

## Batheaston Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Batheaston Parish Council held  
at 7:45pm on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023, at the Rhymes Pavilion.

Present: Councillors Hannah Squire (Chair of Council),  
Peter Bryant, Catherine McCarthy, Alexis Pavlou,  
Sue Peachey and Kate Skelton.

### PROCEDURAL MATTERS

#### 1. Public participation.

##### 1.1. A resident commented on Item 5, the Budget and Precept

- 1.1.1. She said that the financial report did not paint a comforting picture and noted that at the end of the financial year, the Council is projected to have below its target of 6 months' cover in reserves.
- 1.1.2. It was noted that a dedicated reserve has been established for the Playground Project, and that the funds in that reserve, of approximately £5.600 are not referenced in the figures presented.
- 1.1.3. She expressed concern that the Council would not have enough money to continue to provide the services that it does, and to fulfil its other commitments.
- 1.1.4. Cllr Squire thanked the Member of the Public for her comments, and reassured her that Councillors were aware of the challenge facing them, and she did not doubt that they would take appropriate action to ensure the financial security of the Council.

#### 2. Council accepted apologies for absence from Cllrs Wesley Hallam and Peter Lewis.

#### 3. There were no declarations of interest from Councillors.

#### 4. Minutes of Previous Meetings

##### 4.1. Council approved the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

- 4.1.1. Cllr Squire duly signed the minutes.

### VILLAGE MATTERS

#### 5. 2023/24 Budget and Precept

- 5.1. Council received a report on the financial position of the Council, and the projected budget for 2023/24 from the Clerk.
  - 5.1.1. He outlined the financial performance over the past 3 years, and the underlying trend. In summary, the Council has not covered its costs in the past 2 or more years, but this has been obscured by "windfalls", of multiple years of reclaimed VAT, and CIL payments from BANES.
  - 5.1.2. He also noted that there have been some significant spend on dealing with legacy and backlog issues, such as over £5,000 on Streetlights. These are likely to continue.



- 5.1.3. The Council's income is down on pre-pandemic levels, most obviously in the case of the Rhymes Pavilion which no longer attracts as many bookings as it did previously.
- 5.1.4. On top of these, the Council has been subject to the inflationary pressures well known to all: on electricity supply, salaries, and many other supplies (such as insurance, which saw a 23% this year).
- 5.1.5. He modelled various scenarios, as outlined in the papers, and noted that making savings of 5% across the board, and increasing the Precept by 35%, would mean that costs would be covered, but would not restore reserves in 2023/24.
- 5.1.6. Finally, he noted that Batheaston's Precept is significantly below the average for Parish and Town Councils in BANES.

**5.2. Councillors considered options for changes to the operations of the Council that have a substantial impact on the budget projection.**

- 5.2.1.1. The Clerk presented a report that identified six possible actions to reduce costs, and the financial impact of each.
- 5.2.1.2. He noted that there might be some duplication in the options as presented, and that the figures were approximations. A budget would be prepared to deliver any chosen option(s).
- 5.2.2. The Clerk had prepared a more detailed assessment of the most significant of the options; regarding the possible refurbishment of the Rhymes Pavilion.
- 5.2.3. It was noted that there are a number of problems with the Rhymes Pavilion, some of which cannot be resolved cheaply or easily, for instance the issues of vandalism affecting the far end of the building.
- 5.2.4. Furthermore the reduction in income since the New Village Hall, meant that the Rhymes Pavilion is costing approximately £8,000 to maintain.
- 5.2.5. Councillors instructed the Clerk to bring forward a resolution to close the Rhymes Pavilion at the next meeting.

Clerk

**5.3. Councillors discussed the budget and the Precept.**

- 5.3.1. Councillors noted that many households are facing a tough year ahead as a result of similar pressures on their budgets. Any increase, even of £1 / week, would be difficult for some families.
- 5.3.2. Councillors noted however that its current position is unsustainable, and they are duty-bound to seek to resolve the Council's deficit.
- 5.3.3. It was noted that the Council possesses a number of assets which potentially have substantial value to the community, and also the ability to generate income. For instance, there is no other football pitch in Bathavon / Bathavon North [which is right?]; nor an all-weather pitch, and there is great demand for both.



5.3.4. Councillors discussed the options of taking a major step at this point, rather than making small, incremental changes. Generally, the former was preferred; small changes will not address the fundamental nature of the challenges.

5.3.5. The Council would hope to tap into the skills and resources of the Parish, by both involving individual volunteers and other community organisations.

5.3.6. Councillors also noted that discussions have commenced regarding the use of a charity to apply for external funds, to provide the investment needed. The other most obvious option is to seek a Public Works Loan. In both cases it was noted that significant clerical effort would be needed.

5.3.7. A consensus emerged that the Council should seek to re-balance its operational budget, and invest some funds in bringing resource to oversee a programme of improvement. Councillors discussed what nature of person could help, and for what period.

5.3.8. **Council approved** an amendment to specify that the Precept would rise by 90%, to £105,260.

5.3.9. **Council approved** the amended motion.

5.3.10. The Clerk signed the Precept Form and undertook to submit to Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Clerk

## STANDING ITEMS AND REPORTS

### 6. Planning Applications

6.1. **Council reviewed** the following planning applications from Bath and North East Somerset Council, and resolved not to oppose them:

6.1.1. Reference Number: [23/00078/CLEU](#)

6.1.2. Reference Number: [23/00180/LBA](#)

The meeting closed at 9:36pm

#### Forthcoming Meetings:

Council Meeting, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023

Council meetings are open to the public, and members of the public are welcome to join and may speak by invitation.

Signed by Cllr Hannah Squire, Chair of Council:

Date:



21.2.23