

Minutes of General Meeting on Wednesday 14th June 2023 at Broad Oak Village Hall at 7pm

Present:

Cllr Ashley Bubb (Chairman), Cllr John Hogben (Vice Chairman), Cllr Karen Isaac, Cllr Peter Campbell, Cllr Peter Wenham, Cllr Ann Davies, Cllr Heather Taylor

Dawn Hyams, Clerk

Ken Bullock, Cemetery Superintendent

7695. Apologies for absence

Linda Hayes – Community Warden

Public questions

A gentleman asked for the update on Centenary Woodland. This is on the agenda.

7696. To receive Declarations of Discloser Pecuniary Interests and other Significant Interests and Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests on any agenda items and a reminder to think of any changes to the DPI register held at CCC, such as change of job or home.

Cllr Davies and Cllr Wenham have a declaration on 7716 – Sturry Social Centre Modernisation and 7717 – To approve an annual grant of £1000 due in April each year to Broad Oak Village Hall and Sturry Social Centre. Cllr Bubb has a declaration on 7720 – To consider approval of the Co-Option and if possible, approval of a request for co-option on the parish council.

7697. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17th May 2023.

Cllr Taylor proposed, and Cllr Isaac seconded. Cllr Davies abstained.

7698. Matters arising from minutes of Parish meeting on 17th May 2023.

None.

7699. Chairman and Councillors' reports.

Cllr Bubb – Chairman thanked Steve Birch for the work in the dog walking area. Cllr Taylor also thanked him and his wife. Cllr Davies reported she attended the Twinning exchange visit. Cllr Hogben and Cllr Taylor also attended this event. Cllr Hogben said that it went very well and hopefully it will go ahead for next year.

7700. County and District Councillors' reports

No reports received.

7701. Community Warden Report

Nothing to report.

7702. Village Caretaker's Report

Nothing major has happened in the Parish. He caught up on work in the cemetery. Repaired benches in the cemetery and the topsoil has now arrived which he will be filling in any sunken graves.

7703. Cemetery Superintendent's Report

I have presented my analysis of our IT requirements to the finance committee and answered all queries (agenda item).

Following the Annual Parish Meeting, where a resident had raised an issue 3 years ago apparently without resolution, I have created an enquiry handling system utilising Microsoft One Note: This should ensure future queries of any type (council, cemetery etc.) will be recorded, tracked, and reported upon. 3 items of which are on the agenda for discussion.

Open Queries in hand: Cemetery = 10 Burials = 5 Council General = 7

(Excludes walk in, email, telephone enquiries resolved at the time)

Cemetery Database:

Survey of area B1, continues, but is complicated by the increase in volumes of "half" plots, used for the burial of cremated remains. These have been placed closer together than standard plots and therefore leading to row misalignment. This does mean at some point in the future, we will need to get the cemetery map redrawn.

I have added several records to both the registers and the database for historic cases that had not been recorded. This work continues.

Cemetery Other:

The matter, where a headstone was placed on the wrong grave space has been fully resolved to the family's satisfaction.

I have made further progress with the list of "cemetery pending" items.

We have a burial of cremated remains on June 16th, a burial on June 17th, another burial on June 19th a further burial on June 27th June and a planned burial of cremated remains on July 19th.

I have made 2 small amendments to the final draft of the cemetery regulations. It is now ready to print (agenda item)

The Laurel trees and ivy have been cut down along the Cemetery drive. Quotes now required for fencing repairs (agenda item)

Cemetery Ongoing:

Continue survey of cemetery plots/space.

Continue checking all documents & update grave records on database.

Respond to and resolve the ongoing resident enquiries.

Continue resolution of the outstanding "pending" items.

Cllr Ashley Bubb asked if the dangerous tree was done, and Superintendent confirmed this had been dealt with. Cllr Heather Taylor asked the burial on Saturday, we don't usually do burials on Saturday, but our website has not been updated and it does say we do Saturdays. Superintendent confirmed it will be taken off the website. The new regulations do state that we don't do Saturdays except for in extreme circumstances. The price list has been updated.

7704. Clerk's Report.

The VAT has now been done. With the accounts there is now a problem with Rialtas end of year training, as no reply to emails. Cllr Campbell has been helping with the check list.

7705. Approval for Printing of Cemetery regulations

Two minor amendments which solar lights exclusion has been taken out and no alcohol to be consumed in the cemetery has been added. Cllr Bubb asked if the councillors are happy with the two changes. All agreed. Cllr Bubb proposed that we approve printing of the booklet.

All agreed.

A: Cemetery Superintendent to arrange for booklet to be printed.

7706. Approval for support and maintenance contract for Cemetery software.

Superintendent explained the maintenance licence is now an up-front cost. We have paid this year's and they have said if we agree to sign up to this contract, they will refund the difference. Without the licence they would take the user I.D. away, thereby losing access to the Cemetery database.

All councillors were in favour. Motion carried.

7707. Approval of tree cutting quote for the Cemetery

Tony Hart found 5 dead trees. Superintendent looked and they all need cutting down. Tony Hart has given a price. There are 3 other local tree surgeons, they all price similarly, What Superintendent asked the council is to get the work done

without three quotes, as they will come back with the same sort of price. Cllr Davies said if it comes to less than £1000, we only need one quotation. It comes to £1040. Cllr Bubb said that as it is over the £1000 we need to get 3 quotes.

7708. Neighbour request Yew tree cutting in Cemetery drive

The neighbour wants us to take a chunk out of the tree. Cllr Davies said we have looked at this tree before and it is not hanging over her garden, and we refused last time as it has been hacked at a few times in the past. Cllr Bubb said we will get the tree surgeon to do a health check on the tree.

7709. Anti-social behaviour incidents at the Cemetery

A complaint has come from a resident stating that most evenings up the cemetery there is a group of youngsters there. Superintendent has not seen any damage up there, but the resident said about the swearing etc. that goes on, so can't let the grandchildren out in the garden. Cllr Bubb said that without seeing them up there, we can only keep reporting it to 111 for antisocial behaviour. We will bring it up with the community warden and the 2 policemen for Sturry.

7710. Resident complaint, overgrown trees Centenary Woods

Superintendent said we just need to know what we are doing with this. Cllr Taylor suggested the Caretaker goes and looks. The Caretaker agreed to do this.

7711. Approval of payment of Hart Lee Invoice for work completed in the Cemetery

This is for the clearance of the laurels in the Cemetery. Cllr Bubb proposed. All councillors agreed Motion carried.

7712. Approval of recommendations prepared by Ken Bullock. These recommendations are the result of careful comparison of services and costs for four IT companies and four Telecommunications providers. They have been considered in detail by the Finance Committee which supports the recommendation that we appoint Highway for IT provision and BT for telecommunications. The recommended appointments will provide the security and IT support needed by the Council and a significant saving in costs.

Cllr Davies said that the Superintendent has got like for like quotations. It is clear that Highways are giving the best deal for IT support. Cllr Bubb is happy with what the committee is recommending. Cllr Davies asked if this change over could be done as soon as possible. Cllr Bubb asked if the councillors were in favour of proposal. All councillors agreed. Motion carried.

7713. Approval of draft Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee

Cllr Davies said that there are no Terms of Reference for the finance committee. It was looked at last year, but never got to the point of them being approved. The Finance Committee has now reviewed them. It was agreed for this to be deferred to the next meeting, as there had been insufficient time for councillors to review them.

7714. Review of the council's Financial Regulations

Cllr Davies stated that the regulations had been checked and have not changed. As the regulations had not been circulated prior to the meeting, it was agreed to defer to the next meeting.

7715. Centenary Woodlands Safety Work

A) Report on Tender Opening

There were only two tenders received. Both tenders require some follow-up with the contractors as some information was either missing or ambiguous. Cllr Campbell proposed going back to both tenderers seeking clarification. Cllr Bubb said this was a wise decision, and to put a deadline of seven days for the contractor to comply. We should be ready to re-tender on the 8th day, then there is nothing holding it up if we hear nothing back. Cllr Taylor and Cllr Hogben said they were happy with that. All councillors were in favour. Motion carried.

b) Approval of quotation for the Principal Designer for the safety work.

There were 2 quotes to consider:

Steven Barnsley at £1200, and B & M at £950. B & M are a local company. Cllr Bubb proposed that the B & M quote be accepted. Cllr Taylor seconded. All voted in favour. Motion carried.

7716. Sturry Social Centre Modernisation

Cllr Davies said she gathered that the ownership of the social centre was questioned. Cllr Bubb said it was also to do with if we are legally allowed to give what Cllr Davies was asking for. Cllr Davies said they would like an approval of a statement they could use for the tenders. Cllr Davies sent out the Deed and conveyance. This sets out the ownership, which is clearly the parish council. It also sets out the terms of the trust under which it is held. Cllr Bubb said that this was different to what they were asking for last time. He asked if they have had any funding through yet. Cllr Davies said they take three months. Cllr Bubb asked how much she had asked for. Cllr Davies said that Awards £10,000, Kent County Community £10,000 Viola £45,000, maybe £50,000. This is above what they need but you must apply for more than you need. Cllr Campbell said the ownership was not clear. Cllr Taylor said this is not on our asset list. Cllr Isaac asked if the parish has the freehold and Cllr Davies confirmed the parish does have the freehold.

Cllr Wenham and Cllr Davies left the meeting.

a) Approval of a statement on tenure of the Committee. This will aid grant applications for the work in demonstrating the long-term use of the building for the benefits of residents.

Cllr Taylor said she thinks we need to get legal advice on the document. Cllr Bubb said we need to work through each section, as this one is for approval of a statement. Cllr Isaac wants to know who benefits from this. If there are lots of people benefiting from it, then that is something to look at. Cllr Bubb said that at the moment we are just being asked to give a statement. Cllr Bubb proposed to give a statement, and Cllr Campbell seconded. Cllr Isaac abstained. Councillors in favour were Bubb, Hogben and Campbell. Councillors against was Taylor. Motion carried.

b) To consider and agree on whether the procurement of the three main items, building work, flooring and kitchen fitting can be done via the parish council. This arrangement will allow V.A.T. to be reclaimed with a saving of approximately £11,000 on the modernisation costs.

Cllr Bubb said we originally spoke about the modernisation, and it was bought to us that they were going to raise £45,000ish. They were putting in grants and would the parish be willing to make up any short fall. We agreed that at the time. Until the grant applications have been made, he is not happy to pay for the work to be done. Cllr Hogben believes this is being done in stages, and they have got the money for the first stage. Cllr Bubb said the wording on this is a bit confusing. Cllr Taylor said if we own it, are we paying for the work. Cllr Taylor said she didn't think we can make that payment without a public consultation. Cllr Bubb said it all comes back to the previous meeting and he proposed that we are not paying the £11,000. Councillor Bubb proposed that we stick to what we committed to at the previous meeting. We will help them out but once they have their grant money and we will make the shortfall up as agreed. All councillors agreed.

7717. To approve an annual grant of £1,000 due in April each year to Broad Oak Village Hall and Sturry Social Centre, subject to an annual finance statement from the village hall and social centre committees.

Cllr Isaac said she thought we had already decided on this. Cllr Bubb agreed. He said he wouldn't want to commit to this yearly, but we could help when needed. Cllr Taylor said she was happy for them to put in for a grant if they needed things. Maybe we should do a grant pack just for the village halls. Cllr Bubb is happy to propose this with them coming to us and no commitment. Cllr Bubb proposed that we put a process in place to enable a quick response for emergency work.

A: No one was actioned to take this forward.

Cllr Wenham and Cllr Davies came back to the meeting.

7718. Cemetery Fencing. To agree the type of fencing to replace the existing damaged fence and approve the seeing of quotations for supply and installation of the fencing.

Posts and fencing needs replacing. We need to know what type of fencing we want. If we ask for like for like we might not need to replace all the posts. We would need to agree on the spec before we can get some quotes. Cllr Bubb said it is hard for him to comment as he has not seen the fence, but gut feeling is like for like. Cllr Davies said the original fence had barbed wire at the top and we shouldn't be putting that up. She is not sure of the situation with liability. Cllr Bubb said could we arrange for a site visit for a few councillors to have a look and we can then give a proper answer for what to ask for. Cllr Bubb said he would send out an email to the councillor and arrange a suitable time.

Cllr Isaac left the meeting.

7719. Grant Funding

To consider and agree on the meaning of the current wording of the parish council's policy for making grants. To agree to revise the Grant making policy and conditions, and how this is to be done.

Cllr Davies said that if Policies are not doing what we think they should then it is up to the council to amend them. Regarding the policy, we read it to mean if there is an organisation that could provide the funding, not just an umbrella organisation, then we would not provide funding. This interpretation prevents us from funding the guides, the scouts and anybody that has an umbrella organisation so it would be easier to revise the policy wording. Cllr Bubb said he was happy for the wording to be changed if everyone agrees. All councillors were in favour.

A: No one was actioned to take this forward.

Approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31st March 2023.

Deferred due to the accounts not being completed. Clerk has requested an earlier training date.

7720. To consider approval of the Co Option and if possible, approval of a request for co-option on the parish council.

It was agreed that the Finance would be done first and then the public should leave and 7720 could be dealt with.

7721. Finance

Payments for approval.

Cllr Davies asked why we are having to pay for the VAT to be dealt with by Rialtas. The Clerk explained we needed this due to the software we use, because of going digital.

Cllr Davies asked why the council debt card had not been used for materials for the dog walking area. The clerk explained it was down to time. Usually, we do use the council debt card.

Cllr Bubb proposed, and Cllr Davies seconded, that the payments be approved. All in favour, Motion carried.

7722. Date for next meeting

12th July 2023.

The Public was asked to leave.

CONFIDENTIAL

7720. To consider approval of the Co Option and if possible, approval of a request for co-option on to the parish council.

Cllr Bubb left the meeting. Cllr Hogben took over as chairman.

A lengthy discussion was had by the councillors. Cllr Wenham asked to leave the meeting. Cllr Hogben explained we needed his vote. Cllr Wenham left the meeting. Councillor Hogben stated we needed to vote on co-opting Steve Birch. Councillors Hogben and Taylor voted in favour. Cllr Taylor then left the meeting. Cllr Wenham returned to the meeting. Cllrs Davies and Wenham voted against. Cllrs Isaac and Campbell abstained.

Outcome.

2 votes in favour

2 votes against

2 abstained.

Cllr Hogben asked the Clerk to send a letter to Steve Birch saying he was unsuccessful this time but if he still wants to, he can try again after six months.

Meeting finished at 21:10.