

WINTERBORNE ST MARTIN PARISH COUNCIL AGM

DRAFT MINUTES 25th May 2023 - 7.00pm at St Martin's Church

No formal recording was made of this meeting due to a technical issue with the microphone, but a partial recording was made available by a parishioner and this has assisted in drafting.

Two members of the public were present.

Councillors Present:

Mark Pemberton (MP) Chair, Karen Delafield (KD) Vice Chair, Raphaella Rooke (RR), Martin Usherwood (MU), David Read (DR), David Hutchings (DH) Andy Daw (AD) Richard Eversden (RE)

Preliminaries:

Public period for comments on issues on the agenda – 5 minutes per speaker

No Report from Dorset Council Councillor

No Report from Police Liaison

Mention was made as to whether Councillor Tarr was invited to the parish council meetings. It was agreed that it was his responsibility to keep updated with all the Parish Councils in his area but suggested that a personal email with an invitation from the clerk would be a good idea for any future events. **Clerk to action**

25/5 - 1 To elect the Chairman of the Council for 2023/2024 and sign the Acceptance of Office

There were no nominees or candidates put forward for the Chairperson.

MP advised that he would be prepared to continue as Chair for the next year if two conditions were met as follows:

- 1) Responsibility for monitoring the Grounds Maintenance Contract was taken on by one of the parish councillors.

AD agreed to take on this role.

- 2) Another councillor volunteered to be included in a staffing committee to help manage issues relating to staffing.

DH agreed to take on this role.

- 3) There was discussion about lead for drafting planning responses after Councillors had been consulted and expressed their views. It was considered that the Clerk should eventually take this on.

MP was voted in as Chair with 5 in favour and 2 abstentions.

25/5 – 2 To elect the Vice Chairman of the Council for 2023/2024 and sign the Acceptance of Office

There were no nominees or candidates put forward for the Vice Chair.

Following nomination by MU, KD advised that she would also be prepared to continue in this role but would need another member of the parish council to take over the role of the Flood & Sewage representative.

KD gave a full explanation as to what was involved in the role.

RR agreed to take on this role.

KD was voted in as Vice Chair with 7 in favour.

25/5 – 3 To receive apologies for absence. - ***None***

25/5 – 4 To receive declarations of personal and pecuniary interests or grants of dispensation.

MP and MU declared an interest in the WI application for funding for the Village Hall garden (item 19.1) as their wives are both committee members of the WI and named in the application.

25/5 - 5 To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 27th April 2023

Proposed as a true record of the meeting by MU

Seconded by RR

All councillors present who were at the April meeting voted in favour.

25/5 – 6 Matters arising from the minutes for information only.

RR reported that the Half Hardy Marathon had received positive results from the village and reiterated that the organisers were very keen to meet with WSMPC to discuss plans/recommendations for any future events. MP reminded those present that he had an on-going Freedom of Information request with Dorset Council.

The Chair also advised that with regard to the difficulties raised at the April Meeting he had written to the Councillor concerned.

25/5 – 7 To receive the Chairman's report of 2022/2023

In the absence of any other Councillor prepared to stand I was elected Chair in Jun 2022, having been a Councillor for three months. That there was much that I did not know soon became apparent, so I think it best by thanking those who tried to counsel me. Firstly my predecessor Cllr Dawes – I now know the load you carried and the conflicts you faced; secondly my Vice Chair Cllr Delafield – who actually stood the gap and who is always willing to research the actual situation rather than rely on a rumour or village legend. I would also like to thank the Councillors with longer service for their knowledge, recollections, and hard work this year and in the past. And I would particularly like to thank those who have become Councillors in my tenure for having the commitment to stand for what seems to be a pretty thankless task. I'd also like to thank our succession of Clerks, without Mrs Harding doing the books at the end of last year we would have had no start point; Ms Safadi brought knowledge and common sense where mine was lacking, and now we have Mrs Baird who is gaining confidence in her roles as RFO and Proper Officer. There were of course several months when we were without a Clerk and I would like to thank Cllr's Delafield and Usherwood for assisting me in ensuring that we could function during these periods - Agendas and Minutes do not write themselves.

On my learning curve one of the biggest problems I've found is the lack of evidence to allow understanding of why we are in whatever the situation is that we are debating. This is immensely frustrating and I realise that our current system of minutes needs to be improved to include some indication of the debate as well as the result. At least with the internet our records will not be lost, which is in fact the unfortunate case for much of the relevant past.

However, as often quoted, "the past is a place of reference not residence" and there are many occasions when I believe we could better perform our roles by looking forwards rather than back – nit picking is fine, but what are we going to do about the issue today? Another frustration with our system is that I don't get all my own way, but I suppose that is a reflection of the strength of our Council rather than a weakness. Another lesson I've learned is to research. Unfortunately, there have been several occasions when people, who might be regarded as having "skin in

the game”, have authoritatively quoted documents or policies which actually read differently from their recollection or have been superseded; misquoted papers to suit their ends; or simply explained that I am wrong and do not understand. In the last point they are often right, but as many officers at Dorset Council can testify, when I don’t know I ask.

So what have we done in my tenure? We dealt with two long outstanding complaints and two separate but equally outstanding Subject Access Requests, at least one of which is formally closed. This doesn’t sound much but it took me and our then Clerk months. In doing this we, or I, generated a new complaint but fortunately dealing with that sits outwith the Council. We investigated the benefits of developing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide future development, and found that whilst it would undoubtedly be beneficial to have one we felt that the Council should not lead – and no other organisation was prepared to take it on at that time. We debated a number of what turned out to be pretty controversial subjects, particularly grass cutting and stream clearance, eventually investing heavily in both, and on the subject of the latter have engaged Wessex Water at it’s highest levels over our concerns about sewage capacity and the resulting dumping into the Winterborne. However, perhaps my strongest recollection of our democracy in action was the Budget debate in November, when the careful workings of the Budget Group were dissected by the Council and we were sent back to think again. As part of that budget process we determined that we must bring down our surplus or carried forward cash holdings so decided to minimally increase the precept and cover other costs from our surplus. We also determined that having three small earmarked reserves was inappropriate so have grouped these as a general reserve which, if the proposal is approved later tonight, we will seek to increase until this represents a year’s worth of precept. Our current plan is to take forward a budget where our reserves are defined and our annual income effectively matches our expenditure.

And what have we failed to achieve? Well, there is no Jubilee Tree, and as yet no decision to mark the Coronation in any way. We have argued about maintenance issues without resolution but we do recognise that we must maintain the Parish assets so again there is a motion later tonight to get a grip of this. And then there is the sign outside the Church describing our Parish which I hope we will finally take forward in 2023. Finally, there is the memorial hall/Reading Room or Parish Office which we have failed to gain control over. I believe that we have actually achieved a great deal but know that there others who disagree so will include this failure on the negative side of my account. There is so much we could do, but as I alluded to earlier one of the failings of democracy is that we need a majority view to achieve this. Parishioners can help us achieve this by making enough noise to make Councillors take notice of their concerns, or maybe even to take action.

25/5 – 8 To reaffirm the PC policies and procedures.

8.1 Motion -that we should adopt the revised Model rules MODEL STANDING ORDERS 2018 (ENGLAND) — UPDATED APRIL 2022

Proposed KD seconded MP – 6 Voted in Favour – motion carried

8.2 Motion for two changes to our Standing Orders:

- a. The removal SO12f to allow us to keep drafts of our minutes (many of our minutes only exist in draft form), current regulation means we should delete them.
- b. The addition to SO4 allowing the creation of Working Groups constituted distinctly and differently from sub committees.

A general discussion took place regarding the formation of the minutes and how they are adhered to at the meeting. A brief discussion also took place regarding the differences between working groups and sub-committees.

Proposed KD seconded MP – 5 Voted in Favour, 1 Abstention – Motion Carried

c. The addition in 9b to include the requirement for a motion to have a mover (proposer) and seconder before it can be added to the Agenda.

Proposed KD seconded MP – 5 Voted in Favour, 1 Abstention – Motion Carried

MP submitted a document (attached) highlighting the reviews he had carried out and asked councillors for their comments on the following:

8.3 Review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, non-for profit bodies and businesses.

It was agreed that we had none other than our Grounds Contract.

8.4 Review of inventory of land and other assets including buildings and office equipment

It was acknowledged that the Bus Shelter had been removed from the PC's asset register as it never should have been included and that the telephone box had now become an asset with the replacement value of £2,500.

8.5 Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies.

8.6 Review of the Council's complaints procedure.

8.7 Review of Council's obligations under the freedom of information and data protection legislation

KD advised that this was both robust and clear.

8.8 Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media

RR would undertake a review of this as it was considered too complex for our needs.

8.9 Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures

The clerk was tasked with checking and updating this.

8.10 Review of other published policies.

It was agreed that more action was needed on reviewing our Grant Awarding Policy. Also, it was considered that we should have a scheme of delegation in place to enable urgent decisions to be made particularly with regard to financial decisions and payments.

25/5 – 9 To reaffirm that WSMPC is NOT eligible to use the "General Power of Competence

All in agreement as no qualified clerk in place

25/5 – 10 To appoint reaffirm the area reps/committees and members – responsibility matrix

Key responsibilities had been dealt with at Agenda Items 25/5.1 and 25/5.2. Councillors confirmed that other responsibilities would stand.

10.1 DAPTC To appoint a DAPTC Representative.

Clerk advised that the DAPTC were very keen to have a parish councillor representative to liaise with. KD and MU advised that they had both undertaken this role before and the conclusion was that it was not of any use. No other member of the council volunteered to undertake this role but MP advised that he will look into this further.

25/5 – 11 Finance: -

11.1 To approve the Revised Budget

Proposed RR, Seconded DR, all voted in favour.

11.2 To approve the bank reconciliation.

Reported balances confirmed by MU – all voted in favour.

11.3 To approve the draft Reserves Policy – Proposed MP seconded KD

Proposed MP, Seconded KD, all voted in favour.

11.4 To approve the Annual Insurance for 2023-2024 - Clerk

Clerk advised that the renewal quote from Zurich had risen by 4.4% from £473.76 to £494.94 and was due to expire on 4th June 2023. Clerk also advised that she had not been made aware that this should have ideally gone out to tender.

Councillors advised that as the assets had now decreased due to the Bus Stop (valued at £19,000) not belonging to the PC and the acquisition of the telephone box (valued at £2,500) then we may be able to obtain a reduced premium. It was agreed that the clerk would request a reduced premium but that the Insurance should be renewed with Zurich for this year.

7 Votes in Favour 1 Abstention.

11.5 To receive an update on end of year processes – AGAR and Audit - Clerk

MP and Clerk advised that they had worked on the end of year accounts for submission to the internal auditor. A minor variation of £19.76 was found in our favour. MP explained that without going back through all the figures from 2021 to 2022 we should accept this slight imbalance. The clerk informed the meeting that the Internal Auditor had not been concerned with this discrepancy when it was discussed with him in an initial phone call prior to the audit.

MU advised that all things considered with regards to the changes and lack of clerks etc for this year it was an acceptable outcome.

Clerk explained that the AGAR process was in order and the internal audit would take place on 15th June. Following this it would be presented to the council along with the end of year accounts for consideration but must be in the public domain by 30th June 2023.

25/5 – 12 Planning Consultations: -

12.1 To consider any current planning applications in circulation

12.2 To consider any other planning/enforcement or ongoing issues

There were no current planning applications to consider, however it was agreed that if the closing date for comment was between our meeting dates then if needed, we would ask for an extension to allow discussion at the meeting.

25/5 – 13 Reading Room / Memorial Hall

Motion - The parish council to form a working group to move forwards on taking on the reading room, with a clause stating that any liabilities before the handover date are not the responsibility of the Parish Council. The working group to consist of DR MU RE and DH. The parish council agrees to using up to £2500 for legal fees in the action.

Proposed DR Seconded DH

MU advised that he no longer wanted to be included in the working group and stated that as it was such an important project potentially involving large financial commitments, he was not happy to continue as neither the Chair or Vice Chair were part of the working group. Therefore, the Working Group will consist of DR, RE and DH.

7 votes in favour, 1 abstention - Motion Carried

25/5 – 14 Highways and Rights of Way

Update by Exception - DR

25/5 – 15 Flood and Riverbanks

Update by Exception - **KD**

25/5 – 16 Washpool

Quote received – update and way ahead – **AD**

AD provided the council with a repair quote and an explanation of the costings involved. He advised that the repairs could be broken down into 3 stages involving the initial repair, the pinning and the strengthening and the repointing.

All agreed that the Quote was very expensive and unachievable. A general discussion ensued about the best way to achieve a satisfactory repair and what had caused the problem.

It was concluded that the council would obtain some other quotes – both DR and RR would provide AD with some contacts to provide these.

NB 09:20 AD HAD TO LEAVE THE MEETING FOR AN URGENT MATTER

25/5 17 Benches

Motion: that the Council commits up to £2K to repair or replace damaged benches.

Proposed MP Seconded KD

A general discussion took place to consider this motion. A member of the parish had suggested a picnic bench and two parishioners had requested a commemorative jubilee/coronation bench. It was generally agreed that a new bench should be purchased to replace the plastic one and that the plastic one be moved to a different site to enable a new wooden one to be present on the village green. It was also put forward that MU and MP would attempt a repair on the concrete bench.

5 in favour 1 abstention – motion carried.

25/5 – 18 SID REPAIR

A request has been received to fund a repair to the SID.

A discussion took place to determine if the PC should continue to maintain the SID and therefore finance the repair costs of £100 plus VAT.

RE proposed that we continue to maintain the SID, MU seconded, 5 in favour, 1 abstention – Motion carried.

25/5 – 19 Correspondence to be discussed and noted.

19.1 - Grant application for £150 to fund purchase of plants for the Village Hall Garden.

This was discussed amongst members with mention that the WI and the Village Hall themselves have available funds and therefore consideration was given as to whether this would be a good use of council funding.

MP and MU unable to vote due to declaration of interests.

1 in Favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions – Application for funding refused.

25/5 – 20 Motions

Note: These motions were submitted at 9.29pm on 18th May which is outwith the requirements of SO9b. It is therefore for the council to decide whether we take them forward at this time.

25.1 We stop using the name memorial hall for the reading room.

This was discussed and agreed that although historically it had been known as the Reading Room it would be difficult to use this title as the title deeds referred to it as The Memorial Hall.

Proposed DR, Seconded RR, 2 in favour 3 against – motion not carried.

25.2 We stop using the name wash pool for the sheep dip.

Proposed DR, no Seconder so motion not carried.

25/5 – 21 To consider urgent matters to report from members and items for the next meeting. To include an open forum 10 minutes.

MP introduced a number of issues relating to the role of the Proper Officer.

Clerk requested that the council follow a more formal process for compiling the agenda as the constant reviews taking place before submission between members were causing delays. The Clerks guidelines indicate that it is the clerk who takes responsibility for the Agenda and it's format but does suggest that it is good practice to discuss it with the chair before sending the summons.

Clerk requested an answer with regards to an email that had been received and copied to each member, from a resident in connection with maintaining the riverbank and hedges alongside their property. The council advised that the area referred to should be included in the ground maintenance contract but had been missed and this would be highlighted to the contractor to include in the future.

Clerk to produce a note describing procedure moving forwards.

25/5 – 22 To Determine the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

The Council agreed to continue holding the meetings on the 4th Thursday of each month excluding December.

It was agreed that KD would provide an article for the next V&V publication.

Signed by The Clerk

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Review of Policies – MVP’s contribution.

Standing Orders – replace with new. Amend as required by motions prior to adoption at June meeting.

Financial regulations – content.

Staffing Committee – enact or bin – needs third member (Chair, Vice Chair + 1).

Code of Conduct - content

Equal Opportunities – content but suggest needs research into current best practice covering 2SLGBTQ+

Cooption - content

Grant Awarding Policy –

CIL – amend gobbledygook - 11. Completed form will go through either the Budget, for recommendation to Full Council who will determine the application.

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I believe that this is far too complex for our needs and is actually “dated” in respect of communication routes.

In terms of Communication I also believe that the Chair should have the right to correspond on behalf of the Council (whether described as such explicitly or not) provided Councillors are kept informed and correspondence is always copied to the Clerk.

Scheme of Delegation (Expired)

Not Content – Recommend reauthorise subject to:

Add additional clause below that on Emergency expenditure. (is there a definition of Emergency?).

In consultation with Chair or Vice-Chair, urgent expenditure up to £500 whether or not there is budgetary provision for the expenditure (subject to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations). Urgent in this case to mean: expenditure which must be made prior to the next meeting for statutory, legal or contractual reasons, or to promote the efficient management of the Council.

Suggest full Council review of Planning delegation.

Complaints against the Council Procedure

Content, and very familiar!

Employee Grievance Policy.

Appears to be straight steal from NALC and I could find no update. Suggest that Marion reviews and confirms she is content.

Employee disciplinary Policy

Appears to be straight steal from NALC and I could find no update.