 24-10-2024 was approved.
- e) BACS payments: £389.90 to J Wright (Clerk's salary including back pay); £126.30 to J Wright (Clerk's expenses + reimbursement) were approved for authorisation.
- f) Cllr N Curtis proposed and Cllr Stacey seconded that the revised Financial Risk Assessment, having been circulated prior to the meeting, should be approved: this was resolved.
- g) Cllr Bowles proposed and Cllr K Curtis seconded that subject to the landowner's consent the kissing gate referred to at 60/24 a) should be repaired by the Parish Council: this was resolved.
- h) The Parish Council has been gradually building up a ring-fenced pot in case of unexpected need by the Village Hall. Cllr N Curtis proposed and Cllr K Curtis seconded that, as this has never been called upon, it should be released into the general finance of the Parish Council: this was resolved.
- i) The 2025-26 budget was considered in detail. Following the removal of the £100 from the Village Hall's ring-fenced pot it was agreed that the proposed precept could be reduced by £200. Cllr Stacey proposed and Cllr Cross seconded that the precept for 2025-26 should be £4000: this was resolved.
- j) Following from 54/24 a) the possibility of the Parish Council contributing to the repair of the footpath if the grant awarded to the National Trust was insufficient was discussed. Cllr N Curtis proposed and Cllr Stacey seconded that as it was no longer proposed to do the complete job (track and footpath) then the Parish Council was no longer willing to contribute to the cost: this was resolved. It was agreed that if HCC seemed unwilling to make the grant to the National Trust then the Clerk should contact the HCC councillor to gain his support.

Meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Date of Next Meeting

20th January 2025 at 7.30 pm in the New Forest Post Production Studio.