



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ROMSLEY PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 7TH MAY 2024, 7.00PM AT ST KENELMS CHURCH HALL

PRESENT: Cllr. Antal, Cllr. Macaulay, Cllr. Powell, Cllr. Shaw, Cllr. Strain, Cllr. Swift, and Cllr. Weston

ALSO, PRESENT: Ruth Mullett, Clerk, and four members of the public

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

1.1 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr. Weston as Chair. Cllr. Weston duly signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. APOLOGIES

2.1 None.

3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

3.1 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr. Swift as Vice Chair.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 Chair asked all members present to declare any personal or prejudicial interest on any items on the agenda.

Other Disclosable Interest

Cllr. Swift and Cllr. Shaw – member of the Severn Trent Residents Working Party

CHAIR ADJOURNED THE MEETING FOR AN 'OPEN SURGERY' TO ENABLE RESIDENTS TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES WITH THEIR COUNCILLORS AND IDENTIFY MATTERS OF CONCERN RELATING TO THE AGENDA, THIS DOES NOT FORM PART OF THE FORMAL MEETING

5. DISPENSATIONS

5.1 To consider any requests for a dispensation from a member who may have a DPI or ODI to allow them to stay/speak in the meeting during the consideration of the item.

None

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S

6.1 Apologies were received from Cllr. May and Cllr. Nock.

7. COUNTY COUNCILLOR

ROMSLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Signature

7.1 As 6.1 above.

8. **INSURANCE**

8.1 It was confirmed all insurance arrangement cover is in place in respect of all insurable risks.

9. **ASSET REGISTER**

9.1 Asset Register is up to date with regards the Council's assets and has been reviewed by the Internal Auditor.

10. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

10.1 All council policies, procedures, and practices in respect of its obligations under the Freedom of Information, GDPR and data protection legislation were reviewed, and adequate policies are in place.

11. **SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

11.1 This item was deferred to next month.

12. **EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES**

12.1 All employment procedures were reviewed and in place.

13. **STANDING ORDERS**

13.1 Standing Orders were noted with no amendments.

14. **CODE OF CONDUCT**

14.1 Councillor were reminded of continual adherence to the Code of Conduct.

15. **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

15.1 New Financial Regulations were received prior to the meeting. It was agreed for the Finance Working Party to arrange a meeting to review them.

16. **RISK ASSESSMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL POLICY**

16.1 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Risk Assessment and Internal Control Policy for 2024-25.

17. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

17.1 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 2ND April 2024 be signed as a correct record, the Chair duly signed.

18. **FINANCE**

18.1 **Accounts for payment** - it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments.

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Ruth Mullett | Clerk's expenses | £113.95 |
| HMRC | Payroll Taxes Due | £375.34 |
| Worcs CALC | Subscription | £1187.73 |
| Bromsgrove DC | Romstock Licence | £70.00 |
| Gallagher Insurance | Container insurance | £46.07 |

| | | |
|--|--------------|----------|
| Bromsgrove DC | Bin emptying | £1341.84 |
| Direct debits | | |
| Npower | Electricity | £478.74 |
| E.On Next | Electricity | £127.90 |
| Npower Electricity | Electricity | £151.82 |
| Corporate Card | Various | £671.17 |
| Cllr. Swift and Cllr. Strain to approve the online payments. | | |

To confirm receipt of: -

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Worcestershire CC | Lengthsman Grant | £304.00 |
| Bromsgrove DC | Underpaid precept | £2912.50 |
| HMRC | VAT refund | £8652.13 |
| Various | Allotment rent | £340.00 |
| Bromsgrove DC | Half yearly precept | £27837.50 |
| Worcestershire CC | Lengthsman Grant | £440.75 |
| Worcestershire CC | Lengthsman Grant | £421.25 |

- 18.2 **Bank Reconciliation Statement** – this item was deferred.
- 18.3 **Update from Finance Working Party:** - a detailed update from the Finance Working Party was received and this is attached as Appendix 1.
- 18.4 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the following recommendations from the Finance Working Group: -
- A councillor from the working group to conduct monthly internal financial control check – it was agreed for Cllr. Strain to conduct the check for May 2024.
 - It was unanimously **RESOLVED** not to make a grant to Romsley and Hunnington Show
 - It was unanimously **RESOLVED** not to make a grant to Friends of Romsley and Hunnington.
- 18.5 **Internal Auditor** - it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the Internal Audit Report produced by John Benner for 2023/24 with no actions arising from the report.
- 18.6 **Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24** - To approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, the Annual Governance Statement for financial year to 31/03/2024. - Councillors reviewed S1 AGAR, the Annual Governance Statement which had been issued in advance of the meeting and responded 'YES' to each of the first eight assertions, 'N/A' to the ninth assertion. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Clerk sign.
- 18.7 To approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, the Annual Accounting Statements for the financial year to 31/03/2024. Councillors reviewed S2 AGAR, the Accounting Statements 2023/24 which had been circulated as part of the agenda. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Clerk/RFO sign.
- 18.8 It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the dates for the Public Inspection of the Accounts commencing on 3rd June 2024 to 12th July 2024. Clerk to place a copy on the noticeboard and website.

19. PLANNING MATTERS

19.1 District Council Decisions

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Planning Type: | Full Application |
| Planning Reference: | 22/00563/FUL |
| Proposal: | Retrospective planning application for approval to retain the existing lodge building located on the land of St Kenelms Woodyard for a temporary three-year period |
| Location: | St Kenelms Woodyard, Uffmoor Lane, Romsley |
| Decision: | Granted |

19.2 Planning Applications for Parish Council Comments

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|----------------------------|---|
| Planning Type: | Full Application |
| Planning Reference: | 24/00229/FUL |
| Proposal: | Retention of nine storage containers |
| Location: | Land at Backlane Farm, St Kenelms Road, Romsley |
| Decision: | No objections |

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Planning Type: | Full Application |
| Decision: | No objections |

19.3 Appeals

None

20. PLAYING FIELD/COMMUNITY AREAS

20.1 **Play area upgrade** – no progress since last meeting.

20.2 **Memorial for Nigel Williamson** – it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the circular sign with the colour to be decided once samples have been received.

21. WINWOOD HEATH ALLOTMENTS

21.1 Councillor visited the allotment today and there were numerous complaints about rubbish being dumped on other tenants' plots. It was agreed for a letter to be drafted and sent to all tenants. The grass is also in urgent need of cutting.

22. ROADS/FOOTPATHS/TRAFFIC/HIGHWAYS

22.1 Confirmation had been received that we had been awarded a grant application for two VAS signs, one to be situated by the Swallows Nest the other opposite The Sun.

23. PARISH LENGTHSMAN/MAINTENANCE

23.1 **Lengthsman** – nothing to report.

23.2 **Maintenance** – in attendance but nothing to report.

ROMSLEY PARISH COUNCIL

May 2024

Signature

24. **COMMUNICATION**

24.1 The Communication Working Party met on 11th April and the following recommendations were **RESOLVED**: -

- a) Full agendas to be posted on all noticeboards not just the notice of the meeting.
- b) A photographer to be at all events to capture photos for the newsletter/social media and for there to be a parish council more of a parish council profile.
- c) To say in the newsletter that if anyone or has specific reasons for requesting would like a paper copy of the agenda and minutes to contact the Clerk.
- d) For a Social Media Plan to be drawn up.

25. **EVENTS PLANNING**

25.1 **Romstock**

- To ensure the medics bring all equipment for the event.
- Sadly, we have lost the use of our regular car park but are looking for other options.
- To arrange a Working Party Meeting to discuss the set-up and event on the day including a rota and then arrange a review meeting with Social Eats.
- Ticket sales are progressing well.
- A request had been received for a sponsorship opportunity at Romstock and this is being research further.

25.2 **St Kenelm's Day**

25.2 It was agreed to organise a review meeting after Romstock and post a Save the Date on social media.

26. **TO RECEIVE CLERK'S REPORT**

26.1 Nothing to report.

27. **TO RECEIVE REPORT OF PARISH COUNCILLORS –**

Cllr. Swift – fly-tipping to be an urgent item on the next agenda.

Cllr. Shaw – gave an update of the meeting with Severn Trent Volunteer Group and this will be an agenda item next month to hopefully agree dates and locations for the volunteer days.

Cllr. Shaw – confirmed confirmation had been received from Severn Trent that the drainage issue at the playing fields had been resolved.

28. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – 5th June 2024, 7.00pm at St Kenelm's Church Hall, 7.00pm.

Meeting closed at 20.54.

Romsley Parish Council

Finance Working Group update

The first meeting of the working group was held following the Parish Council meeting in April where Councillors proposed and agreed that the working group should be established.

Its purpose is to review and make proposals to the full council on all finance related matters including the annual budget, precept, grant applications, unforeseen and emergency expenditure.

The working group consists of 4 councillors and the clerk.

Having reviewed the groups responsibilities it was felt appropriate that the monthly bank reconciliation and a regular review of the full accounts were also included. As such the Working group will meet on a quarterly basis.

An agenda had been drafted and comprised of the following topics:

- A full financial update – where are we now?
- A review of the play area project costs
- Playground repairs and maintenance needs
- A review of the RPC – Grant Application policy
- Current grant application requests

Financial review

Updated/year end reports had been provided by the Clerk which included the profit and loss statements, balance sheet and the 2024/25 budget.

These statements show a healthy profit and bank balance for the full financial year.

It was however highlighted that the figures were distorted due to the following reasons.

- a. A precept payment for 2024/25 had been received early from BDC. (£27,837.50)
- b. The S106 funds from BDC for the play area having not yet been fully spent. (£85,814.88)

A discussion was had regarding an appropriate level of reserve (i.e. minimum available funds) and the Clerk confirmed that any balance should not be above the annual precept level unless allocated for specific projects. Councillors were also

informed that the reserve should always be sufficient to cover all governance costs including administration and employment requirements as well as contingencies.

It was agreed that a value of approx. £30K was seen to be an appropriate minimum value although further details are required in respect to employment liabilities.

Having reviewed all financial information available, which has been forwarded to the external auditors, it was felt that the accounts were in a good order, are being managed well with the nett balance being able to cover a limited amount of emergency expenditure requirements.

Playground project

A report had been distributed and was discussed that showed a full breakdown of the costs for phase 1 of the park upgrade, namely the play area.

The costs are inline with the budgeted value of £96,500 with a balance of £76,000 (plus the recently added drainage costs) still to be paid.

Not related to the playground project but relevant to the park is a proposal to replace the car park perimeter fencing which is rotten and broken in several areas. Additionally, a proposal was made to repair the metal fence at the bottom of the playing field which is falling over.

These maintenance requirements have not been budgeted for but are seen as a priority given current conditions and should be completed as soon as possibly, ideally within the current financial year.

Quotations are needed from 3 contractors and when costs are known a proposal will be put to the full council.

RPC – Grant application policy

A copy of the policy had been distributed and was discussed. It was agreed that the policy was still relevant and fit for purpose although some minor changes should be considered including the updating of postal address and the parish council logo.

Grant Applications

The two grant applications that the Parish Council have received were discussed. These are for Romsley & Hunnington Village show (£500) and the Friends of Romsley & Hunnington show (£2,000).

Finally, it was agreed that the working group should, at the next meeting, begin the process of drafting a “Reserve Policy” for consideration by the full council.

In summary, this was a very informative meeting which enabled councillors to raise many questions and obtain greater insight into what is considered to be our main responsibility – i.e. the management of taxpayer funds.

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Grant applications

1. Romsley & Hunnington Village show (£500)

Having reviewed both the application and the Councils Grant Application Policy the Working Group’s proposal is that the application is not approved as no funding for grants had been included in the 2024/25 budget.

2. Friends of Romsley & Hunnington show (£2,000)

Again, having reviewed both the application and the Councils Grant Application Policy the Working Group’s proposal is that the application is not approved as no funding for grants had been included in the 2024/25 budget.

However, it is further proposed that the Council offers FoR&H free of charge the use of our marquee, fencing, cones, and any other equipment we have.

