

Blackthorn Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November at 7.30pm in Blackthorn Village Hall.

Councillors Present: Mrs J. Lamont (JL) Chairman, Cllr. Mr R. Rue (RR) Vice-Chairman, Mr C. Hegarty-Swain (CHS) and Mrs A. Stevenson (AS).

In Attendance: T. Charlesworth Clerk/RFO

23.172 Apologies:

RESOLVED: To accept apologies from Cllr. R. Lamont due to work commitments and Cllr. R. Rue who left the meeting after ensuring that it was quorate and reporting on the Flood Forum, for health reasons.

23.173 Declarations of Interest: None declared.

23.174 Public Participation: No attendance.

23.175 Minutes: To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 5 October 2023 at 7.30pm previously circulated.

RESOLVED: Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 5 October 2023 at 7.30pm were approved and signed by the Chairman Cllr. J. Lamont.

23.176 Reports:

- a. **Chairman's Report:** For personal reasons the Chairman had been unable to attend the Town & Parish Council Charter Summit.
- b. **Clerk's Report:**
 - i. Minute Ref: M9/2023-23.160-9.1-b: Blackthorn Brook: Contractors instructed to carry out works as agreed.
 - ii. Minute Ref: M9/2023-23.160-9.2-a-iii: 20mph Application:
What happens next?
The county council will review the responses and if necessary (i.e. if objections are received) prepare a report to be presented to the Cabinet Member for Highway Management at a meeting scheduled for later in 2023. This will be public meeting at which members of the public may apply to speak. The agenda and reports for meetings will be made available on the Oxfordshire County Council web site about a week before the meeting (please note that occasionally it is necessary to defer reports to a later meeting, and it is therefore advisable to check the agenda ahead of attending a meeting). The Forward Plan of decisions meetings can be viewed
 - iii. Minute Ref: M9/2023-23.164-a: Standing Orders: Draft comparison presented to Chairman for review.
 - iv. Agendas and Minutes Webinar:
 - Agendas: Attended first webinar on 18 October and has implemented changes to the agenda.
 - Minutes: Attended second webinar on 25 October.
 - v. Payment: Bank Reconciliation identified that the initial cheque No: 101471 has now been cleared; requested return of second cheque No: 101479; this resulted in an amendment to the accounts and bank reconciliation.

23.177 Vacancy/Co-option: The Parish Council is in receipt of no applications.

23.178 District or County Councillors: No reports received.

23.179 Governance:

- a. **Civility & Respect:**
 - i. **Training:**
 - ii. **Dignity at Work Policy:** The model policy relates to larger councils; the Parish Council's current Code of Conduct and Standing Orders covers the areas relevant to the council.
RESOLVED: To form a policy relevant to the Parish Council using elements of its Code of Conduct and Standing Orders; draft to be considered at the next meeting.
 - iii. **To put in place a training programme for councillors and staff:** Draft to be considered at next meeting.
- b. **Policy:**
 - i. **Training:** Draft to be reviewed.
- c. **Standing Orders:** Council's Standing Orders to be reviewed and updated to include 2020 amendments. Draft to be circulated for consideration at the next meeting.
- d. **Risk Assessment:** To be reviewed as part of Internal Audit recommendation and carried out in-line with the Practitioner's Guide using the matrix format.
- e. **Data Protection Regulations:**
 - i. **Generic Emails:** To date, not all councillors have completed setup.

23.180 Project Reports:

- a. **Drainage/Flooding:**

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- i. **River Bank Repairs/Network Rail:** Following attendance at the Ray Valley Flood Forum on 18 October 2023; it has been discovered that river level data is available and will be monitored against Blackthorn data levels.
- ii. **Blackthorn Brook:** Contractors had not been able to complete works due to the weather.
 - Clerk to note agenda item for July 2024 to instruct contractors to clear the brook in September 2024.
- b. **Village Plan: Review of proposals:**
 - i. **White Traffic Calming Gates:** In hand.
 - ii. **Proposed new gate on Station Road at the Junction of Weir Lane:** To consider any information relating to an application for permission of proposed new gate: C/fwd.
 - iii. **20mph Application:** O.C.C. – Blackthorn 20mph Limits – Consultation closed. See 23.176-b-ii.
- c. **Play Area:**
 - i. **Inspection:** To consider and approve action regarding the weed growth and low bark surfacing: Weeding of play area to form part of the proposed 'Handyman' job description.

RESOLVED:

- To order replacement bark as recommended on the play area report; to be covered by Play Area Fund.
- ii. **Maintenance Procedure:** To form part of the proposed 'Handyman' job description, to be carried out in between quarterly and annual inspections, any faults to be reported to the Parish Council for action.

23.181 Finance:

- a. **Payments prior to the Meeting:** To record and approve any invoices paid prior the meeting as listed on the payment schedule: None recorded.
 - b. **Receipts:** To record and approve any receipts received as listed:
 - Scottish Widows Bank Plc – Interest £37.97.
 - c. **Payments:**
 - i. **Salary(s):** Salary Oct 2023 - £297.00 – Expenses £6.36 – Mileage £9.60 – Home Working Allowance £26.00.
 - ii. **Grass Cutting:** Invoices had not been received to date. Clerk instructed to produce cheque for signing upon receipt of invoices (if prior to next meeting) as the work is contractual and budget for.
Power: *Highways Act 1980, s964 (verges) and Public Health Act 1875 s164 for play area (leased).*
 - iii. **Blackthorn Brook Clearance:** £2,750.00 plus VAT: Invoice had not been received to date. Clerk instructed to produce a cheque for signing upon receipt of invoice (if prior to next meeting) and in-line with quote as work had been approved at previous meeting and budgeted for.
Power: *Public Health Act 1936, s260.*
 - iv. **Training/Webinar/Meetings:** Town & Parish Council Charter Summit – Invoice No: W-2986 - £0.00.
 - d. **Bank Reconciliation:** Presented prior to the meeting.
 - i. To accept the amended Bank Reconciliation up to 19.9.2023 to reflect 23.176-b-v:

Balance B/fwd	£25,648.12
Add Total Receipts	£6,976.16
Less Total Payments	£4,845.94
Balance C/fwd	£27,778.34
 - ii. To accept the Bank Reconciliation up to 30.9.2023:

Balance B/fwd	£25,648.12
Add Total Receipts	£6,976.16
Less Total Payments	£4,845.94
Balance C/fwd	£27,778.34
 - iii. To accept the Bank Reconciliation up to 19.10.2023:

Balance B/fwd	£27,778.34
Add Total Receipts	£37.97
Less Total Payments	£2,188.77
Balance C/fwd	£25,627.54
 - e. **Budget Comparison:** To accept the budget comparison up to the 2 November 2023 with no anomalies.
 - f. **Financial Controls:** Quarterly check to be completed and signed off by Internal Control and RFO: With the absence of Cllr. R. Lamont this was carried forward to next meeting.
 - g. **VAT Spreadsheet:** Presented prior to the meeting; this had been completed, with the exception of the grass cutting invoices as not yet presented, and recorded a VAT Claim presented to HMRC for invoices up to 30 September 2023 for £687.60.
 - h. **Quotes:**
 - i. **Allotment Post:** Works to be included in the proposed 'Handyman' job description.
 - ii. **Traffic Calming Gates:** No further quotes obtained to date.
 - iii. **Blackthorn Brook:** To confirm approval of increase on previous years costs:
- ### RESOLVED:
- That the increase of £75.00 was accepted and approved.
 - i. **Grants/Funding:** To consider any relevant applications for funding:
 - i. **County Councillors Priority Fund:** To be considered once a quote has been accepted and approved for the Traffic Calming Gates.
 - j. **End of Year Audit 2022/23:** Internal Audit – Actions following report:-
 - i. **Appraisal:** Completed.
 - ii. **Payroll:** Registration completed and up to date.
 - A new tax code has been presented by HMRC for the tax year 2024 to April 5.

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- Pension Regulator: Process has to be completed as a new Employer/Employee.
 - iii. **Document Management:** In hand.
 - k. **Budget 2024/25:** Draft budget was reviewed and amendments proposed; update to be circulated to councillors prior to next meeting.
- RESOLVED:**
- **Allotments:** Review of rental to be increased to £15.00 per year for the year 2024/25; Clerk to send out updated Tenancy Agreement to be signed and returned if acceptable; payment will be required by bank transfer due to proposed closure of Barclays Bicester.
 - **Annual Waste Bin Collection:** No longer required.
 - **Play Area Quarterly Inspection:** Will be budgeted on a yearly £250.00 increment, starting with £250.00 in the budget 2024/25, £500.00 in 2025/26 etc, until £1,000.00 reached (or any increases taken into consideration), the difference to be covered by the Play Area Fund.

23.182 Planning:

- a. **Planning: Applications:** To consider all recent applications received from Cherwell District Council detailed below and any other planning applications submitted and published on the CDC planning portal between the agenda being published and the meeting: None noted.
- b. **Decision Notices:** None noted.
- c. **Appeal Notices:** None noted.
- d. **Withdrawal Notices:** None noted.
- e. **Planning Matters:**
 - i. **Network Rail:** Noted that phase 2 has been cancelled.
 - ii. **C.D.C. - Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 Consultation Draft (Reg 18) – Pre-Notification of Public Consultation** - public consultation will commence on Friday 22 September 2023 for a period of 6 weeks. The consultation will close on 3 November 2023: To consider if the Parish Council has any comments.

RESOLVED:

- The Parish Council made no comments.

23.183 Clerk's Contract:

- a. **To consider and approve Clerk's updated contract based on the NALC Model 2011.**
- b. **Upon acceptance and approval to be signed:** Draft to be updated with a view to complete at the next meeting.

23.184 Village Maintenance Tasks: Review of proposed job role: See 23.180-c-i and 23.180-c-ii; the draft Job Description was reviewed; signage checks to be included, with damage being reported to the PC. Clerk tasked with contacting other parish council's to see if they can recommend anyone that they use.

23.185 Attendance at Meetings:

- a. **Town & Parish Council Charter Summit: Report from Chairman:** See 23.176-a.
- b. **Ray Valley Forum: Wednesday 18th October 6.45 - 8.15pm @ Piddington Parish Hall, OX25 1PU:** See 23.180-a-i.

23.186 Correspondence/Emails: (See Appendix 4): (B.P.C. 309): Comments to be considered and any matters for the next agenda not already considered as part of this agenda: None noted.

23.187 Village Matters:

- a. **Facebook: Matters for Parish Council consideration raised through the village Facebook page.**
 - Noted that 'Community Health' representative attended the coffee morning.
- b. **Publication:** To consider approve matters for publication through the Parish Council website or village Facebook page: None.

23.188 Matters for Further Information or Discussion at the Next Meeting:

- a. **Matters for Further Information:**
 - Noted that a fallen tree at Elm Tree Close had been cut back and the risings left on the highway verge.
- b. **Matters for Discussion at the next meeting:**
 - None other than those raised on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting.

23.189 Date of Next Parish Council Meeting: 7 December 2023 at 7.30pm.

RESOLVED:

- To change the date of the next meeting to **6 December 2023 at 7.30pm.**
- a. **Village Hall Booking 2 May 2024:** To be considered when arranging Parish Council meeting dates for 2024.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:33pm.

Draft Minutes subject to Confirmation

Minutes approved 6 December 2023 – M11/2023-23.193

Signed by the Chairman: J. Lamont