



THESE MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AND AGREED AT THE NEXT MEETING

Minutes of a meeting of Buriton Parish Council held in the Village Hall, Buriton, at 6:30pm on Thursday 8th August 2019

Present: Cllr D Jones (Chair), Cllr L Ashcroft, Cllr A Bray, Cllr H Coates, Cllr T Crew, Cllr M Johnston, Cllr S Rossiter, Cllr S Stephens and Mrs P Norris (Parish Clerk).

In attendance: 0 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. Co-option

It was agreed that Heidi Coates, Samantha Rossiter and Sarah Stephens were co-opted as Councillors onto Buriton Parish Council. Matthew Marriott was unable to attend the meeting so his co-option will be included into the agenda for the meeting on the 30th September 2019.

It was agreed that the sub committees of Buriton Parish Council will now be made up of:

Planning – Cllr Johnston (Chair), Cllr Ashcroft, Cllr Jones, Dr Edgworth and Matt Marriott once co-option has been completed.

Village Hall & Recreation – Cllr Jones (Chair), Cllr Coates, Cllr Crew, Cllr Stephens and Steven Franks (Village Hall Manager)

Finance & General Purposes – Cllr Bray (Chair), Cllr Rossiter, Cllr Stephens and Petra Norris (Clerk).

Membership of the Rights of Way Working Group remains unaltered.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4. Finance and Accounts

The approval of the account for 2018-19 were unable to be agreed due to problems with the audit process. A further extension has been requested to 2nd September 2019 for submission. The new Auditor is Tim Light who is recommended by the Hampshire Association of Local Councils.

There were issues with the computerised system with entries missing and double entries. The Clerk and Tim with help from Caroline at RBS Solutions spent a day correcting entries and preparing the accounts for audit. There are also issues with the VAT return. The Chair expressed his thanks to Tim, Petra and Caroline for all their work on the audit. A meeting has been arranged for 6.30pm on Tuesday 27th August 2019 to approve the accounts. An up-to-date Asset Register is required for the audit. **Action: Chair.**

There will be extra costs incurred with the audit, the auditor costs and the extra hours worked by the Clerk.

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There is free training available for the finance system, it was agreed that this would be useful for those on the Finance and General Purpose Committee. **Action: Clerk**

It was also agreed that the Finance and General Purpose Committee also consider whether the Parish Council continue to use the software or look at using spreadsheets.

5. Update on Tree Applications

The Chair presented a report on the tree planning applications, attached to these minutes.

- Up to 50 trees that may require some work across the parish
- Some Councillors had met with Matt Marriott to look at the potential work
- Work to the trees in the vicinity of School Meadow should be carried out first, (ou this financial year) and the rest next financial year.
- Some of the trees are on Hampshire County Council land, the Chair will contact Cllr Mocatta so see if they will carry out the work, if not the cost is estimated at £3-4,000. **Action: Chair**
- Kiln Lane – the trees are in the electric wires so this may be down to SSE.
- Recreation Ground – T6 & T7 work on these ash trees needs to be done next year so will need to be budgeted for £750 +VAT.
- The other trees are on National Rail Network land, other landowners and the car park. **Action: Matt Marriott to provide details of the trees on other land to Chair in order that he can contact them.**
- Trees in the vicinity of School Meadow – this work needs doing this financial year at a cost of £540 +VAT. Due to the urgency of the work and to try and get it carried out during the school holidays, Councillors agreed to go with the one quote rather than obtaining two others.
- It was agreed that an article be written in the Parish Magazine on Ash Die Back. **Action: Chair**

6. Repairs to Playground Equipment

The Chair presented a report on the repairs to the playground equipment, attached to these minutes.

- Councillors agreed to the work being carried out as a matter of urgency so will use the one quote rather than obtaining a further two. There have been a number of complaints due to the piece of equipment being fenced off. **Action: Cllr Crew to arrange for the repairs to be completed and let the Clerk know a start date so that those who contacted the Parish Council can be informed.**
- Councillors agreed to look at an on-going maintenance contract for the play equipment and for it to be budgeted for in next year's budget.
- It was agreed to obtain warranty dates for all the equipment. **Action: Chair**
- Skate Park – the ROSPA report stated that some bolts were missing, this is because it is welded and not bolted so no action needed. However, it does need to be painted, it was agreed that this is something that the Lengthsman can do. **Action: Cllr Crew to let the Clerk have details of the work.**

Meeting finished at 7.40pm

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Update on Tree Applications

Report to Buriton Parish Council: 8 August 2019

Background

Three planning applications have recently been lodged with EHDC/SDNPA with details of up to fifty trees potentially affected.

At the meeting of the Parish Council on 29 July 2019 few details of the rationale, urgency, locations, potential aesthetic effects and costs were available and it was, therefore, agreed to defer the consideration of this matter until this extra meeting of the Council.

At the Council Meeting in November 2018 it had been reported that a tree survey had been carried out and that it had revealed that there were no issues for the Parish Council to be worried about.

More recently, on 24 June 2019, a letter had been received from Buriton School explaining that a health and safety inspection had been carried out and that it had been noted that there were some low branches overhanging the school meadow and children's play equipment. The Parish Council replied to the School explaining that it would arrange for the site to be inspected by our tree warden as soon as practicable but that, in the meantime, the school should take all necessary measures to ensure that children do not enter the relevant area. Councillors White and Crew met with the Parish Council's Tree Warden at the beginning of July to assess the situation.

New information

Since the meeting of 29 July, Parish Councillors have had the opportunity to meet with Tree Warden Matt Marriott and look at all the trees included in the applications. Details are summarised below:

SDNP/19/03469/TCA: trees along south east boundary of Recreation Ground

(T6) Field Maple – sever ivy to reduce wind and snow loading to improve longevity of the tree (cost included in estimate for T7 below)

(T7) Group of 5 Ash trees – advised to fell within 24 months as infected with ash die back. Cost estimate £750 (+ vat)

(T8) Group of Laurel, Elder and Field Maple – trees belong to Old Rectory and are overhanging the footpath and tennis court fence. Tree warden will contact the owners of the Old Rectory: suggested that they should trim back to boundary and crown lift to 4 metres

SDNP/19/03470/TCA: near Buriton Primary School

(T12) Damson - Fell dead tree and reduce height of shrubs to clear BT cables. Cost estimate £120 (+ vat)

(T13) Various species – Recommended to crown lift along boundary to 4 metres in height and fell ivy covered Damson behind shed. Cost estimate (including T15, T16 and T17 below): £420 + vat

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(T14) six Ash trees on bank between High Street and School Meadow (potentially highway land) – infected with Ash die back; felling recommended within 24 months. Cost estimate: £3,000-£4,000.

(T15) mature Oak growing horizontally over school meadow. Recommended length be reduced by 40%.

(T16) mature Oak with deadwood in crown – recommend dead wood (30mm diameter) be removed.

(T17) 2 Sycamore – sever Ivy from 2 trees to reduce wind and snow loading.

(T18) Mix of species crowding pavement and road (on highway land) – recommend Crown lift to 3 metres over pavement and 5 metres over road within next 24 months.

(T19) Hazel & Field Maple in Kiln Lane (near electrical sub-station) are touching utility cables. Recommended that SSE be informed so that they can clear branches to provide 1 metre clearance.

SDNP/19/03433/TCA: near village pond and car park

(T20) Norway Maple showing crown die back, possibly due to root compaction from vehicles – reduce height to 7 metres and width to 5 metres.

(T22) Semi-mature American Elm in good condition – crown lift over road to 5 metres. No cost involved with this work as can be fitted in with other work.

Four other issues were also considered:

- a Willow near to the southernmost corner of the Recreation Ground (on Network Rail land) should be reported to Network Rail as it is falling into the Recreation Ground and could bring the fence down.
- the Horse Chestnut in the recreation ground car park (T10) could be crown-lifted to 3 metres to clear vehicles (at no charge as combined with other work)
- nearby remains of tree stump (Copper Beech) could be removed [to provide an extra parking space] at no charge as combined with other work
- the Lime in the recreation ground car park (T9) would benefit from protection from root compaction: either make car park smaller (relocate fence) or protect tree roots with a membrane as part of a potential project to improve the southern part of the car park (ex-playground area).

Budget context

In previous years the Parish Council has always held very healthy levels of financial reserves which could be brought to bear to pay for unforeseen costs such as the above. The provision of the new playground used about £20,000 from these reserves and, in his report to the Council Meeting in January 2019, the then Chairman explained that the budget for 2019/20 would be running down the reserves further to leave, at the end of the financial year, £12,000 in the bank. Parish Council income was forecast to be £21,427 with expenditure (including £1,000 for works to trees on Parish Council land) totalling to £28,217. Village Hall income was forecast to be £16,600 (exc nursery school) with expenditure of £16,400. It is still uncertain as to what the levels on income from the new nursery school will be but the village hall budget allocates any excess towards replacement windows etc.

Auditors always advise Councils to always hold at least one year’s precept in their general (unallocated) reserves. The Council’s precept for 2019/20 is £18,900 and it was

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recognised at the Council meeting in January that we would only be holding about 64% of our precept. It was, therefore, agreed at the January meeting that the Council “should not commit to any large amounts of expenditure on any matters, including from ring-fenced reserves, until the tail-end of the financial year by which time income from the new Nursery School would be known.”

Conclusions and next steps

The recent meeting with the Tree Warden and site visit indicated that no trees appear to represent any imminent danger but that it would be sensible to undertake some work during 2019/20 and some during 2020/21 / beyond. A number of Ash trees have ash die-back which is likely to make work on them (felling etc) much more expensive in a few years' time as they may become brittle. Removing the trees proposed should allow other nearby species to flourish with minimal, if any, overall adverse aesthetic effects. Work could be undertaken at times to minimise effects on wild-life etc.

In the light of the context of the Council's budget (set out above), which includes an allocation during 2019/20 of £1,000 for works to trees on Parish Council land, it is suggested that:

1. work in School Meadow should be done first (T12, T13, T15, T16 and T17) at an estimated total cost to the Parish Council of £540 + vat
2. T14 and T18 to be reported to the Highway Authority (cost estimate: £3,000-£4,000)
3. T19 to be reported to SSE
4. T6 and T7 to be done during 2020/21 at an estimated total cost of £750 + vat
5. T8 to be reported to the owners of the Old Rectory
6. T5, T10, T11, T20 and T21 to be done during 2019/20 at no additional cost
7. Willow near to the southernmost corner of the Recreation Ground to be reported to Network Rail
8. Consideration to be given to protecting the Lime (T9) as part of any project to amend the car park.

This approach would require an estimate of £540 (+ vat) to be spent during this financial year with at least £750 (+ vat) being required during 2020/21 – subject to the outcomes on T14 and T18 etc. Expenditure of £540 (+ vat) can be taken from the annual budget without requiring any draw-down from reserves. It should also be noted that there would be a need for an adequate allocation for works to trees on Parish Council land to be included in the Council's budget for 2020/21.

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Repairs to Playground Equipment

Report to Buriton Parish Council: 8 August 2019

Background

As reported to the Parish Council meeting on 29 July, and following the RoSPA inspection report received in May, an inspection with a prospective contractor had taken place on 19 July and an estimate of costs for remedial works subsequently received totaling to £1,245 (excluding vat). The bulk of these costs relate to old play equipment transferred from the old playground, none of which is under warranty.

As an immediate interim measure the relevant equipment was fenced off for safety reasons until repairs can be made. The costs of the fencing are estimated to be £80 (plus vat) for each three week period.

Expenditure for repairs of this order of magnitude had not been anticipated so soon after the opening of the playground last year and, with uncertainties about other potentially significant sums of unforeseen expenditure, it was agreed to defer the consideration of this matter to this extra meeting of the Council.

It was also noted that discussions with the contractor had suggested that an annual servicing of all the equipment might be a prudent course of action in future years – at a cost of about £600pa. This idea can be considered when the budget for 2020/21 is set later in the year. It was also agreed that it may be helpful to have a schedule of when the warranties on each piece of new equipment expire so that inspections can be made beforehand and any claims made.

The situation with the Skate Park may still need to be clarified with the RoSPA report identifying some potential actions for consideration.

Budget context

In previous years the Parish Council has always held very healthy levels of financial reserves which could be brought to bear to pay for unforeseen costs. The provision of the new playground used about £20,000 from these reserves and, in his report to the Council Meeting in January 2019, the then Chairman explained that the budget for 2019/20 would be running down the reserves further to leave, at the end of the financial year, £12,000 in the bank. Parish Council income was forecast to be £21,427 with expenditure totalling to £28,217. Village Hall income was forecast to be £16,600 (exc nursery school) with expenditure of £16,400.

Auditors always advise Councils to always hold at least one year’s precept in their general (unallocated) reserves. The Council’s precept for 2019/20 is £18,900 and it was recognised at the Council meeting in January that we would only be holding about 64% of our precept. It was, therefore, agreed at the January meeting that the Council “should not commit to any large amounts of expenditure on any matters, including from ring-fenced reserves, until the tail-end of the financial year by which time income from the new Nursery School would be known.”

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At the meeting on 29 July the Council was faced with the following other budgetary uncertainties which led to the decision to defer the consideration about repairs to playground equipment to this extra meeting:

- unknown fees or charges in relation to the late submission of audited accounts
- there had not yet been any reply to the Council’s “Terms of Agreement” letter to the new nursery school (with potential levels of income being difficult to assess)
- three planning applications for works to trees had been lodged (with details of up to fifty trees affected) but no assessment of potential costs was available.

New information

Since the meeting of 29 July, Parish Councillors have had the opportunity to meet with our Tree Warden and obtain an assessment of the potential costs of works to trees during the current financial year. As explained in a report elsewhere on this agenda, it is estimated that the immediate costs can be taken from the 2019/20 annual budget, without requiring any draw-down from reserves, with further works to be undertaken in future years.

In addition, a conversation has been held with the organisers of the new Dottie Tots Nursery School with a reassuring outcome. A formal response to the Council’s “Terms of Agreement” letter is anticipated in the near future. It is, however, still difficult to assess the overall levels of income from the nursery school over the remainder of the financial year due to potential changes in the hours of operation. With the nursery school not opening until May 2019 (rather than throughout April) it is felt unlikely that the full amount of budgeted income during the financial year will be forthcoming.

It is understood that the level of fees / charges arising due to the late submission of audited accounts is likely to be of nominal amounts (less than £100) but an update can be provided at the meeting.

Conclusions and next steps

In the light of the above information, Councillors are now better able to consider the merits and risks of spending £1,245 (excluding vat) from reserves to repair the play equipment. If approved, the funding would be taken from the allocation held in Council reserves for playground maintenance.

It is recommended that, when the budget is being set for 2020/21 and beyond, an annual allowance be included to cover an annual servicing of all the equipment so as to minimise the risks of unforeseen expenditure (such as this current instance) occurring again in the future.

Councillors may also wish to confirm the merits of obtaining a schedule of when the warranties on each piece of new equipment expire so that inspections can be made beforehand and any claims made.

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The situation with the Skate Park may still need to be clarified as the RoSPA report identified some potential actions for consideration. The Council may wish to consider next steps on this matter.

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