

Little Bollington with Agden Community Council

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY 11 JULY 2023

At Little Bollington School

0711/1 Present and Apologies

Present: Agden Ward: Anne Blackburn, Will Blackburn, Rick Taylor

Little Bollington Ward: Thomas Britton, Raluca Khajeh, Robin Palmer (Chair)

Clerk: Mike Reed

Ward Councillor: Kate Parkinson (for item 0711/8)

Apologies: Paul Cassidy

0711/2 Declaration of interests

The Chair asked whether there were any conflicts of interest. All confirmed there were none.

0711/3 Approval of agenda

The agenda circulated by the Clerk was approved. It was agreed to include grants on the agenda of future meetings.

ACTION

CLERK

0711/4 Adoption of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Council agreed to adopt the Standing Orders and Financial regulations published by NALC and circulated by the Clerk.

0711/5 Public participation

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

0711/6 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 7 June were approved and signed by the Chair.

0711/7 Matters arising

The following matters were reported.

The forms for new Councillors (Election expenses, Register of Interests, Declaration of Acceptance of Office) had all been completed and sent to CEC where required.

The Annual Governance and Accounting Return for Agden Parish Meeting and Little Bollington Parish Meeting for 2022-23 had been completed and published on the website, and the Certificate of Exemption had been sent to the external auditor.

The LBACC comment and objection to the planning application for a motorway services had been submitted to CEC.

Regarding skills and experience in the community, the Clerk has asked all those who offered support to LBACC to provide their contact details. Some responses are still awaited. The Council agreed that it may at some future date take up offers of help and may establish working groups on eg: Planning & Development, Highways & Traffic, Community Activity.

0711/8 Financial Report

Budget 2023-24 and 2024-25

There was lengthy discussion of the draft budgets for the current year and next year. It was noted that basic expenditure required for the Council to function exceeds the income from the precept and that this will be worse when a salaried Clerk is appointed. This means that the Council has no funds to undertake work or make improvements for the community. Examples of work required were discussed, including more street bins and other litter measures, vehicle parking measures, improvements to land adjacent to the church. It was pointed out that travel was based on past costs on travel to meetings with Cheshire East Council, mainly on planning and development matters. The expenditure on burial grounds is a longstanding annual contribution to Holy Trinity Church for the upkeep of the cemetery. It is not clear what the salary will be for the Clerk. It may be as high as £3,500.

It was agreed that a large increase in the precept will be required from next year. It may have to rise from £1,990 to about £6,000 or £7,000. It was reported that the current precept is much lower than other councils in Cheshire East. High Legh was thought to have a precept of approx £60 per household generating £12,000 pa. Councillor Kate Parkinson agreed to find the answers to two questions: Is there any difference in the precept between Agden and Little Bollington? What is the precept expressed as a percentage of the Council Tax?

ACTION

KP

The Chair asked all members to carefully consider what expenditure is needed, bearing in mind that the Council should make a positive difference to the community, and to come to the next meeting prepared for a discussion, in order to make an early assessment of the precept required for 2024-25.

ACTION

ALL

The budget for 2023-24 was approved.

It was agreed not to appoint a treasurer.

0711/9 Establishing LBACC: progress report and next steps

Induction

The notes on the induction session led by Jackie Weaver of ChALC had been circulated to all members.

Note to residents

The draft Explanatory note to residents about the new Council were discussed. It was agreed that TB would amend the note to clarify how residents can have a say, and he would circulate this to members prior to the next meeting.

ACTION

TB

Recruitment of Clerk

It was agreed that the recruitment of a Clerk is now a priority. The current Clerk wishes to stand down by the end of December 2023. The Clerk's work currently takes about 25-30 hours a month, but this should reduce as the Council becomes established. It was agreed that a period of overlap with the new clerk would be beneficial in allowing a handover of responsibilities. There was discussion of the options of recruiting a local resident with a keen interest in their local council or a professional with skills and experience in the work of a clerk. It was agreed that the recruitment should be open to all. It was agreed to use the standard documents provided by ChALC for contract of employment, typical advertisement etc. The Chair agreed to look at these documents, prepare a draft advertisement and move this matter forward.

ACTION

RP

Bank Account

The Council agreed as follows:

the existing bank account for Little Bollington Parish Meeting should continue to be used;
the name of the account should be changed to LBACC (the full council name is too long);
Keith Harrison should be removed as a signatory;
Thomas Britton and Richard Taylor should be added as signatories.

ACTION

CLERK

The Clerk presented the forms to apply for a change of account name and change of signatories for the bank account.

The forms were signed by the Chair and the new signatories.

Insurance

Zurich had now decided that it not could continue the existing insurance policy because the Parish Meetings no longer existed. It would necessary to take out a new policy. The Clerk will seek quotations from Zurich and from Abbeystone.

ACTION

CLERK

Website & email account

TB reported on the advice from Alex Lenihan, Clerk of the former Agden Parish Meeting (APM) on the Hugo Fox website. It was noted that Hugo Fox now charge for their website

service but the APM website continues to be available free of a charge. AL has shown that the website can be used by LBACC. He has changed the name and URL address and posted documents on the website. AL has also created a new email account for the Council. The address is littlebollingtonwithagden@gmail.com. The address LBACC@gmail.com has already been taken. Thomas Britton will work with AL to finalise the new website and email account for use by LBACC. Once these are fully operational and tested the current website and email account (as used by LBPM) can be closed, saving a fee of £216 pa.

ACTION

TB

Documents

The Clerk reported that he has a large volume of documents from LBPM. There may be more with APM. It is thought that many of the papers must be retained for a period of seven years. This presents a storage problem as the Council has no premises. RK will look into the proposal to scan the essential papers.

ACTION

RK

0711/10 Proposed motorway Services

The Council noted that its comment and objection had been submitted to CEC and agreed that it is not in a position to meet with Tatton Group at this time.

0711/11 Correspondence

The Clerk reported that he receives a large amount of email correspondence, much of which appears to be of little or no value or interest to the council. This includes invitations to seminars and meetings, news from various organisations, and marketing information. There is a large range of topics including climate change, cyber security, CCTV, personnel matters etc.

The Council agreed to delegate to the Clerk the responsibility to select which material to bring to the attention of the Council.

0711/12 Next meeting / future meetings

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 8 August. The Clerk may be unavailable and if so a member will take the minutes of the meeting.

The August agenda will include the following priority items: precept, recruitment of clerk, bank account, insurance, scanning of documents.

0711/13 Other Business

Lymm Road Footpath

WB reported that the footpath alongside Lymm Road between Spode Green Lane and the Bowdon roundabout is now impassable requiring pedestrians to walk on the carriageway of

this major road causing a serious danger. The was previously reported to CEC but no action was taken. The Clerk will report the matter to the Ward Councillor, Kate Parkinson.

ACTION

CLERK

HS2

There was discussion of the communications from HS2 and the plans to divert the high pressure gas pipeline and electricity power lines. The disruption to the local area is now less than the former proposals. But it is important to keep informed of the plans.

Invasive species

RK reported the presence of large amounts of giant hogweed on the banks of the River Bollin. There was concern that this would spread across a wide area. It was thought that the agencies who may be involved could include the Environment Agency, The Mersey River Trust, the Bollin Valley Partnership and the National Trust at Dunham Massey. The Clerk will raise the matter with the National Trust.

ACTION

CLERK

There was no other business and the meeting ended at 8.15pm.