

Batheaston Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Batheaston Parish Council held at 7:15pm on Tuesday 8th September 2020

Present: Councillors Patrick Vandestein (Chairman), Derek Greener, Catherine Gregory, Alison James, Andrew Lea, Tamsin May, Catherine McCarthy, Alexis Pavlou, Sue Peachey, Hannah Squire.

In attendance: Richard Maccabee (Clerk), Ward Cllr Sarah Warren (until item 7).

1. Public Participation.

1.1. A member of the public asked a question of Peter Macfadyen (Item 5), regarding the handling of Planning Applications at Frome Council; why and how it delegated these to an advisory group, and why it has reverted to a Committee.

2. **Apologies were accepted** from Councillors James Jeffrey and Matt Tovey.

3. **Declarations of interest** from Councillors.

3.1. Cllrs Day and Peachey declared an interest in relation to Planning Application 20/02592/FUL

3.2. Cllr Squire declared an interest in relation to Planning Application 20/02949/TPO

3.3. Cllr McCarthy declared an interest in respect of Batheaston New Village Hall

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1. The Clerk moved a motion, to add a motion at this point: "To approve the minutes of the meeting of Council meeting to Co-opt new Councillors held on 14th July 2020". **Council approved** this motion.

4.2. **Council approved** the minutes of the Council meeting to Co-opt new Councillors held on 14th July 2020

4.3. **Council approved** the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 14th July 2020

5. "Flatpack Democracy"

5.1. **Council received** a presentation by Peter Macfadyen, formerly a Frome Town Councillor (2011-19), where he and others transformed the Council to make it much more open and focused on residents' priorities. He is now an advocate and consultant on more effective local democracy.

Peter encouraged Councillors to see the working of a council from the community's perspective and to:

(a) do away with and simplify the formalities, which he said form barriers to involvement. An early and important step for Frome Council was to substantially simplify its standing orders.

(b) use the financial powers of the council to invest in the community. Frome introduced the people's budget concept, and increased its grant budget 10-fold to support community initiatives.

(c) practise participatory rather than representative democracy; let the community lead on priorities and use the Council to enable and facilitate this action; become a Council that seeks to say "yes", not "no".

Before taking questions, Peter expressed the view that against the background of Covid-19 and the inevitable financial pressures that the community will face, the role of parish and town councils will become more important. He urged councillors to be prepared to step up and – in doing so – be prepared to take risks to support their community.

He took questions from Councillors and a member of the public as follows:

(d) In respect of the financing of development, he said that Public Works Loans are an intrinsically very attractive means of finance.

(e) Peter commented that the degree of immediacy and directness of impact between the actions of a parish or town council and its community is one of the reasons that “flatpack democracy” works at this level, but has not been successful at higher tiers of Local Government.

(f) Peter gave his view on the characteristics of a good councillor: devoting time and effort. He also indicated that it is important to have diversity of Councillors.

(g) As first steps to engage the Community, he highlighted the need to be realistic about what the Council could and couldn't do, and seek to be able to act quickly. An early example at Frome took was to develop (for the first time) a Sports Strategy, which they did by conducting panel meetings at local sports clubs.

(h) In respect of Planning Applications, Peter noted that the Council's role is only advisory (as decisions are taken by the Unitary Authority; BANES in this case), and thus Frome sought to support residents, where appropriate, via an advisory group.

6. Anti-social Behaviour

6.1. The Chairman introduced this item. Councillors had been asked to consider ideas over the summer period to address the range of issues that constitute antisocial behaviour

6.2. Councillors were in broad agreement on the key issues: dog fouling, litter, speeding, and vandalism.

6.3. Some ideas for the Council to tackle these issues were put forward and the action was taken by the Chairman to organise for follow-up:

6.3.1. Appealing to and building community spirit; engaging schoolchildren and naming and shaming.

6.3.2. Installing the flashing signs for speeding

6.3.3. Using the “don't be a tosser” campaign that BANES have been using in Bath and Keynesham

6.3.4. Imposing a restriction that dogs should be on leads in the Secret Garden.

Cllr Vandesteen

7. Communications Planning

7.1. Cllr May gave an oral report on the current status of the new website.

7.1.1. She indicated that she and the Clerk had had a meeting and demo with Mr. Andrew Jeffryes who has been working with the supplier to develop the website.

7.1.2. She indicated that it is looking very good, and has retained some of the useful content from the existing site.

- 7.1.3. The intention will be to put it live but hidden over the next few weeks.
- 7.1.4. She indicated that she would welcome assistance from Councillors to populate the site with engaging and relevant content.
- 7.1.5. Cllr May proposes to work with Cllrs Squire and Lea to work together to develop the approach to Communications and Engagement, and bring forward proposals to the October meeting. She will invite Councillors to view a demo of a site in the interim.

Cllr May

8. Village Green and Public Works Loan application

- 8.1. Cllr Vandesteen introduced this item. He had submitted a draft to ALCA, but they had been unwilling to provide informal feedback at this stage in the process.
- 8.2. **Council resolved** to instruct the Finance Committee to complete the Public Works Loan application process to formal submission.

Cllr Gregory

9. Grant application: Batheaston New Village Hall (BNVH)

- 9.1. **Council received** a report on a pledge of £1,000 made to the Batheaston New Village Hall Trustees in November 2017. Cllr Vandesteen explained the background and the decision tree that was contained in the report.
- 9.2. **Council resolved** to make a grant to the Batheaston New Village Hall Trustees in support of completing the build of the New Village Hall, that is:
 - 9.2.1. proactive grant
 - 9.2.2. Subject to conditions
 - 9.2.3. Time-limited, to 31/3/21 (the end of the Council's Financial Year)
- 9.3. Cllr Vandesteen undertook to communicate this decision to BNVH Trustees

Cllr Vandesteen

10. Finance Committee matters

- 10.1. **Council received** a report from the Cllr Gregory, Chairman of the Finance Committee, following its meeting of 18th August 2020.
- 10.2. The Clerk presented a report of monthly transactions.
 - 10.2.1. He indicated that the current presentation is a temporary solution, pending the introduction of the business.
 - 10.2.2. He noted that expenditure had exceeded income.
 - 10.2.3. He noted that the process of submitting transactions and bank reconciliation to Council fulfilled two of the audit recommendations.
- 10.3. Cllr Gregory presented an update on the current status of the budget following an informal meeting of the Finance Committee. There had been some reduction to income due to Covid-19, and delays to the submission of the Public Works Loan mean drawdowns are unlikely to be available this financial year which necessitated the reduction of capital spend
 - 10.3.1. Cllr Vandesteen indicated that a key figure is the discretionary cash remaining which is currently £4,700 (minus the BNVH grant of £1,000 approved earlier), and he urged Councillors to recognise that this is not a large amount of

money, and that Council cannot reduce reserves further having done so in 2019/20.

10.3.2. Cllr Gregory indicated that funds for capital expenditure were no longer available for additional Christmas lights, nor for the pontoon at the Riverside.

10.4. Council received a report outlining an Action Plan to address matters raised in the Audit process from Cllr Gregory. She highlighted that this is a very challenging plan, and that assistance would be particularly welcome on risk management and reserves policy.

10.5. Cllr Vandesteen introduced the updated Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee, to include responsibility for staffing matters.

10.5.1. **Council resolved** to approve the updated Terms of Reference

10.5.2. **Council approved** Cllrs Day and Lea as new members of Finance Committee

10.6. Council approved an updated Fixed Asset Procedure presented by Cllr Gregory.

10.7. Refurbishment of the Playground

10.7.1. Cllr Gregory introduced this item, indicating that the Council has £18,000 from a Section 106 fund, to be spent by January 2022. While this may seem a long time, it is clear that the project requires 3 or more months of planning; and 3 to 6 months to undertake, this latter being ideally undertaken in Spring 2021.

10.7.2. Council **resolved** that Cllr Lea will oversee the refurbishment of the Playground, obtaining grant funding to supplement the Council's own funds.

11. Planning

11.1. The Chairman noted that there had been a large number of planning application from Bath and North East Somerset Council since the previous meeting. He indicated his intention to focus only on the one, 20/03054/OUT, that had been indicated as noteworthy in informal consultation amongst Councillors. Council assented.

11.1.1. Councillors discussed this application. As an outline application, there is relatively little detail

11.1.2. **Council resolved** to request more information from Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Clerk

11.2. Council resolved not to object to any of the other Planning Applications.

Clerk

11.3. Council noted the outcome of Planning Applications from Bath and North East Somerset Council.

11.3.1. All decisions were in line with the recommendations given by the Council.

11.4. Council reviewed the proposal from Bath and North East Somerset Council to name the new street formed by the development of the site of the house The Copse in Bannerdown Road as "The Copse".

11.4.1. Council indicated that it had no objection to this.

11.4.2. It was however noted that it would be preferable if the house numbering could be sequential, along Bannerdown Road, to avoid confusion.

Clerk

12. Clerk's report.

12.1. Council received a report from the Clerk. The following items were noted:

12.1.1. That a booking from the charity "Hope and Homes" had mistakenly be made free-of-charge. The Clerk explained that he had not understood that its focus is on benefit outside the Parish. He indicated that he would develop clear criteria to apply henceforth.

Clerk

12.1.2. The Riverside Toilets will be open by Saturday 11th September, which will be in time for the Bathscape walk.

12.1.3. The invitation from the Valley Parishes Alliance for the Council to re-new its membership. Cllr Greener explained the background; that this is a useful forum, but discussions often range beyond the Parish's boundaries. The Bathavon North Forum was mentioned as a valuable meeting with direct relevance to the Parish. It was agreed that the Council should review its external engagement.

Clerk

12.1.4. Councillors' attention was drawn to the need to play their part in setting up the new email accounts.

12.2. Council resolved to accept the proposed meeting schedule for the formal meetings of Council and the Finance Committee in 2021.

13. Chairman's report.

13.1. The chair re-iterated the new governance process of preparing before the meeting so as to have informed debate and decision-making at meeting. He noted there had been limited engagement with the process this time and urged councillors to take up the process.

Meeting close at 21:21

Upcoming Meetings: -

Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 6^h October 2020

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

Signed: -



Parish Clerk

Date issued: 3rd September 2020