

HAYDON WICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Haydon Wick Parish Council Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 28th February 2023 at 8.00pm held at Parish Council Offices, Thames Avenue, Swindon, SN25 1QQ.

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS: Councillors, V Manro (Chairman), E Baker Lee, A John, S Fateru, L Brown, J Fuller, R Hailstone, S Heyes, A John, B Patrick-Okoh, R Ross, A Roupelis, L Rhys-Jones and R Venkatesh

OFFICERS: Chief Officer/Clerk & RFO, Georgina Morgan-Denn
Finance Officer/ Deputy RFO, Jodie Smart
Head of Parks & Open Spaces, Dave Hunt
Community Development Officer, Caroline Hunt

FC 209 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Councillors D Rodgers, S McDermott, S Callen (Personal Commitments).
There were no apologies from Councillor K T Naik.

FC 210 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none given.

FC 211 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one (1) member of public present who had sent in the following questions in advance and were responded to prior to the meeting:

1) Would you agree that consultation with the public has not been adhered to. Info on the GMF was issued on the Thursday 23/2/2023 and the full council meeting is on the 28/2/2023. To me it's not enough time.

No I wouldn't agree. The public consultation is done after the Council resolution to seek permission. This is laid out in a timeline provided to us by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The formal resolution includes a statement about seeking public consultation.

2) Would you agree that to rush through permission to borrow is the wrong time of year. Many councillors may not be around after the oncoming elections? Should this decision be left until later? Let me just state that the following answer is my personal opinion as an experienced Council Officer. No, I don't agree. This project has been in the pipeline for 2+ years so I wouldn't say that it has been rushed. It has been an aspiration of the Council for quite some time and had considerable time and money spent on it to date. To put off all decision because elections are 2-3 months away would leave the Council in what I would call 'lame duck' months and that's not how we operate in local government.

3). Would you agree that public support is necessary when increasing the Precept to fund Borrowing? Yes, absolutely I would agree, the public consultation will go ahead as soon as possible in the event that Council make the resolution this evening.

4) Re Para 4 of the report. Option 2 was discussed and recommended by the Finance and Extraordinary council to be the preferred choice, are you proposing to ignore this option and increase further? Absolutely not, option 2 was resolved at the following Full Council meeting and that is what our precept demand to SBC has stated.

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5) Will you ask for the whole loan or take it in stages? We will take it in stages to ensure that we do not 'draw down' more than is required.

6) I am puzzled at the figure £64,0950.10+vat which in my book = £76,9068.12, you then add a further £64,000 contingency plus a further £64,000 for a project engineer. Adding that up =£89,7068.12 I am right or wrong? Technically you are right, but as a local authority we will reclaim VAT from HMRC and therefore will (during those large invoice periods) make monthly reclaims to ensure our cashflow is steady. HMRC is thankfully quite swift at processing refunds. Council would not want to borrow the VAT funds to then have them refunded by HMRC.

The resident then delivered a further statement to the meeting which suggested the Council postponed any decision for two years to build up reserves to lower the overall figure that it needs to borrow.

FC 212

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman read out a Thank You note from an attendee from a recent Afternoon Tea for the over 60s, put on recently as part of the Council's reducing loneliness and isolation programme. The resident said: *"I came to the afternoon tea organised on the 25th February. I am widowed, disabled and 70 this year! May I say thank you. I do not get out much but the effort put in and the quality, quantity and superb way it was displayed was excellent. Thank you so much."*

FC 213

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members confirmed as a true record the minutes of meeting held on 24th January 2023 and 14th February 2023 and the Chairman signed the minutes accordingly.

Proposed: Councillor A John Seconded: Councillor B Patrick-Okoh
Vote: Agreed with three (3) Abstentions.

RESOLVED: Members confirmed as a true record the minutes of meetings held on 24th January 2023.

Proposed: Councillor L Brown Seconded: Councillor L Rhys-Jones
Vote: Agreed with one (1) Abstention.

RESOLVED: Members confirmed as a true record the minutes of meetings held on 14th February 2023.

FC 214

SWINDON BOROUGH WARD COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor V Manro (Priory Vale) – Cityfibre has generally made good on the verges but let the Ward Councillors know if any areas need some work.

Councillor J Jackson (Haydon Wick) – Nothing to report.

Councillor S Heyes (St Andrews) – Cityfibre should be moving on from the parish in a couple of weeks.

FC 215

COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Councillor J Jackson – Nothing to report.

Councillor S Fateru – Nothing to report.

Councillor J Fuller – Nothing to report.

Councillor B Patrick-Okoh – Nothing to report.

Councillor A John – Nothing to report.

Councillor A Roupelis – Nothing to report.

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Councillor S Heyes – Nothing to report.

Councillor R Ross – attended both Afternoon Teas and wanted to thank and acknowledge the hard work of all staff put in and gave up their weekends to work at the events. Notified members of a litter pick being organised by her neighbours and encouraged councillors to join them on Thamesdown Drive.

Councillor L Brown – delighted to report the woodpeckers are back in Bluebell Copse. Asked a Ward Councillor to investigate the excessive lighting at Fessey House and could the number of hours be reduced. *Councillor J Jackson will look into it.*

Councillor R Hailstone – attended a remote SBC Standards Meeting and asked if the Borough Councillor training programme could be extended to Parish Councillors.

Councillor R Venkatesh – Nothing to report.

Councillor L Rhys-Jones – Cityfibre has not sorted the verges in her street and warning that there are a lot of foxes around during the day.

Councillor E Baker Lee – Nothing to report.

Councillor V Manro – recently attended the skate event with Councillor Roupelis and extended his thanks to the Officers for organising the event with ATP - they are proving to be a success

FC 216

CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

FC 217

FINANCIAL REPORTS

FC 217A

Members considered and noted the Income & Expenditure Reports for Month 10 – January 2023.

FC 217B

Members considered and noted the Bank Statements and Bank Reconciliations for Month 10 – January 2023.

FC 217C

Members discussed and approved January and February 2023 expenditure under purchase daybook references 2644-2713 and cashbook reference 311. The total of payments for approval is £167,809.55.

Proposed: Councillor E Baker Lee Seconded: Councillor L Rhys-Jones
Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve January and February 2023 expenditure under purchase daybook references 2644-2713 and cashbook reference 31. The total of payments for approval is £167,809.55.

FC 217D

Members received and approved the January 2023 payments using the credit card - £2,362.31 and Petty Cash - £52.12.

Proposed: Councillor L Brown Seconded: Councillor S Heyes
Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the January 2023 payments using the credit card at £2,362.31 and Petty Cash at £52.12.

FC 217E

Members considered and noted the January CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund Factsheet.

FC 218

POLICY UPDATES– FLAG HOISITING

Members received and adopted the revised flag hoisting policy.

Proposed: Councillor A John Seconded: Councillor R Ross
Vote: Agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: To adopt the revised flag hoisting policy.

FC 219

HAYDON WICK LIVING – REVIEW OF SBC AND MP ARTICLES

Members received a report from the Editor and agreed to the recommendation which is to review the space for articles submitted by SBC Ward Councillors and the MP on a bi-annual basis with effect from August 2023 and the next review being August 2025.

**Proposed: Councillor E Baker Lee Seconded: Councillor L Rhys-Jones
Vote: Agreed with one (1) Abstention.**

RESOLVED: To review the spaces for articles submitted by SBC Ward Councillors and the MP on a bi-annual basis with effect from August 2023 and the next review being August 2025.

FC 220

PARKS & OPEN SPACES GROUNDS MAINTENANCE FACILITY

Members received the Officers' report regarding the Grounds Maintenance Facility (GMF). It was noted that the report also contained feedback from some Councillors who had provided their observations with why Council should progress with the project.

The report explained why an improved GMF was needed now since the current facilities were inadequate for the current size of the team and operation. The Parks & Open Spaces service delivers an enhanced grounds maintenance programme with an operational expenditure of more than half of million pounds per annum. The report explained that nearly £100k had already been spent in professional fees and a significant amount of time and effort from Councillors and Staff so far. The report detailed why the current facilities were only ever meant to be a temporary solution following SBC's decision to devolve many of its grounds maintenance services to parishes in 2017. The report explained how this Council has a duty of care to its employees to provide them with suitable working and welfare conditions. The meeting heard how other parish councils in Swindon have superior facilities for their grounds maintenance teams and how our valued and experienced workforce may choose to move to those parishes with better facilities.

Some Councillors raised concerns about the repayment terms of the loan and interest rates being higher than originally estimated when the Council embarked on the project two years ago. It was suggested that the project was paused for a further 1-2 years and to get more quotes and wait for the interest rates to reduce. The meeting considered that if the Council delayed further there was no guarantee that the interest or inflation rates would improve, and further delays could see the cost of materials and resources rising even more. There was also concern that in future years the precept may be capped and Council may not be able to support the repayments without increasing the precept further. It was noted that Government would be unlikely to cap parishes during the lifespan of the loan - unlike unitary authorities who are already capped.

Members heard why the rental route was not be a viable because the rent payable would be comparable with the Public Works Loan repayments. Furthermore, Council would not have its own facility at the end of the loan term nor any security of tenure.

Some Members were concerned that there had only been one quote submitted and the project should be postponed to allow for a retendering process to demonstrate best value. However, it was noted that four companies had been approached and a competitive tendering process was followed. The meeting heard how decisions not to tender do happen and that does not necessarily mean it was not a robust process. Members were reminded of the Council's

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tendering process and its previous decision, as a corporate body, to suspend Financial Regulations/Standing Orders (FC 199 / February 2022) following a competitive Call for Dialogue exercise, which was advertised widely on the government Public Contracts Finder database Thereby showing Council could show due diligence in the last two years.

It was acknowledged that the Council had recently been awarded at Local Council Quality Gold for a reason. That award demonstrated that the Council does a thorough job and exceeds standards when it delivers its services. It was noted that not to proceed now would be a disservice to the Council.

The meeting also heard that the £64,000 allocated to a Project Manager was likely to be a lot lower, 10% of the total contract amount was recommended to include at this stage. The Council will drawdown the loan in stages and the final amount needed could be lower. The possibility to take a short-term loan whilst interest rates reduced was also raised. It was responded that short-term loans were not advised for local authorities for such high value.

The Resident left the meeting at 20.35.

Members also considered if the decision should be deferred until after the May elections as the decision this evening will be a huge investment for the future Council to take on.

The Chairman concluded the discussion and the meeting noted that it had been a long two years following a robust process. Councillors clearly do not want their staff to suffer any longer than is necessary and they are aware that the temporary facility is no longer fit for purpose. There are concerns around the table about the cost, the repayments and verifying any questions about achieving best value. Council now needs to take a step forward with the project and with no suggestions or alternative options to consider asked for a Proposer and Seconder to go to a vote. Councillor R Hailstone Proposed and Councillor E Baker Lee Seconded. Members then voted on the 12 proposals and agreed to proceed with eight (8) For, five (5) Against and one (1) Abstention.

Proposed: Councillor R Hailstone Seconded: Councillor E Baker Lee
Vote: Agreed with eight (8) For, five (5) Against and one (1) abstention.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To proceed with appointing Affleck Electrical Ltd for the building of the Grounds Maintenance Facility at a cost of £640,590.10 + VAT.**
- 2. To proceed with allocating a 10% project contingency amount of £64,000.00 to offset against any unexpected occurrences.**
- 3. To appoint an external Project Manager up to the value of £64,000.00 and to give delegated authority to the Chief Officer to progress with their appointment up to that amount.**
- 4. To seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a Public Works Loan of £768,590 over the borrowing term of 30 years for the building of a Grounds Maintenance Facility (grand total of points 1-3 above). The annual loan repayments will come to around £49,038. It is also intended to increase the Council Tax Precept for the purpose of the loan repayments by 3.34% which is the equivalent of an additional £4.18 a year. This will be subject to a Precept increase consultation.**

5. To note that before any loan can be applied for, a public consultation must run to raise awareness of the Council's intention to apply for a loan.
6. To note that if the Public Works Loan is approved, the Council could draw down the loan in stages, as required and therefore, the full amount may not be required.
7. To note that the build timeline is 30 weeks from the date of awarding the contract, which brings completion to mid-October 2023.
8. To allocate the current balance (minus £1,000 for bus shelter repairs required) in the CIL EMR, £19,275 to cover the temporary relocation costs to Waterside Depot and/or Ventnor Close enhancements and GMF legal fees. This may reduce the total amount required to drawn down from the Public Works Loan.
9. To appoint a solicitor to review both contracts (Design & Build and Minor Works with Contractors Design) to the value of £5,000.00 (£2,500.00 each contract) and give delegated authority to the Chief Officer to progress. To be met from CIL EMR budget.
10. To proceed with the temporary move to Waterside Depot up to a cost of £20,000.00 per annum with a one-month tenancy notice period.
11. To note if the space at Waterside is shared with St Andrews Parish Council, the £20,000 cost may be halved.
12. To continue with contract and pricing negotiations with SBC with a view to occupying the space at Waterside Depot from 3rd April 2023.

FC 221

MARCH MEETING DATES

Members noted the March meeting dates:

7th Community Development (7.30pm)

14th Parks & Open Spaces (7.30pm)

21st King George V Trust Annual Meeting (6.30pm)

21st Planning & Highways (7.00pm)

21st Full Council (8.00pm)

28th Annual Parish Meeting & Community Networking Event (6.00pm)

FC 222

ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

To be passed to the Chief Officer in advance of the next meeting on Tuesday 21st March 2023.

FC 223

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS

To resolve in accordance with Standing Order 3 (d) that 'in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted and in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw'. Reason: Contractual.

FC 224

TREE MAINTENANCE

The meeting agreed to push back on any tree maintenance, covered under the SBC/Parishes Transfer of Services Deed, and leave the work to SBC Tree Department.

The meeting closed at 21.15.

Chairman _____

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