

MINUTES OF AN EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF
OMBERSLEY AND DOVERDALE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 9th JANUARY 2018 AT 7.30PM.
AT SYTCHAMPTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs Mrs J Goodman (Chairman), W T Arnold, M Best, F Cody, Mrs S Collier, D Ingram, C MacKenzie-Rowan, Mrs B J Serrell and C J Welch (9)

Public Question Time

No members of the public were present.

154/17 Chairman's Announcements

None

155/17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs H Barningham, P Reynolds and R Reynolds. An apology for absence was also received from Cllr P Tomlinson (County and District Councillor)

156/17 Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest

The following interests were declared:-

Cllr W T Arnold – Member of Ombersley Memorial Hall Management Committee and Ombersley Memorial Hall Trustee.

Mr M Best – Member of Sytchampton Village Hall Management Committee.

Cllr F Cody – Parish Council representative on Sytchampton Village Hall Management Committee.

Cllr D Ingram – Parish Council representative on Ombersley Memorial Hall Management Committee.

157/17 Ombersley Memorial Hall – Future Proposals and Aspirations

At the invitation of the Parish Council, Iain Freeman and Lesley Fox from the Ombersley Memorial Hall Management Committee attended the meeting to update the Parish Council on their plans and aspirations for the Memorial Hall.

Prior to the discussion, Iain forwarded a copy of the Hall Committee's grant application for 2018-19.

- Refurbishment Proposals – Ombersley Memorial Hall

As the Parish Council was aware, the Memorial Hall had submitted a grant application to Biffa Waste to help fund the improvements to the Memorial Hall. This application had, unfortunately been unsuccessful. The Memorial Hall Committee intended to review the reasons for refusal and re-submit the application in February 2018.

Mr Freeman indicated that the total cost of the improvements being planned was likely to be between £230,000 and £250,000 plus VAT. In order to ensure that the project remained manageable it was intended to split the project into bitesize chunks. The refurbishment project would now be referred to as 'Project 2023' to reflect the Hall's centenary that year.

In the first instance, competitive tenders would be sought for the removal of the false ceiling, recladding of the interior walls and removal of the stage. Discussions had been held with the Drama Group to discuss alternative arrangements (portable staging etc) which could be used when necessary. This would not only help with the energy efficiency of the Hall but would also increase its capacity by some 30-40 seats.

Informal indications were that the cost of this aspect of the project would be in the region of £53,000 excluding VAT. Taking into account the amount held by the Hall Committee and the sum held on the Hall's behalf by the Parish Council, this could be achieved. However, the Parish Council's assistance was also required to offset the VAT element which would need to be added to the total.

In addition, if the Biffa Waste application was successful, the Hall would wish to discuss with the Parish Council whether it would be prepared to fund the Third Party contribution required.

The Parish Council indicated that it would wish to continue to be as supportive as it could be. The VAT position was complex and any proposed expenditure would need to be carefully considered to ascertain whether it would be possible to reclaim any VAT incurred. The Parish Council also had a responsibility to ensure that any funds allocated to the project from the money held on the Hall's behalf represented value for money. Three competitive tenders would need to be sought and forwarded to the Parish Council for consideration. The Hall Committee was happy to forward the necessary details so that the Parish Council could consider them prior to any expenditure being committed.

During any refurbishment works, it would be necessary to relocate any existing hirers for the duration of the works. Cllr Best re-iterated his previous offer that Sytchampton Village Hall would be happy to help out where it could.

- Ombersley Play Area

Iain Freeman wished to take the opportunity to update the Council on discussions which had been held with the Play Area Group regarding funding for the refurbishment of the Play Area.

The Hall Committee had recently received a request from the Play Area Group. They had applied for a grant from the Fields in Trust Charity. The Trust had responded that they only funded sites where the land was protected by a Deed of Dedication and in this respect only the landowners can apply for such a grant. The Group had therefore asked whether this was something the Hall Committee would look at.

A previous request had also been received from the Group asking whether the Hall Committee would be prepared to apply for the release of the Section 106 funds payable on the commencement of The Racks development. These funds had been identified to enhance the recreational facilities on the playing field adjacent to Ombersley Memorial Hall. The Group had enquired whether an application could be made to draw the money down early to enable a contribution to be made to the refurbishment of the Play Area.

The Hall Committee had responded to this request as follows:-

"The Hall's constitution stated that the Memorial Hall would remain as a public amenity for the benefit of the village and inhabitants now and in the future. As the allocated money would probably not be available for at least 12 months, it was felt that the village community should be consulted in line with the Hall's constitution before any decisions are made regarding its use".

"Following discussions with the Parish Council, it had been confirmed that the Hall and its land would be an integral part of the "Neighbourhood Plan". With this in mind, the Hall Committee felt that it was only right that the community had a say in how they would like to see the Hall and its land now and in the future".

"The Hall Committee had confirmed that when the money was received it would be 'ring fenced' and only used to improve or change the outdoor facilities".

The Parish Council confirmed that the Hall Committee's approach was consistent with the view expressed by the Parish Council who, in September 2017 had confirmed that whilst the refurbishment of the Play Area remained a high priority, any funding for upgrading the Play Area

could not be considered in isolation. Instead, the proposal and methods of funding should be considered as part of consultation on the wider Neighbourhood Plan.

In conclusion, the Parish Council thanked the representatives from the Hall for their attendance and gave a commitment that the Parish Council remained entirely supportive of the Hall's aspirations. It looked forward to seeing the detail of any future tenders and grant applications and wished the Hall well in its endeavours.

At this point, Iain Freeman and Lesley Fox left the meeting.

158/17 Co-option to the Parish Council.

Councillors were reminded that this matter had been brought forward for consideration at its last meeting on 21st November 2017. One vacancy currently existed and two applications had been received.

At a time when responsibilities on local councils was increasing the Parish Council felt very uneasy about rejecting any expressions of interest in the work of the Parish Council. The Council therefore felt that it should explore further whether there was any way in which both applicants could be accommodated.

The Parish Council had therefore agreed that consideration of this matter be deferred. In the meantime, the Clerk to the Council was asked to explore all available options with Wychavon District Council, including ways in which the Council may appoint or involve both applicants. Once this advice had been received the matter should be considered further at the next appropriate opportunity. If needed, an Extra-Ordinary meeting of the Council would be convened.

The Clerk to the Council had subsequently discussed this matter further with Officers at Wychavon District Council and an Extra-Ordinary meeting of the Council had been convened on 11th December 2016 to consider this matter further. Unfortunately this meeting had been postponed due to adverse weather conditions.

The Clerk to the Council reminded the Council that one vacancy currently existed and applications from individuals seeking co-option to the Council had been sought. Two applications had been received.

As part of his discussions with officers at Wychavon District Council it had been confirmed that as there was only one vacancy, the Parish Council could only co-opt one of the applicants onto the Parish Council. There were more informal ways in which the Council could involve the 'unsuccessful' applicant in the work of the Parish Council and this was a matter the Council may wish to explore. However, any involvement could not be undertaken in the capacity of a Parish Councillor.

Having updated the Council, Councillors agreed that they should proceed to consider the matter.

The election would be conducted by ballot and the Clerk to the Council had prepared voting papers which were distributed. Completed ballot papers were returned to the Clerk to the Council who then declared the result. He informing the Parish Council that 9 votes had been cast and based on a majority, Mr John RINGE had been elected to serve on the Parish Council until the next ordinary elections in 2019.

The Clerk to the Council would now inform Mr Ringe and arrange for him to sign his Declaration of Acceptance of Office together with the Register of Interests and any other necessary paperwork. Additionally, he would write to the unsuccessful candidates thanking him for taking the time to apply to join the Parish Council and offer the opportunity to look at ways of involving him in the work of the Council.

159/17 Exclusion of Public and Press

It was moved by Cllr Mrs Serrell and seconded by Cllr Cody that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it was likely that exempt information relating to an individual will be disclosed and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosure. All Councillors agreed.

At this point, Cllr Mrs Collier left the meeting.

160/17 Report on Alleged Breach of Code of Conduct

Summary of the proceedings during which the Press and Public were excluded.

The Clerk to the Council had received a copy of a report on an Alleged Breach of the Council's Code of Conduct. The Report outlined the complaints made, the findings and also made a number of recommendations. The Parish Council was now required to consider the recommendations and determine whether it intended to endorse them, take alternative action or take no action.

To assist the Council in its deliberations the Clerk to the Council had forwarded a copy of the report to each Councillor. He had also prepared a suggested process for considering the report which would hopefully provide a structure to the Council's deliberations.

The Council then proceeded to consider the report and its recommendations. Having taken the opportunity to discuss the content of the report, and hear from the Councillor who had allegedly breached the Code of Conduct, the Parish Council formulated its response to the report which unanimously agreed. During the determination of the response the Councillor who had allegedly breached the Code of Conduct left the meeting and took no further part in the discussions. They were invited to return to the meeting once the conclusion had been reached and was informed of the Council's response.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm

..... CHAIRMAN.