

HAYDON WICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Haydon Wick Parish Council held on Tuesday 24th January 2023 at 7.30pm held at Parish Council Offices, Thames Avenue, Swindon, SN25 1QQ.

ATTENDANCE

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

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

FC 176 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and noted from Councillor D Rodgers (Personal Commitments) and Councillor R Ross (Work Commitments).
No apologies were received from Councillor K Naik.

FC 177 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none given.

FC 178 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

One (1) member of public submitted some questions in advance and at the meeting.

A) **Budget Reserves - With the overspend figure this year what do you anticipate the reserve figure to be?** With the projected overspend of £112,624 this will leave approximately £422,140 in General Reserves.
Can we have the reserve figure published regularly? To be discussed with the Chief Officer.

What amount will the parish use as a monthly reserve, will it be based on the original budget setting? Or will it be a revised figure reflecting previous year's figures thus allowing for contingencies? The monthly reserve is calculated on the budget set for that year. Setting the budget year on year considers the previous year's activity and any known planned activity plus a contingency where appropriate. For your information the reserve stated above would leave 4.49 months reserve for 2023/24 based on the current budgets set for that year, yet to be agreed by Full Council.

Could the Reserve Figure be identified in the Council's Standing Orders – we use the Council's Reserves Policy for this which is brought to the Council each year as part of the budget setting process.

B) **Blunsdon Road Deed of Variation - if the Reversion was enacted would any legal cost incurred by the Parish Council be refunded.**
Highly unlikely but will ask the question to the legal department.

FC 179 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

All Councillors were reminded of the BEST – Be a Better You – event in February and encouraged members to attend to support the youth initiative.
Action: Chief Officer to resend the invitation. Thank You cards from the Christmas parcel recipients were passed around the table.

FC 180

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members confirmed as a true record the minutes of meeting held on 13th December 2022 and the Chairman signed the minutes accordingly.

Proposed: Councillor B Patrick- Seconded: Councillor L Rhys-Jones Okoh

Vote: Agreed with six (6) abstentions.

RESOLVED: Members confirmed as a true record the minutes of meetings held on Tuesday 13th December 2022.

FC 181

SWINDON BOROUGH WARD (SBC) COUNCILLOR REPORTS

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

Councillor S Heyes (St Andrews): Interviewed by Wiltshire BBC following a proposal he championed at SBC pressing for accessible play in all of Swindon's play parks. Pleased to be able to report that both St Andrews and Haydon Wick are doing this. Also mentioned skatepark in the parish and outdoor gym in St Andrews widening the audience for play areas to older residents and not just younger people.

Councillor V Manro (Priory Vale): Thames Water has committed to renewing the sewage main and confirming the route they will take. Some Parish Councillors attended the Thames Water drop in at the Tawny Owl pub and heard how the above works will take a year to complete and reported the forthcoming improvements were well received. There is a presentation available which will be shared with members. Action: *Chairman to circulate.*

FC 182

COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Councillor S Heyes: Nothing to report.

Councillor S Callen: Has a bin request for Mazurek Way to be taken to a future Parks & Open Spaces Committee meeting and wanted to thank the Team for cutting back the hedges and litter picking within that area. Action: *Deputy Clerk to add to future meeting.*

Councillor L Rhys Jones: Requested an update on City Fibre works and was told to escalate any queries to Ward Councillors.

Councillor R Hailstone: Attended Thames Water presentation that showed they were keen to reinstate the river but there is a disagreement with the Environmental Agency about the actual number of fish that died.

Councillor S McDermott: Magazine report later.

Councillor J Fuller: Raised the state of potholes and line markings across the Parish and in Swindon.

Councillor R Venkatesh: Nothing to report.

Councillor V Manro: Enhanced hedge work is looking good and should make ongoing work a little easier.

Councillor B Patrick-Okoh: Nothing to report.

Councillor J Jackson: Nothing to report.

Councillor L Brown: Nothing to report.

Councillor A John: Attended Thames Water presentation and wants to know definitive number of fish/wildlife affected.

Councillor E Baker Lee: Was in East Swindon and surprised by how unkempt the area was. Queried the pricing of recent fish and chip events as there is a disparity in the costings. *Officers to investigate.*

Councillor A Roupelis: Nothing to report.

Councillor S Fateru: Nothing to report.

FC 183

CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

Attended Swindon Borough Council Clerk's Forum on Monday 23rd January
topics included:

- A) Confirmation that a boundary review would be taking place in Swindon from late 2023 to 2024. It was made clear this was not a CGR but a ward/borough review triggered by the Local Government Boundary Commission for some wards, including St Andrews and Wroughton among others where there are democratic anomalies. While not directly involving parishes it might have some impacts for those within those areas. It wasn't made clear why this couldn't be expanded to a CGR if they're doing the work anyway but then again, I don't really know what's involved (and SBC has no timetable or precise details that they are willing to share yet).
- B) Also confirmed that the SBC budget is released Tuesday at 6pm with cuts in some areas but there no service devolvement to parishes in 2023/24 but as previously reported there will be for 2024/25. Discussions will be led by Brian Pinchbeck and take place after the May elections as there could be significant changes in the administration.
- C) The 'guinea pig' work looking into a new system for reporting parish issues, communicating and following up etc – similar to the hotline currently provided to Members – is nearly ready to test with end users. I am on the working party and see how that goes, probably starting mid Feb.
- D) Presentation from Elections Team to ask Parishes to promote the legislative requirement to bring photo ID when voting. Materials are being sent and we will share messaging – hoping to get something in our next magazine.
- E) Presentation from Wiltshire & Swindon Prepared asking Parishes to take part in registering a community hub for emergencies in local area. Explained that our parish and others already have community hubs designated for emergencies but expressed interest to be involved and a formal proposal detailing the benefits will come to future meeting.
- F) Explanation of recent miscommunication surrounding the recent Chairs & Clerks meeting when no clerks were invited. Then at the meeting those present were informed it wasn't a meeting for clerks (despite the name!). Apparently, Committee Services function is very depleted so errors were made in the invitation that went out. It was confirmed that all future meetings do include Clerks and future meeting invitations will reflect that.

FC 184

PARKS & OPEN SPACES GROUNDS MAINTENANCE FACILITY

Members received a verbal update from the Grounds Maintenance Facility Working Party. The tender documents are due to be received back by Friday 27th January 2023. One of the four interested parties has confirmed this week that they will not be tendering for the project. The planning application for temporary relocation to Ventnor Close has been submitted. In the meantime, Officers visited a space at SBC's Waterside Depot that is available immediately for temporary relocation of the Parks & Open Spaces Team. The thought is to still progress with enhancements to the site at Ventnor Close (bottom vehicle gate, improved car parking and placement of a shipping container) but for operational reasons, such as collecting fuel, tipping, and washing down vehicles. Costs and potential terms of contract are still being negotiated with SBC. There is a Grounds Maintenance Facility Working Party set for Tuesday 31st January to review the tender documents and discuss next steps ready to report to Parks & Open Spaces and Full Council in February. The building

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design planning application for the Facility at Goodearl has also been submitted.

FC 185

LEGAL MATTERS

Members considered and agreed to sign the Deed of Variation and Supplemental Lease for the Land at Blunsdon Road, Haydon Wick as presented. The Chairman and Chief Officer signed and witnessed the document.

**Proposed: Councillor L Rhys Jones Seconded: Councillor R Hailstone
Vote: Agreed unanimously.**

RESOLVED: For the Chairman to sign Deed of Variation and Supplemental Lease for the Land at Blunsdon Road, Haydon Wick.

FC 186

BUDGET SETTING 2023/2024

Members received a verbal report following the recent Budget Working Party held on 10th January 2023. Discussion included:

- A) Community choices – reduced from £12k to £8k but with other projects budgeted for the Council is still delivering a lot in the community.
- B) Postponed Bus EMR to 2024 – will reinstate next financial year.
- C) Elections – keep £19k in the budget for any contested elections and repurpose for another project if not required.
- D) Play Area refurbishment – there are some in EMRs (£23k) so we have reduced Trent Road refurb that same amount.
- E) Climate Change reduced to £2.5k which releases £7.5k and intention is to build funds up as work gains momentum.

Projections for the current financial year have been given a full review and based on information available (not withstanding any major impacts in the last quarter) and reduced the projected use of General Reserves from the budgeted £176k to around £112k. This in turn should assist with the subsidy for 2023/24.

Currently calculating next year's budget with a £130k subsidy – this represents a precept rise of under 10% but still working on the budget to see if this can be reduced further. With a £130k subsidy from General Reserves that would leave just over £4k over the minimum three months level of reserves.

It was acknowledged that setting the budget in the next few weeks may result in the precept rise being under the rate of inflation - but 9% would be better as this is under £1 per month for all the services provided by the Parish Council and represents good value for residents. Some Councillors would like to see the precept reduced further to around 7% but the meeting acknowledged this could see some dramatic changes to the level of services currently being delivered. There was a discussion about focusing on the monetary rise and not the percentage rise as this is a misleading statistic however the local press use percentages for the obvious reason. There was a discussion about Trent Road play area refurbishment and if it could be deferred for another year until there are sufficient funds to do it fully. Whilst others considered setting a budget and seeing what could be achieved for it. It was noted that next year's budget will need another subsidy from the General Reserves so to be cautious about deferring projects as next year's budget will be equally difficult to balance.

The discussion was concluded with an interim vote to on an acceptable precept rise to give Officers guidance when presenting the final budget to Council in February.

Proposed: Councillor E Baker Lee Seconded: Councillor S Fateru
Vote: Agreed with three (3) against.

RESOLVED: To present a draft budget to Council in February with precept increase of no more than 9%.

FC 187

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AMENDMENT

Members received a recommendation from the Finance & Policy Committee and agreed to amend financial regulation 6.1 To permit the authorisation by the Chief Officer/Clerk of any variable Direct Debits for utility suppliers (energy, telephone, and water).

Proposed: Councillor S Callen Seconded: Councillor A Roupelis
Vote: Agreed Unanimously.

RESOLVED: To amend Financial Regulation 6.1 To permit the authorisation by the Chief Officer/Clerk of any variable Direct Debits for utility suppliers (energy, telephone, and water).

FC 188

MEDIA POLICY & PRE-ELECTION (PURDAH) REMINDER

Members received a reminder about the Council's Media Policy especially as the Council approaches a pre-election period from Wednesday 22nd March 2023 to Thursday 4th May 2023 inclusive. Further, guidance was given for Members intending to produce any election material or press releases in which their work as a Parish Councillor was described. Members noted that this material must be signed off by the Chief Officer/Clerk. Councillors may wish to send their material to colleagues to proofread before sending to the Chief Officer. The report also included a section concerning staff conduct during the pre-election period requiring them to be mindful of the Council's Member/Officer Protocol and to always represent the Council's interests to most benefit and avoid damaging the reputation of the Council. Officers must perform their duties with political neutrality, and this includes not conducting themselves in any way that may appear to conflict with their duty of political impartiality. It was noted that the terms 'Pre-Election Period' and 'Purdah' are interchangeable and as such should made clearer on all communications for further clarity.

FC 189

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

Members received an update from the Community Development Team as an interim update ahead of the Community Development Committee in February. It was reported that the next skate park event will be held on Friday 17th February skate, to be organised by ATP Skate Shop, and funded by a Haydon Wick Community Grant. Members asked how we are monitoring the attendees and where they hear about the events. The response was that many heard via the hard copy leaflet delivered to all households and via the Christmas parcel scheme, but lots of word of mouth, and new attendees are coming to the events. There was a request to survey the attendees regularly to check where they are finding out about our events. Councillors were reminded to share the events on their own Facebook page, and if anyone has any ideas for new promotion outlet, to let the team know.

FC 190 LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

Members received confirmation of the Council's Quality Gold Award Achievement. The meeting was pleased with the outcome and acknowledged the work by the Council and Officers to achieve the highest level award.

FC 191 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING & COMMUNITY NETWORKING EVENT

Members received a verbal update on plans for the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 28th March 2023. The idea is to host the Annual Parish Meeting & Community Networking Event at the GLL Centre in a small studio room as this is larger than the Council Offices. The Annual Parish Meeting will cover usual Council business such as a roundup of the Council year, the Haydon Wick Heroes awards, an update on projects from the recipients of Community Grant Scheme. The Police Crime Commissioner will also be in attendance and several community groups, partnerships and external organisations. Members noted the Full Council scheduled for this date will be moved to the 21st March 2023 and incorporate financial matters. Attendance so far is confirmed from RCCG Church, BEST Be A Better You, Seven Fields Conservation Group, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – Mouldon Hill and the Police Crime Commissioner. A request to Members to send in suggestions of any other community groups to personally invite ahead of advertising for the event; one suggestion was to invite Seven Fields Park Run. Members also suggested that at the beginning of the event there is an acknowledgment that it will be the pre-election period and therefore the event is solely about the outgoing Council year and discussing matters with the Council rather than individual Councillors.

FC 192 HAYDON WICK LIVING MAGAZINE

Members received a verbal update from the Editor on the Spring 2023 edition of Haydon Wick Living Magazine. The magazine is on track with reports being received by the deadline and being proofread and cross referenced by the Office. As the magazine will be delivered within the pre-election period some of the wording has been modified to reflect this and align the comments to the strategy as to what the Council has done rather than individual Committees/ Councillors. Final edited documents will be sent to Councillors ahead of publishing in the magazine. The Community Development Team has taken on the contractual elements, such as booking the print run, artwork, puzzles and advertisers and is receiving ongoing training for future editions.

FC 193 FEBRUARY MEETING DATES

Members noted changes to February's meetings dates to accommodate the budget/ precept:

- 7th Community Development 7.30pm
- 14th Finance & Policy 7.00pm
- 14th Extraordinary Full Council (Budget/Precept) 8.00pm
- 21st Parks & Open Spaces 7.30pm
- 28th Planning & Highways 7.00pm
- 28th Full Council 8.00pm

FC 194 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

To be passed to the Chief Officer in advance of the next meeting on Tuesday 28th February 2023.

Member of the public left the meeting 20:53.

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FC 195

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 and Staffing.

FC 196

LARGER AREAS GRASS CUTTING CONTRACT 23/24

Members received a report regarding the larger areas grass cutting contract for 2023/2024 detailing options and prices. It was noted only one contractor had submitted costs in time for the meeting. The contract needs to be confirmed to allow plenty of time for the contractor to resource from April onwards. Members also noted that there has been no rise in cost, there is scope to cancel cuts in the event of adverse weather conditions and the contractor is known to the parish and has provided an excellent service on the larger areas of grass cutting. After discussion Members agreed to the recommendation within the report.

Proposed: Councillor R Hailstone Seconded: Councillor S Heyes

Vote: Agreed with one abstention.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To proceed with Countrywide for the cutting of 10 large open spaces, during the summer of 2023 at a cost of £10,765.82, to be coded to 4522/307.**
- 2. To note there is also contingency fund of £1,656.28 assigned to code 4522/307 in case of additional cuts needed either side of the peak season (March & November).**

21:00 - all Officers left the meeting and the Chief Officer remained to present part of the Salary Budget 23/24 Recommendations.

21:30 - the Chief Officer left the meeting and Councillors E Baker Lee & V Manro took the minutes.

21:30 Resolved to extend the meeting by a further 15 minutes.

FC 197

SALARY BUDGET 23/24 RECOMMENDATION

Members received a report from Councillor L Rhys-Jones following recommendations from Personnel Sub Committee and Finance & Policy Committee. Additional information was given by the Chief Officer in respect of the POST salaries, regrading of Senior Officers and the Meeting Administrator role. Members agreed to the following recommendations with an amendment of extending the Administrator role to a six-month temporary to permanent contract and to recruit for the role after the budget was finalised.

Proposed: Councillor S Callen Seconded: Councillor L Rhys-Jones

Vote: Agreed with two (2) abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To a total salary budget for 2023/24 at £767,087, as presented.**
- 2. To note the total salary budget includes all contractual increments, an estimated 5% Cost of Living pay award, employers NI contribution rate of 15.05% and employers Pension contribution rate of 19.70%.**
- 3. To regrade the role of the Chief Officer from 1st April 2023.**
- 4. To regrade the role of the Deputy Clerk & Services Manager from 1st April 2023.**
- 5. To regrade the role of the Finance Officer/Deputy RFO from 1st April 2023.**

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6. To retain £15,000 in the salary budget for the part time Administration vacancy. Recruit after the precept has been finalised on a six-month temporary to permanent contract.
 7. To regrade a POST Operative to SCP 5-9 from 1st April 2023.
 8. To regrade a POST Operative to SCP 10-15 from 1st April 2023.
 9. To allocate budget for Spot Awards at a total of £1,250 to be allocated by the Chief Officer, based on the performance.
 10. To allocate budget for Spot Awards at £1,250 x 2, based on performance.
 11. To reduce the impact of the above additional expenditure by releasing funds from various budget lines.
 - a. To release £4,500 EMR Training leaving £1,500 for future training
 - b. To release £1,600 101 Training leaving £1,550 for future training
 - c. To release £1,000 101 Training leaving £0 as self-funded.
- Using funds 11a-c and with Point 6 above, the proposed regrades and spot bonuses will mean no additional budgetary impact on the precept for 23/24.

The meeting closed at 21:42.

Chairman _____

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