

Batheaston Parish Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Batheaston Parish Council held at 7:30pm on Tuesday 1st December 2020

**Present: Councillors Derek Greener, Alison James, James Jeffery,
Andrew Lea, Tamsin May, Catherine McCarthy, Alexis Pavlou,
Sue Peachey, Hannah Squire, Patrick Vandestein.**

In attendance: Richard Maccabee (Clerk).

The Clerk took the Chair for the first item, Election of Chairman.

1. Election of Chairman

- 1.1. Cllrs Lea and Squire were nominated for the post and made short presentations.
- 1.2. **Council elected** Cllr Squire to the post of Chairman.

Cllr Squire took the Chair.

2. There was no Public Participation.

3. There were no apologies for absence. Cllr Tovey was absent.

4. There were no Declarations of interest.

5. Election of Vice Chairman

- 5.1. Cllr May was the sole nominee for the post. She made some introductory comments.
- 5.2. **Council elected** Cllr May to the post of Vice-Chairman.

6. Appointment of Councillors to the Finance Committee.

- 6.1. Cllr Greener nominated himself to join the Finance Committee.
- 6.2. **Council elected** Cllr Greener to the Finance Committee

7. Election of Chairman of the Finance Committee

- 7.1. Cllr Vandestein nominated himself to the post of Chairman of the Finance Committee.
- 7.2. **Council elected** Cllr Vandestein to the post of Chairman of the Finance Committee.

8. Village Green

- 8.1. Cllr Greener introduced this item.
 - 8.1.1. He emphasised the importance of seeking community backing for a Public Works Loan, and suggested time be taken to engage, possibly at an Annual Meeting of the Parish, which he would hope can take place in May 2021.
 - 8.1.2. He was concerned that this initiative does not have the formal approval of Council, and that there are other initiatives that the Council should conclude before progressing further. Other Councillors supported his comments.
 - 8.1.3. Cllr Vandestein described the history of decisions by the Council which in his view give a firm foundation for the project.
 - 8.1.4. Cllr McCarthy described the very positive comments made on Facebook when some of the ideas were posted there recently. She was optimistic

about the capability of the Council, and the community to pursue this and other initiatives.

- 8.1.5. Cllr Vandesteen emphasised that no money has spent has been spent, and that no decisions to do so are envisaged at this time.
- 8.1.6. Cllr Greener asked for a named vote for the resolutions in this item.
- 8.1.7. **Councillors voted** on the resolution to stop all work by Council on the village green / green corridor until full engagement with all residents households by sending a questionnaire.

In favour: Cllrs Greener, Jeffery, Lea

Against: Cllrs James, May, McCarthy, Peachey, Squire, Vandesteen

Abstentions: Cllr Pavlou

The motion was defeated.

- 8.2. **Councillors voted** on the resolution to set up a working group to establish a questionnaire seeking residents' views for the future of Batheaston.

In favour: Cllrs Greener, Jeffery, Lea

Against: Cllrs James, May, McCarthy, Peachey, Squire, Vandesteen

Abstentions: Cllr Pavlou

The motion was defeated.

- 8.3. **Councillors voted** on the resolution to cease all other activities to progress this project until the questionnaire has been completed, its results analysed and Council has formally approved that the project should progress.

In favour: Cllrs Greener, Jeffery, Lea

Against: Cllrs James, May, McCarthy, Peachey, Squire, Vandesteen

Abstentions: Cllr Pavlou

The motion was defeated.

9. Playground

- 9.1. Cllr Squire introduced this item, indicating that the project had been led by Cllr Lea, with Cllr May.

9.1.1. **Council approved** the proposal to proceed with urgent repairs to equipment on the Elmhurst Playground, for a cost of £2,081.

9.1.2. The Clerk requested that the Item relating to Planning be brought forward, as he was aware that a member of the public was keen to hear Council's discussion of this, and had been disappointed that this was not possible at the previous meeting.

9.1.3. **Council approved** the motion to bring this item forward.

Council agreed to take Item 15, Planning, at this point.

15. Planning

15.1. Councillors considered the Planning Application Reference: 20/03657/FUL submitted to Bath and North East Somerset Council.

15.1.1. Councillors commented that this will help to maintain the centre of the village, and that the Gather Cafe, in its current far-from-ideal location is always busy, and may attract visitors to Batheaston, to the benefit of the wider community.

15.1.2. Other comments made included a desire to see the name of the White Lion retained in some way; and a note that English heritage has queried signage; which was a concern shared by one Councillor (in similar vein to previous comment)

15.1.3. **Council resolved** to wholeheartedly support the application.

Clerk

10. Finance Committee Report

10.1. **Council noted** the report of the October Finance Committee Meeting.

10.2. **Council noted** the approved monthly transactions and bank reconciliation for September.

11. Financial Regulations and Governance

11.1. The Clerk introduced this item, as the previous Chairman of Finance Committee has resigned from Council.

11.1.1. **Council approved** the Financial Regulations which are based on the model from the National Association of Local Councils, with updated limits as temporary financial regulations pending completion of new financial governance policies and procedures.

11.2. Cllr Vandesteen introduced the Financial Governance Framework. He indicated that the regulations and our capability do not enable us to undertake projects of substantial ambition. **Council approved** the motion to:

11.2.1. continue with current policies and procedures until such time that precept and budget start including capital expenditure;

11.2.2. Finance Committee will use reasonable efforts to update the current policies and procedures to make them as fit for practical purpose;

11.2.3. Finance Committee prepare a costed project to outsource the creation of the policies, procedures, measures and controls necessary for implementing the proposed financial governance framework.

12. Precept and budget 2021/22: resident participatory process.

12.1. Cllr Vandesteen introduced this item, explaining that against the background of the hardship and reduced budgets resulting from Covid-19, the Council cannot assume that it has a mandate for any level of expenditure. He therefore proposes that Council seek the views of the residents in a non-binding survey.

12.1.1. Councillors expressed concern that the Council does not have the communications structures in place to validly conduct such an exercise, especially in the short time available.

12.1.2. Cllr Vandesteen requested a named vote.

12.1.3. **Councillors voted** on the resolution to consult residents on 3 strategic precept choices ahead of setting the 21/22 Precept.

In favour: Cllrs Vandesteen

Against: Cllrs Jeffery, James, May, McCarthy, Pavlou, Squire

Abstentions: Cllr Greener, Lea, Peachey

The motion was defeated.

13. Preliminary Discussion of Review of the Code of Conduct

13.1. Cllr Vandesteen introduced this item, indicating that a number of issues come together to prompt Council to review its Code of Conduct: they have not been reviewed since August 2018; and there have recently been issues of disclosure of information. It would be beneficial to seek to have “best practice” Code of Conduct; and that it should include direct reference to the Nolan Principles of Public Life, and that these be explained in some detail.

13.1.1. Cllr Greener strongly recommended the Essential Councillor Course. The Clerk mentioned that he has been in touch with someone who could offer training, to meet the previous request for the Essential Councillor Course, and which could include a collaborative discussion to develop a revised Code of Conduct.

13.1.2. Cllr Pavlou said that the current Code of Conduct is quite strict. The key issue is adherence to it, which is not enforceable by strict sanctions.

13.2. Council approved the motion to determine in outline what changes are required to the Code of Conduct and other Council Policies.

Clerk

13.3. Cllr Vandesteen withdrew the motion: to request that the Clerk conduct an investigation into the website governance failures we have suffered recently and bring forward to Council a report on what can be learned for the future.

14. Complaints policy

14.1. The Clerk indicated that the draft policy, based on a previous draft policy of the Council. He had updated this on the basis of learning from dealing with the complaint at the last meeting.

14.2. Council approved the updated complaints policy.

Item 15, Planning, had been taken earlier in the meeting.

16. Clerk’s Report

16.1. Council noted the report from the Clerk.

16.1.1. The Clerk noted that since submitting the report he had received confirmation of satisfactory conclusion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Report. There were some items to be addressed, which he will take forward with the Finance Committee.

16.1.2. He also indicated that earlier that day, he had had a mid-year review with our Internal Auditor, who had indicated that good progress had been made, but that further improvement is needed to some processes, around invoice approvals and management of transactions.

16.1.3. He committed to provide Councillors with the new Council Email Accounts.

Clerk

17. Chairman's Report

- 17.1. Cllr Squire thanked Council for their support in this meeting, and she counted on their further support in the future.

The meeting closed at 9:02pm

Forthcoming Meetings

Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 15th December 2020
Finance Committee Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 12th January 2021
Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 26th January 2021

Parish Council Meetings are open meetings;
members of the public are welcome to attend and may speak by invitation.

Signed: - 

Parish Clerk

Date 21st January 2021