



MARTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Martock Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 22nd November 2023 in the Parish Hall, Church Street, Martock at 7:00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Ashley Chapman, Paul Helyer, Suzanne Luxton, Graham McDonald, Alan Potter, Alison Warne, Ash Warne, Louise Clarke, Tony Welsh, Sylvia Williams and Neil Williams

NOTE: In the absence of the Chair and Deputy Chair, the Council approved that Councillor Sylvia Williams take the chair for this meeting.

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Finnis Locum Clerk, Emily Dawson Operations Manager and Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone

Public participation time

No members of the public were in attendance.

Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone updated the Council on her ongoing work in respect of the Coat Grove pavement, including keeping pressure on the Developers and liaison with Highways. She also reiterated the bleak picture with regard to the financial challenges being faced by Somerset Council.

Somerset Councillor John Bailey was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a report updating the Council on various matters and this had been circulated to all Parish members.

Public participation ended at 7.10pm

97/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Joy Bailey and John Hole.

98/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

99/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved (unanimously):

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 6th November 2023 be approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to minute 89/23, resolution 4 to change the word 'Town' to 'Parish'.

100/23 DEVOLUTION OF ASSETS AND SERVICES

Council considered a report from the Locum Clerk in response to a letter received from the Leader of Somerset Council, highlighting financial pressures and, as a result of the need to make large-scale savings, offering Parish and Town Councils the opportunity to take on devolved services and assets.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the response proposed by the Clerk be approved and that Somerset Council be urged to confirm a phased approach to any devolving of important community services to ensure that such services will continue until the Parish is able to;

- Fully consider and indicate the services it may wish to take on.
- Liaise with other nearby Parishes with a view to taking on services on a shared basis.
- Receive detailed resourcing information on listed services in order to calculate the necessary precept increases that would be needed.
- Consult on the proposals and options with our community, and
- Decide how best to proceed having regard to consultation responses.

101/23 REVIEW OF TASK GROUPS

The Locum Clerk submitted a report identifying and summarising the status of existing Task Groups.

Resolved (by 10 votes to 0 with 1 abstention):

1. That Council formally approves the continuation of the following Task Groups on the memberships, terms of references and timelines specified under each one.

Environment and Climate Emergency Task Group

Purpose – Following the approval of an Environmental Policy by Council on 4th October 2023, the Task Group is instructed to formulate an action plan of achievable measures, in support of the policy, and specifically section 5 of the approved policy, for the Council to consider.

Members – Councillors Suzanne Luxton and Paul Helyer and Mr Andrew Clegg.

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Suzanne Luxton

Timeline – Recommendations and update to Council by the end of the 2023/24 municipal year

Risk Register Task Group

Purpose – To review, update and recommend a Risk Register for adoption by full Council.

Members – Councillors Paul Helyer And Suzanne Luxton and Operations Manager Emily Dawson

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Paul Helyer

Timeline – Recommendations to Council by the end of the 2023/24 municipal year.

Emergency Plan Task Group

Purpose – To produce an updated Emergency Plan for submission to Council.

Members – Councillors Paul Helyer and Alan Potter, and Operations Manager, Emily Dawson

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Paul Helyer

Timeline – Recommendations to Council by the end of the 2023/24 municipal year.

Pavilion Café Task Group

Purpose – a working group was set up by the BOS Committee (and subsequently confirmed by Full Council) to prepare a specification and invitation to tender for the Pavilion Café and, subsequently, to review tender submissions and make a recommendation to Full Council.

Members – Councillors Ash Warne, Paul Helyer, Graham MacDonald, Alan Potter and Louise Clarke.

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Ash Warne

Timeline – To remain in place until an agreed lease is secured following Council award of lease on 1st November 2023.

Neighbourhood Plan Task Group

Purpose – To prepare updates and revisions to the Martock Neighbourhood Plan, activity to be dictated by the requirements to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is compliant with the applicable legal requirements.

Members – Councillor Paul Helyer, Andrew Clegg, Gordon Swindells

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Paul Helyer

Timeline – The initial aim was to produce a simple minimal update to the current version as soon as possible in an effort to re-establish its legal status as a Planning Document (which expired 2 years from its issue in May 21) – if this is possible. Then to start working towards the major up-issue with the intention of this being ready to submit for a referendum at the time of the next Somerset & Parish Council Elections (May 2025 or 2026). Council to receive periodic updates on progress.

Note – An initial public meeting has been held and we have a list of 20 or so names of people interested in participating. The next step is to prepare an outline plan and call a meeting to discuss it. It is envisaged that a number of sub-groups may be needed to address specific issues.

Coat Grove Task Group

Purpose – To maintain a watching brief on the progress and activities of Barratts and Somerset Council in the outstanding conditions attached to the Planning Application approval for the Coat Grove development and provide local knowledge where necessary.

Members – Cllr Paul Helyer, Gordon Swindells, Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Paul Helyer

Timeline – Ongoing activity until such time as all the conditions have been met – updates to full Council at any point when significant developments occur.

Trees Task Group

Purpose – To determine and progress appropriate actions in response to a survey of the safety of trees on MPC premises.

Members – Councillors Ash Warne, Paul Helyer Cllr Graham MacDonald, plus Andrew Clegg and Bruce Bailey

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Ash Warne

Timeline – Tree surgery to be conducted over 3 separate years with a monitoring action thereafter. Highest risk issues in phase 1 have been completed. Medium risk items were intended as phase 2 in current year to be followed by the lowest risk items in Phase 3. Update on progress to be submitted to Council by the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.

Fireworks Event Task Group

Purpose – Initially set up to conduct detailed planning and arrangements for the fireworks display.

Members – Councillors Alan Potter, Louise Clarke and Paul Helyer, plus a number of non-councillor volunteers

Designated Lead Member – Councillor Alan Potter

Timeline – To be held in abeyance pending work on reviewing issues arising from the 2023 event and agreement on the way forward for 2024.

2. That further consideration of a task group for youth provision issues be deferred until the new permanent CEO is in post.
3. That the Cemeteries Task Group had concluded its business and was now disbanded.

102/23. COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee on 8th November 2023.

103/23. PURCHASE OF NEW COOKER FOR THE PARISH HALL

Council was requested to approve the purchase of a new fit-for-purpose cooker for the Parish Hall. Three alternative models, suppliers and quotations were provided.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Clerk be given delegated authority to purchase a suitable cooker upto a cost limit of available funds from the Parish Hall equipment budget, plus installation costs, and having regard to:

- (a) First preference being the lowest quoted electric cooker at a cost of £729 + £125 delivery, subject to establishing whether there is an adequate electricity supply to the building, or
- (b) Failing the above, exploring the feasibility of repair to the existing gas cooker or the purchase of a new gas cooker.

104/23. FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- (a) Planning and Highways Committee – Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 7.00pm.
- (b) Council – Wednesday 20th December 2023 at 7.00pm. NOTE: This meeting would be primarily to discuss the draft budget for 2024/25.

105/23. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved (unanimously):

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.

106/23. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Council considered the report of the Locum Clerk on behalf of the Recruitment Panel set up to manage this process.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. That Natalie Fortt be formally offered the post of Chief Executive of Martock Parish Council on a salary level of scale points 43 to 45, pro-rata for 30 hours per week (actual cost £41,761 to £43,805) and subject to agreeing terms and conditions.
2. That the starting salary be scale point 43, with progression to 44 following satisfactory completion of a 6-month probationary period, and progression to 45 on completion of the full CILCA qualification.
3. That this post is conditional on completion of the full CILCA qualification within a period of 2 years from taking up post.
4. That a mentoring programme at a cost of £750 for 10 sessions be agreed to enable the incoming Chief Executive to become familiar with Parish Council operations as soon as possible.
5. That, with mutual consent, the current Locum Clerk be kept in post until the new permanent Chief Executive arrives and be retained for an appropriate handover period.

(Exempt Information Reason – personal information of a third party)

NOTE: Minute 106/23 is now deemed public but the report and discussions thereon remain confidential.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Chair

Date