



## Minutes of the Parish Council Tuesday 26 October 2021

### **66 / 21 Attendance and Apologies for absence.**

Attendance: Cllr Buxton (Chairman); Cllr Jacklin (Vice-Chairman); Cllr Booth; Cllr Burn; Cllr Evans; Cllr Penney; Cllr Pike

Apologies for absence: Cllr Biggs, Cllr Grover, and Cllr Sayer

Borough Apologies: Cllr Bateson, Cllr Luxton

Present: Ruth Davies (Clerk)

There were no members of the public present.

### **67 / 21 Declaration of interest for items on the agenda**

There were no Declarations of Interest in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct.

### **68 / 21 Approval of Minutes of Council of 27 July 2021**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the 27 July 2021 were approved with no amendments.

#### **Chairman's update on actions not covered in the agenda:**

The meeting regarding HR Policies will be conducted with Croner prior to the end of the year.

### **69 / 21 Announcements from the Chairman**

The Chairman welcomed Nikki Tomlinson into the new role of Deputy Clerk. Nikki started on 14 September and had already attended a planning committee meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thucydides for donation of 3 high picnic benches in memory of his wife.

The Chairman thanked Fiona Barker for litter picking day in August which was well attended. On behalf of the council the Chairman also thanked Julia Ratcliff, Assistant to the Clerk for co-ordinating the actions around the event for the parish council. Fiona has another litter picking event booked for 6 November.

The Chairman congratulated the winners of the William Pack cup covered in the parish magazine and on the website and once again thanks to Julia for the work managing the allotments and organising the judging for the WP Cup.

The Chairman updated council that the large poppies have been put up around the village and poppies which were extra were donated to Holy Trinity Church.

The Chairman shared emails from Rev Jon Hutchinson expressing thanks to the council for work on the community day cutting the hedge and clearing around the church on 16 October and the hope to run another one early next year.

The Chairman shared the email sent to Rev Jon Hutchinson from an ex-resident who commented on the appearance of the cemetery and shared with many other residents the delight with the maintained look for the graveyard. The Chairman thanked the council for supporting the decision to take over the management.

#### **Borough councillor update -**

The Chairman confirmed that the council members had received in the papers the updated from the Borough Councillors mentioning the proposed work at the junction of the A30 and Broomhall Lane. It was confirmed that this

was reviewed in the planning committee (5 October) and concerns were raised. The full detail of this can be seen in the minutes of that meeting. The Borough Councillors declared their support for the plans.

## **70 / 21      Public Adjournment**

The Chairman stood down the Standing Orders at the beginning of this agenda item and requested the Clerk confirm if any questions had been received prior to the 10am deadline on the 25 October 2021.

The Clerk confirmed 2 questions had been received by email prior to the meeting.

*Q: A recent local press report stated that a member of the public had not been able to elicit responses to questions submitted to the SPC. That has not been my experience. I have reliably received written responses to my written questions although it is true that I have not always been satisfied by the response.*

*For example, on questioning the rationale of delaying publication of draft meeting minutes till three working days prior to the next meeting I received the reply "The Chairman confirmed that this was the decision of Council." Would the Council please reconsider this matter?*

A: The Chairman referred this matter to the Oversight and Strategy Committee to report back to council with recommendations.

*Q: The Parish Council meeting this time last year (13 October 2020) included a discussion of a parishioner survey for which no theme had been chosen, nor goals set other than it was deemed essential to complete the report by the end of March 2021 (no explanation as to why).*

*Because of this time imperative, it had been deemed necessary to award a £9500 consultancy contract on a single offer basis to a consultant located 25 miles down the M3. The Clerk had been unable to obtain any offers or interest from local consultants based in Sunningdale or elsewhere in the Royal Borough.*

*Since the survey was not discussed at council meetings beyond November 2020 it has been assumed that it has been aborted.*

*Were any payments made for proposal preparation, down payment, preliminary work, cancellation charge or for any other reason in respect of the survey consultancy contract?*

A: The payment made to date is £1400 for work carried out on the survey. No other liabilities are due.

It is to be noted that the location of the consultant was never made public and is information that remains to date only known to parish councillors.

With regards to updates on the survey, the minutes of the Operations Committees - 12.1.2021 and 16.2.2021 and presented to council on the 19.1.2021 (76/20) and 9.3.2021 (108/20) details the progress of the survey.

*This question would not have arisen had the SPC followed the practice of their neighbours in Sunninghill & Ascot by recording payments and receipts on its website.*

A: Details of the payment is on the council website and has been since January 2021 in full compliance with the requirements for reporting under "Quarterly Transparency information".

## **72 / 21      Councillors Questions and Business Motions**

The Chairman confirmed the questions posed at the meeting on the 22 July 021 by Cllr Pike, submitted via email on the 10 August 2021, had been answered in full and the answers provided

Cllr Pike expressed her desire to respond and agreed this would be sent after the meeting in writing.

The Chairman confirmed there were 4 questions from Cllr Evans which were sent to the Clerk and the Chairman prior to the meeting.

*Q: What was the time spent on producing the answers to questions posed by Cllr Pike (clerk and Chair and other councillors together)?*

*Q: What is the value for money of such exercise to the Council?*

*Q: What is a reasonable number of questions for a councillor to raise in a meeting?*

Q: How do Parishioners benefit from this.?

The Chairman referred these questions to the Oversight and Strategy Committee to review and return to council with answers and proposals where required.

The answers to the questions posed by Cllr Pike at and subsequent to the council meeting 27 July 2021 are copied at the end of these minutes.

### **73 / 21 To receive a presentation on the additions and updates to the Recreation Ground**

The council received a presentation on the proposed MUGA, Teen Play Area and the Adult Fitness area at the Recreation Ground.

After extensive discussion, it was agreed that Council Members would submit any further questions to the Clerk who would collate and work with Cllr Grover and Michael Carter, the external consultant, to bring back answers to the council meeting on Tuesday 23 November.

### **74 / 21 Business from previous meetings**

The Chairman informed council of the recent delegated decisions taken under the Extension to the Scheme of Delegation.

Scheme of Delegation consultation sent 7 October for response by 15 October @ 5pm to approve the Business Plan: Approved under the Scheme of Delegation

Scheme of Delegation consultation sent 4 October for response by 7 October @ 5pm to approve the additional Christmas Lights: Approved under the Scheme of Delegation

The Council received a verbal update on the library provision, with meetings continuing with RBWM library services to confirm the service, the requirements to set the room up and the IT provision. Meetings are ongoing.

### **75 / 21 Presentation of Committee Minutes, reports from Representatives and proposals from Working Groups.**

The Chairman confirmed the update on LCWIP by Cllr Biggs would be postponed to next meeting.

Cllr Booth presented the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting with nothing to note.

Cllr Booth updated the council on the dates for the budget setting process for the parish council which would be delayed this year due to the RBWM budget information which would not be provided until 17 November at the earliest.

Cllr Booth confirmed work had taken place with the RFO on the reserves policies and a draft budget would be prepared for the Finance Committee on the 9 November 2021.

### **76 / 21 Responsible Financial Officer Report**

Council received the FOI EXEMPT Responsible Financial Officer's Financial report up to 31 September 2021.

There was nothing to note.

Council received the Council Detail Report to 31 September 2021. There was nothing to note.

Council received the receipts and payments up to 31 September 2021. There were no questions.

**RESOLVED:** That the Receipts for July, August, September 2021 are approved.

**RESOLVED:** That the Payments for July, August, September 2021 are approved.

### **77 / 21 Information Sharing.**

The Chairman invited council members to bring forward items not requiring decisions.

None were brought forward.

**78 / 21 To resolve exclusion of members of the public and press in accordance with the applicable Legislation for the following PART II Agenda.**

**RESOLVED:** That the council approves the exclusion of members of the public from the PART II of the meeting.

Cllr Penney left the meeting at 9:15pm as part I closed.

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Chairman

Unapproved

## Responses to questions from Cllr Pike

Received 10 August 2021 posed at the council meeting of the 27 July 2021.

*PLEASE NOTE THAT IN FUTURE QUESTIONS WILL ONLY BE RESPONDED TO IF RECEIVED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MEETING, NOT 2 WEEKS LATER.*

**The matters raised in these questions are now closed.**

Question 1.

Matters arising from Minutes of 22nd June 2021 Meeting

27/21

My question to Council was in respect of governance related to agenda Item 27/21 as we were considering the AGAR (Annual Governance Return) then.

Why is this considered a Part 2 related question when all I simply asked was, as per Council's Standing Order 19c, had the performance and annual appraisal of the work of staff been carried out for the financial year 2020-2021 to which the AGAR relates to

Response 1.

HR matters in any sense are Part II. It would have been more appropriate to have asked this 'governance' question when approving the Statement of Accounts and reviewing the AGAR at the finance committee meeting on the 8 June.

Questions 2.

28/21

A proposal was brought to Council in (8th) December 2020 (Agenda Item 62/20) so I am not sure why the minutes of 22nd June 2021 refer to October 2020?

The proposal was to provide maintenance to the closed graveyard of the Grade 2 listed Holy Trinity Church which sits in the conservation area of Sunningdale at a cost of £7,000 per annum

The minutes of the 8 December 2020 which was reviewed at Council on 19 January 2021 read accordingly:

62/20 To receive a presentation of the draft budget as proposed by the Finance committee. The council received, reviewed, and discussed a motion from Cllr Buxton regarding the maintenance of Holy Trinity closed graveyard as it directly related to the draft budget being reviewed as prepared by the Finance Committee.

The council resolved to approve the motion for the council to take over maintenance of the graveyard. Within this resolution was a request for confirmation on the timescale over which this would take place, Cllr Buxton agreed this would be confirmed once the requirements as detailed in the paper had been agreed with all parties.

To the best of my knowledge, Council was not updated on the resolution which was a request for confirmation of the timescale over which this would take place, once the requirements as detailed in the paper had been agreed with all parties.

Response 2.

As detailed in the meeting, the minutes clearly show that the Clerk had corrected the comment made – in fact, it is the next line to the one questioned.

As to the timescale, this was updated in the Operations Committee minutes of the 6 April 2020 (OP 67 / 20) which was brought to the council meeting on the 20 April (127/20) which read in full:

*The committee received a verbal update on the transfer of maintenance service for Holy Trinity graveyard and noted that the maintenance work would commence on Thursday 8 April and would be carried out all Thursdays throughout the season. Also, that RBWM contractors had not complied with the agreement made between SPC and RBWM to provide 2 cuts in the month of March.*

Question 3.

27th July Council Meeting

Agenda Item 40/21

Business Motion for MUGA

We have only one quote – why was there not at least one other quote to demonstrate value for money (as per Financial Regulations) given that we are spending public money?

Response 3.

The Financial Regulations read as follows:

*10.1 All members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order is to ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the **best available terms** are obtained in respect of each transaction, **usually by obtaining three quotations or estimates** from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11 (i) below.*

Therefore, there is no obligation to gain 3 quotations, however where possible this is the normal practice on standard services. Having met with the consultant, Cllr Grover and the Clerk deemed this to be a specialist service and that the quotation was reasonable in comparison in terms of market costs for feasibility studies. The market rate for studies is around £1,500 to £5,000 for projects from £150,000 to £500,000 – so 1% which is what the quotation was for.

This is a **retrospective question** about a resolution taken by council and should have been raised as a concern at the time. If a council member has a concern about a resolution taken, then the correct approach is to raise a business motion to review the resolution made.

Question 4.

Agenda Item 41/21 (Bullet point 3)

According to the Scheme of Delegation Extension Parameters which were approved in May 2021 :

**Payment and expenditure processes and authorities as regulated by Standing Orders and Financial Regulations remain unchanged by this Delegation.**

On the Summer shack proposal to spend £4005.50 of public money - why was this proposal for expenditure not brought to Council for approval as per Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations?

Response 4.

**Firstly**, the proposal and subsequent delegated decision was to:

*To approve the financial risk associated with the operation of the Chalet for the 7 weeks as itemised.*

Therefore, there was no decision to 'spend' rather a document demonstrating that the risk the council undertook by opening the Chalet for the summer was the minimal capital expenditure and the staffing costs.

In the Finance Committee on the 8 July (12/21) after an update from the Clerk on the operation of the chalet, the committee reviewed the request from the Clerk to approve setting up a separate cost centre to clearly show the income and expenditure against this operation. This would have been an opportunity to question the 'spend' which would have then been explained to be a risk.

In the meeting on the 27 July when the question was raised, the Clerk had just verbally updated the council to report that the first week (of 7) had 'broken even'. Therefore, giving the understanding that one 7th of the risk approved by the council had been mitigated.

**Secondly**, the Scheme of Delegation Extension – Post 7.5.2021 to which is referred to was approved at the council meeting on the 7 May 2021 and refers to the payment and expenditure process and authorities. This refers to the manner in which invoices are paid through the council account from one month to the next. It clearly does not refer to the process of decision making on expenditure.

Question 5.

Agenda Item 42/21

LGA Code of Conduct – we last reviewed the Code in May, what changes have been made in the intervening 2 months?

Response 5.

In response to this there are two points to review.

1. Council Members have been in possession of both codes from 17 July 2021 with a clear action taken at the meeting on the 22 June to bring any questions to the attention of Cllr Jacklin by 29 June under 26/21 of the 22 June. Therefore, all members were able to make the decision for themselves as to the differences between the existing Code of Conduct and the proposed new LGA Code.

2. The Code reviewed in May 2021 was not the code that was approved at the meeting on the 27. As mentioned above, the code in May 2021 was the old code and the new LGA Code was proposed for adoption at the meeting on the 27 July. Therefore, there were no changes made to the code of May 2021, it was a completely different code of conduct. This is noted in the same minute 26/21 of the 22 June minutes.

Question 6.

As Councillors are bound by this Code, I do not believe members have a choice, why is it necessary to have this signed individually?

Response 6.

That is correct, members do not have a choice, if the council adopts this then all council members are governed by it. However, as clearly noted in the Oversight and Strategy Committee minutes, and the agenda for the council meeting on the 27 July, the proposal to council was that Sunningdale Parish Council would not only adopt this code but sign personally to agree that each council member would abide by it and would also publicise these on the council website.

Whether or not a single council member personally agrees with this is in part irrelevant, council is a democracy, and any member / committee may bring a resolution to be considered by council. As long as the resolution is within the powers of the council to approve, once approved it becomes the policy / strategy / operational decision of council and is immediately enacted.

Question 7.

In respect of my question asked in our June meeting (Agenda Item 27/21) , it simply required a yes or no answer in my personal opinion and even at the 27 July meeting, no answer was provided in Part 2 despite the minutes suggesting it might be.

Response 7.

This is covered in the answer given above.

Question 8.

Regarding questions I have to raise at Council, Council Meetings are meetings held in public. It follows then that Councillors raising questions in respect of Agenda Items, do so at Council Meetings.

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May, Anne-Catherine quite rightly talked about the Nolan Principles one of which is Openness and Transparency, which I believe underpins Council Meetings.

Response 8.

There is no attempt to restrict questions that are meaningful and are based upon prepared information, however, as can be demonstrated above, all these questions should have been able to be answered outside of the confines of a council meeting with the information from previous meetings and the papers associated which remain on the council website.

Any question such as these can be simply sent through to the Clerk or Chairman prior to the meeting who will provide a quick answer pointing you as to where to look for more clarification.

Question 9.

Thank you for bringing forward my comments about the papers being made available earlier.

Response 9.

As clearly stated, this is something which will be reviewed. However, as council were informed by you that you do not do your preparation until 24 – 36 hours prior to the meeting when the papers are always made available at least 120 hours prior to the meeting, it may be deemed as unreasonable to request other council members prepare and provide their papers and motions to council in a shorter time period to facilitate your chosen limited timeframe.

Question 10.

I would also reiterate not only my previous request but the recommendation of Lesley Swinbank at our Councillor training, that meetings are recorded. It would save Council a lot of time – this occasion being a good example.

Response 10.

The reference to saving time is unclear. Recording meetings may well be something the council reviews, and also something that is within the ability of a council member to bring forward as a Business Motion to council for a resolution should this be something you wish to see the council adopt.

Question 11.

Being a sole, full-time carer, it does not get easier by the day. I try my best to respond as soon as possible.

Response 11.

All council members are working in different circumstances, some may have extremely difficult circumstances for family, health, or work reasons. There are options to all council members who feel that their available time to give to council is no longer sufficient to fulfil the role in the manner required. If support or information on these options is required, please do not hesitate to address this with the Chairman or the Clerk.



Unapproved