



MARTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Martock Parish Council meeting held on Monday 6th November 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, Tony Welsh, Sylvia Williams and Neil Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Finnis Locum Clerk, Tracy Lamb RFO, and Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone

Public participation time

Five members of the public were present. Concerns were raised around issues of parking and vehicular movements, in particular instances of illegal parking in Bower Hinton, in respect of yesterday's fireworks event. The organisers were also praised for the overall success of the event. The Chair reported that there would be a post-event review where issues of concern and potential solutions would be considered.

Councillor Pearlstone congratulated the Parish Council on the success of the Annual fireworks event, and gave an update on key issues from Somerset Council. She reported that the Hills Lane plans were currently being assessed. She also reiterated her previous encouragement to the Parish Council to raise its precept as much as possible for next year, having regard to the likely impacts that may be caused by the serious financial pressures being experienced by Somerset Council, particularly in respect of statutory social care duties.

Public participation ended at 7.20pm

81/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were reported. The Clerk advised the Council of the recent resignations of Councillors Neil Bloomfield and Katie Hunt.

82/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

83/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 4th October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

84/23 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Council received the detailed balance sheets and bank reconciliation current and deposit accounts for July, August and September 2023, current income and expenditure, the list of payments made for July to September 2023, and the bank reconciliation credit card and credit card payments for July and August 2023. Council was also requested to give retrospective approval for purchase of fireworks in the net sum of £4,025, and to approve the purchase of a replacement laptop for the Seniors Support Co-ordinator.

- Resolved:**
1. That the financial reports be noted.
 2. That the RFO provide members with further information with regard to balance sheet line 560 in the sum of £890 for 'singing for all'.
 3. That the payment of £4,025 for the fireworks event be endorsed.
 4. That the Seniors Support Co-ordinator's laptop be replaced from existing spare stock.

85/23 CHANGE OF BANK

- Resolved:**
1. That the proposed change to Unity Bank be approved.
 2. That signatories to the account be Councillors Joy Bailey, Ashley Chapman, Louise Clarke, Paul Helyer, Alison Warne, Ash Warne and Sylvia Williams.

86/23. COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee on 13th September 2023.

87/23. RECRUITMENT OF NEW CHIEF OFFICER

The Locum Parish Clerk reported that, following advertisement, the Recruitment Panel had approved a shortlist of 4 candidates for this post. However, one had withdrawn leaving three for interview. First round interviews were scheduled for 14th November with a second round on 16th November. A lunch would be held on Thursday 16 November to which all members would be invited to attend and meet candidates. All interviews and the lunch would be held at the Hollies Hotel.

Noted.

88/23. EXTERNAL AUDIT 2022/23

Council received the interim report from the external auditors. The final report would follow in due course following due consideration of challenge correspondence received by the auditors (see item 93/23 below).

Noted.

89/23. PROPOSED NEW DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

Council received a report from the Locum Clerk proposing a new democratic structure in line with previous consultation with members.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed new structure set out in section 4 in the report be approved, subject to moving the scheduling of Planning Committee to occur monthly, normally midway between Council meetings.
2. That the new structure formally comes into effect following the establishment in post of the Council's new Chief Officer, recruitment of which is currently in progress.
3. That the terms of reference for the new structure as set out in **appendix 1** to the report be approved.
4. That the Locum Town Clerk be authorised to review and make any necessary amendments to Council policies to reflect the new structure.
5. That, from the point at which the new structure comes into force, the current committee structure be permanently disbanded.
6. That a report reviewing and resetting any currently needed Task Groups be considered at the next meeting.

90/23. SOCIAL MEDIA

This item was withdrawn.

Noted.

91/23. REMEMBRANCE

Council discussed arrangements for the forthcoming Remembrance event.

Resolved: That the Operations Manager finalise arrangements and timings in liaison with Councillor Neil Williams and then advise all members of the Council via email and the public on the details, via the Council's website.

92/23. COMMUNITY TEAM REPORTS

Council received updates on activity for the first half of 2023/24. Members welcomed these reports and considered them universally informed. It was also respected that future reports contain more granular data on numbers and profiles to further improve members' understanding of the service value.

Noted.

93/23. MARTOCK ACTIVE LIVING GROUP

Council considered options going forward for the Council's relationship with this Group, having regard to concerns raised by the external auditors. Members were advised that there was no longer any member of Council staff acting as a signatory to the Group's accounts, thus removing one area of concern. To fully address the matter, Council was requested to pass formal resolutions to place the agreed relationship on the record.

Resolved: 1. That management of the Group remains, as present, outside the Council.

2. That the Seniors Support Co-Ordinator may continue to support the Group in a voluntary capacity within the hours of Council employment.

3. That the Group may continue to use the Parish Hall free of charge.

94/23. FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- (a) Planning and Highways Committee – Wednesday 8th November 2023 at 7.00pm
- (b) Council – Wednesday 22nd November 2023 at 7.00pm.

95/23. 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.

96/23. PROPOSED CAFÉ AT THE PAVILION – AWARD OF LEASE

Following the receipt of tenders, the Council considered the recommendation of the Tender Board as proposed by the Chair of the Pavilion Café Working Group.

Resolved: 1. That Martock Parish Council approves the award the lease of the Pavilion Café premises to Saska’s Coffee for an initial period of 5 years.

2. That the Clerk be authorised to negotiate, have Council’s solicitors prepare, and sign a finalised lease without further recourse to Council unless, in the Clerk’s view, successful negotiation of the terms cannot be agreed.

(Exempt Information Reasons – terms of a proposed contract and financial information of third parties)

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Chair

Date