**BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Held in the Village Hall Bishopstone**

**Thursday 9th November 2023 at 7.30pm.**

**MINUTES**

**Present :** Parish Councillors : P Edwards (PE) (Vice Chairman)

N Barter (NTB)

Mrs A Smith (AS)

Mrs M Tatner (MT)

S Williams (SW)

Ms N Rigg (NR)

Parish Clerk: M R Ash (MRA)

**Also present:** Mr M Pratt

Mrs M Barter

Mrs Caroline Ash

1. **Apologies for Absence**

There were apologies for absence from Cllr A Thorne and Wiltshire Councillor N Najjar.

1. **Declarations of interest**

There were no additional declarations of interest.

1. **Approval of Minutes of the meeting on 7th September 2023.**

NTB proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 7th September 2023 be approved as a correct record, this was seconded by MT and agreed.

1. **Matters Arising from the Minutes, including Action Plan**

MRA reported that he had spoken to the Wiltshire Council officer overseeing the work to the drainage ditches in Faulston Lane and the old “soak away” ditches on the north side of the road had been fully restored.

MRA said that the Parish Steward had cut the long grass in the verge of the bend past the pub to improve visibility and that Wiltshire Council had then undertaken visibility grass cutting throughout the village.

All other matters arising from the minutes were on the agenda for later in the meeting.

1. **Chairman’s Items**

There were none.

1. **Additional Grant to the PCC**

Consideration was given to paper BPC(04)23 (copy attached to these minutes) on whether to provide an additional grant to the PCC to help meet additional unforeseen costs that have arisen in the current year and the level of grant for churchyard maintenance for next year (2024/25).

Unforeseen costs had arisen in the current year for work to clear overgrown areas of the churchyard, to deal with ground subsidence around some of the graves and to make safe the large beech tree on the frontage with Church Lane that had been damaged in a recent storm. The total cost to the PCC was £2,654. However, the cost of a consultants report on the tree had already been met and the PCC therefore requested an additional grant of £1,970.

The Parish Council's grant in 2023/24 towards the upkeep of the churchyard was £550. Regular grass cutting has now been extended to the whole area of the churchyard, including the south eastern part which was formerly designated a “wild” reserve. This is necessary to ensure that all graves are visible, accessible by families and can be easily maintained, thus avoiding the one-off costs incurred in 2023. The total annual cost will be £840.

After consideration of the council’s overall financial position, AS proposed an additional grant of £1,500 should be made as soon as possible and that the annual churchyard maintenance grant for next year be increased to £800. This was seconded by NR and agreed.

PE suggested that the PCC might be invited to attend a future meeting to explain in more detail their funding and expenditure. It was agreed that this could be done as part of the Annual Parish Meeting in March.

1. **Budget and Precept for 2024/25**

A report (BPC(05)23 – copy attached to these minutes) was considered which provided an update on finances in 2023/24 and options for the level of the Council Tax Precept for 2024/25. Spending in the current year was well within budget. Major items included the new bench seat commemorating the coronation in the Children’s Play Area, the contribution to the resurfacing costs in Pitts Lane and might include the cost of an additional defibrillator (see Agenda Item 9). The level of resources required for next year (2024/25) were more difficult to predict than usual. For example, if the bid to get the speed limit on Broad Chalke Road past the Recreation Field and the White Hart reduced from 40mph to 30mph is successful the Parish Council will be required to contribute towards the legal and signage costs. These could be as much as £3,000. However, if the bid is unsuccessful there will be no cost. Decisions on this issue will not be taken before next Spring. It was agreed that the Council had no option but to budget on the assumption that these costs may arise. The paper recommended that a request to Wiltshire Council for funding from Council Tax next year should be £7,500, up from £5,000 this year. This will add approximately £10.00 to the annual charge on a Band D property in the village. Precise figures cannot be provided pending more data from Wiltshire Council and final decisions will be taken at the next meeting on 11th January. Whilst it was decided to leave a final decision until the meeting in January, it was agreed that a Precept of £7,500 was likely to be necessary.

1. **Parish Clerk’s Report**

Additional Defibrillator

MRA said that it had been agreed in principle at the September meeting to install a third public access defibrillator to be located inside the bus shelter at the eastern end of the village, near Church Lane. The electrical supply (for the lights and heating element in the case) would come from an adjacent property, The Beeches. He was very grateful to Mr Michael Pratt, owner of The Beeches for agreeing to facilitate this and to pay the small annual charge for the cost of the electricity. Detailed quotations had now been received for the costs of supplying the defibrillator and for the electrical installation work. Altogether the costs would be £2134.80. If agreed, it is likely that the new defibrillator will be operational by about the end of the year.

Tree Warden

MRA said that Wiltshire Council is looking to establish volunteer “Tree Wardens” in every parish in the county to act as a contact and support for all things tree related in the local area. The role of the Tree Warden might include such tasks as:

* Identifying trees at risk - reporting early signs of pests, disease and vandalism and gathering information about trees important for wildlife or heritage in the parish
* Getting involved in campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of trees
* Co-ordinating local volunteers to manage community tree and woodland planting
* Working with the parish council to provide comment on applications for works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order or in Conservation Areas

He said that Michael Pratt had volunteered to act as a Tree Warden and to co-ordinate Bishopstone’s response. In discussion Mr Pratt said that he was happy to act as Tree Warden for the eastern half of the village (up to Faulston Bridge) but would prefer it if he was joined by someone to take the lead in the western part of the village. He also said it would be desirable to establish a larger, informal, support group of villagers interested in tree planting and maintaining the well-being of the trees and woodlands we already have. It was important to make sure that land owners and tenants in the village were aware of their responsibility to maintain their trees, ensure that they are safe and to deal with any that fell. It was agreed to include an article on these matters in the next edition of STaB.

Approval of Expenditure

MRA requested that expenditure be approved as follows:

1. £151.19 to TEEC for village website hosting;
2. £51.90 as Clerk’s expenses (plastic boxes for papers now stored in the Village Hall);
3. £50.00 to Lee Curtis for ditch clearance in Flamstone Street;
4. £2,134.80 costs of the new defibrillator

SW proposed that these items of expenditure be approved, this was seconded by NR and agreed.

1. **Planning Matters**

There were none.

1. **Questions or statements from Councillors.**

There were none.

**Date, location and time of next meeting.**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on **Thursday 11th January 2024** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

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Signed as an accurate record:

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Chairman Date

**BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL**

**PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**Thursday 9th November 2023**

**ACTION PLAN**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WHAT ACTION** | **BY WHOM** | **COMPLETED**  **✔** |
| Repairs to gate to footbridge in Mill Lane to be investigated. | AJT |  |
| Article in STaB re need to clear dead trees and recruit additional Tree Warden. | MRA |  |
| WC to be reminded of flooding issue in Netton Street. | MRA | **✔** |
| Grass cutting of road verges to be raised with WC. | MRA | **✔** |
| Action on Parish Clerk recruitment. | MRA |  |
| Drainage ditches in Flamstone Street to be cleared. | MRA | **✔** |
| Third defibrillator to be procured and installed. | MRA |  |