



MARTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Martock Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 4th October 2023 in the Parish Hall, Church Street, Martock at 7:00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors John Hole (Chairman), Joy Bailey (Vice Chairman), Ashley Chapman, Paul Helyer, Suzanne Luxton, Graham McDonald, Alan Potter, Alison Warne, Ash Warne, Louise Clarke, Katie Hunt, Tony Welsh, Sylvia Williams and Neil Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Finnis Locum Clerk and Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone

Public participation time

One member of the public was in attendance and raised a concern that a number of agendas, minutes and reports from council and committee meetings were not available online. The Locum Clerk promised to look into this.

Councillor Pearlstone updated the Council on a number of issues. This included Eastfields which would be addressed in Somerset Council's 2024/25 budget, Hills Lane where new plans were awaited, Martock Surgery where there was scheduled an open day on 1st November, and the LCN where a presentation on local demographics had been given and two new working groups set up.

Councillor Pearlstone also highlighted the challenge faced by Somerset regarding financial pressures and the need for savings and reported that all Parishes would be encouraged to increase their precepts. Councillor Hole was concerned that, in the event of any services being devolved, that Martock would be unduly penalised by having chosen to establish a service team. He called for support at Somerset for Martock in this matter and requested early warning of developments in order that the Parish could set an informed budget.

Members referred to the new Slinky Bus service and felt that this was good news that should be promoted. Councillor Bailey reported that she had placed the news on 'Martock Chat'. Additional promotion on the Council's website and on notices was also suggested.

Councillor Hole Read out a thank you card from Linda Batten who had recently retired following 31.5 years' service at Martock Parish Council.

Public participation ended at 7.25pm

68/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Councillor Neil Bloomfield.

69/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

70/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23rd August 2023 be approved as a correct record subject to the following:

- (a) Minute 59, last line, the word 'Town' replaced by the word 'Parish'.
- (b) It was not noted that minute 60, resolution (3) had not been implemented.
A report will come to Council in due course.

71/23 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Council received the proposed Environmental Policy from the Environment and Climate Emergency Task Group. Councillor Luxton reported that an action plan would be needed to support the policy and members fully endorsed the view that environmental impact will need to play an important part of the decisions the Council makes going forward.

Resolved (unanimously): That the proposed Environmental Policy be approved and adopted.

72/23 PROPOSED CAFÉ AT THE PAVILION

Council considered the latest proposals from the Pavilion Task Group. Councillor Ash Warne reported that the deadline for expressions of interest was this coming weekend and that, subject to Council approval, invitations to tender will be issued early next week with a deadline for submission of 31st October. Tenders would then be assessed by a Board comprising 2 members of the task group along with the Operations Manager. In addition, Battens would be asked to prepare a generic draft lease.

Resolved (unanimously): (1) That the planning application approval be noted and the proposed Lease Specification and Invitation to Tender documents be approved.

(2) That the Task Group be authorised to proceed and to receive, analyse and submit to Council in due course, details of tenders received with their recommended preferred tenderer.

73/23. COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted the minutes of the following meetings:

- (a) Personnel Committee – 23rd August 2023.
- (b) Planning and Highways Committee – 13th September 2023.

74/23. RECRUITMENT OF NEW CHIEF OFFICER

The Locum Parish Clerk reported that this post was now being extensively advertised with a deadline for applications of the end of October, and interviews scheduled for mid-November. Following independent job evaluation of the post, it was necessary to increase the salary level and, depending on the negotiated salary with a successful applicant, May require growth in the 2023/24 salary budget. The post was now branded as Chief Executive rather than Parish Clerk. These details had been approved in liaison with the Recruitment Panel appointed by the Personnel Committee.

Noted.

75/23. CHRISTMAS CRAFT MARKET

Councillor Welsh requested the Council, on behalf of the Martock Community Group, to hold a Christmas Craft Market after the Farmers Market on 12th December 2023 from 3pm to 6pm, including use of the shopping precinct and the power supply.

Resolved (unanimously): (1) That the request be approved.
(2) That Councillor Potter liaise with the Operations Manager in respect of the purchase of new Christmas lights and the need for PAT testing of the Christmas Tree lights

76/23. MARKET HOUSE HANDWASH SYSTEM

Council was advised that the Handwash System in the Market House was currently out of use and in need of essential repairs. A quote in the sum of £689.47 to undertake the necessary work had been obtained from Wallgate. Given this company's previous experience with the system, and the lack of alternative local companies, officers recommended acceptance of the quote in order to arrange for the work to be done as soon as possible.

Resolved (by 13 votes to 1): (1) That, due to the urgent need, the Wallgate quote be accepted and approval given for the work to be done as proposed.
(2) That the Operations Manager be asked to source possible additional providers so that any future works can be subject to alternative quotes for consideration.

77/23. ALL SAINTS CHURCH CEMETERY

Council was requested to approve exclusivity rights to Mr Peter Parfitt for gravedigging services at the Church cemetery. Mr Parfitt already undertakes the majority of these services at the cemetery but, occasionally, undertakers

engage others and this has led to site condition problems which had occurred when other sources were engaged to undertake this work.

Resolved (by 13 votes to 1): That Mr Peter Parfitt be given exclusive rights to undertake gravedigging duties at the Church cemetery and that all local undertaker firms be advised accordingly.

78/23. FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- (a) Planning and Highways Committee – Wednesday 11th October 2023 at 7.45pm (preceded by Neighbourhood Plan Public Forum at 7pm).
- (b) Council – Wednesday 25th October 2023 at 7pm.

79/23. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved: That the public be excluded during the discussion of the following matter, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

80/23. LEGAL UPDATE.

The Locum Clerk updated members on the latest position in respect of ongoing legal proceedings.

Noted

(Exempt Information Reason – discussion could prejudice future legal action)

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Chair

Date