

Worth Parish Council
Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on
30th May 2022 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Scott (Chairman)
Cllr Coote
Cllr Cruickshank
Cllr Gibson
Cllr Hitchcock
Cllr King
Cllr Phillip
Cllr Stewart
Cllr Williams
Mrs J Nagy (Clerk)

Cllr Casella
Cllr Dymond
Cllr Hodsdon
Cllr Lord
Cllr Mayor
Cllr Pointer
Cllr Webb

No members of the public

25 Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

26 Apologies

Apologies were noted and accepted from Cllr Dorey

27 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this point of the meeting.

28 Minutes

It was agreed by all present that the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 9th May 2022 were a true and correct record.

29 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman had no announcements

30 Correspondence & Action List

The correspondence and action lists were NOTED.

31 Committees

The following Committee Minutes and actions therein were NOTED.

Planning & Highways Committee, 25th April 2022
Date of next meeting, 30th May 2022

General Purposes & Finance Committee, 11th April 2022
Date of next meeting, 15th June 2022

It was NOTED that the following meeting took place; recommendations and actions from this meeting to be considered under Agenda Item 19.

HR Committee, 24th May 2022
Date of next meeting, TBA

32 County Councillors' Report

The Chairman referred to Cllr Gibson's report, previously circulated, which was NOTED

33 District Councillors' Report

No reports had been provided.

34 Accounts & Financial Matters

Purchase of Christmas Tree for Copthorne

The Clerk referred to her report, and the request from the Copthorne EIWP that the Council considers the purchase of an artificial Christmas tree to erect on the Green at a cost of £4995 + VAT; a photo is included in the meeting pack. Additional requirements would include a dry box @ £20 and ground hooks @ £30 to give a total cost of £5045 this to come out of the CEIWP budget.

It was AGREED by all present to purchase the tree and fittings at a total cost of £5045 + VAT

Possible sale of low loader trailer

The Clerk referred to her report with the suggestion to sell the low loader trailer to create space in one of the Copthorne garages to store the Christmas tree. This trailer has a value on the asset register of £2,700.

It was AGREED by all present in principle to sell the trailer, but the Clerk is to ascertain how the large mower is transported; she will report to the next GP&F meeting.

Donation from Jack & Jill Playgroup

The Chairman of the Council and the Clerk have been in discussion with the Treasurer of this playgroup who operated from the Delmar Morgan Centre in Copthorne. It has had to close, and offered the Council the balance of its funds, this being £9,914.70 on the proviso that this be used for refurbishing of the play area at the Copthorne Recreation Ground.

This sum has now been transferred, and the RFO will create a ERM code to ensure that it is used for the intended purpose.

Councillors NOTED this donation, and asked the Clerk to write a formal letter of thanks to the Jack & Jill Playgroup

35 Sussex Clubs for Young People

The two EI Working Parties have been working on youth provision in the parish for some months, and have met with Sussex Clubs for Young People.

The proposal is that the Council enters into a one-year agreement with SCYP for the provision of a full-time youth worker to work in both villages. This would be reviewed each year, with either party able to give 12 weeks' notice in writing. There are optional "add-ons" such as the provision of the Purple Bus, which is a mobile unit. SCYP would employ the youth worker, so would cover all associated payments, and would provide cover for holiday and other absence. Details of the proposal has been circulated.

Councillors were asked to consider authorising the Clerk to sign the agreement, with a cost of £40,000 for one year, this to be funded with the current £31,000 in ERM for this project, with the balance being taken out of general reserves.

Discussion took place as to venues and ongoing funding, but it was generally felt that SCYP would be able to set up a youth provision model in both villages that could be built upon the future

It was therefore AGREED by all present that the Clerk would sign the one-year agreement with Sussex Clubs for Young People, this to be funded out of Youth Provision ERM at £31,000, with £9,000 being taken out of General reserves.

Sussex Clubs for Young People are to be invited to the next Council meeting to make a presentation to Councillors.

36 Council Land and Buildings

At the time of writing this report, there is nothing to report.

37 Community Governance Review

Draft Recommendations

The draft recommendation report based on the initial consultation has been issued. 250 submissions were received, 61% from Crawley Down and 39% from Copthorne. Of all the responses from both villages, 50% were broadly supportive of the division of the parish, and 50% were opposed to it.

Of the responses from Crawley Down, 77% were in support of the division, 23% were opposed. For Copthorne, 2% were in support, with 98% against.

This report was discussed at the MSDC Scrutiny Committee on 25th May. Para 42 read,

“The current governance arrangements for Worth Parish Council should continue, and this Authority (MSDC) should consider afresh a CGR in 2025 or 2029 dependent on build out of any permitted developments affecting Copthorne West and surrounding areas”

There was one amendment agreed at the Scrutiny Committee, in that the second consultation is to commence on 13th June rather than 6th June to give both parties time to compile the information requested in paras 37 to 40. However, the deadline will remain the same at 1st August to allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider the results at its meeting of 14th September

In summary, this is

Para 37 – WPC and the petitioners should supply their assessment of division costs with evidential annotations for each cost

Para 38 – The indicative annual budget prepared by “The Local Councillors and Residents Supporting the Creation of a Crawley Down Village Council” it seems, is disputed by WPC. MSDC wishes to see an adjusted and agreed version as soon as possible”

Para 39 – The WPC governance review working party and subsequent changes are noted. WPC should carefully consider ongoing elector’s concerns.....and perhaps consider alternating these between the Parish Hub and the Haven Centre, given that virtual/hybrid meetings legislation is not yet in view

Para 40 – The WPC should seek to encourage more local people to stand for election both in Copthorne and Crawley Down.

With regard to supplying costs and budgets in Paras 37 and 38, it is unlikely given past debate that any evidence of cost or budget will be agreed by both parties. The Clerk has approached Mark Mulberry & Co, the Council’s internal auditors, to prepare such information based on data supplied by both parties. By using an independent qualified person, it is hoped that the required information can be supplied that can be accepted by both parties

Mark Mulberry& Co has quoted £60 + VAT per hour, with an estimated time of 6 hours required.

Cllr Gibson said that he had supplied a breakdown of the proposers’ anticipated costs and budget to Cllrs Dorey, Scott and Hodsdon; this was a confidential document not to be shared with the staff.

Cllr Scott said that as this document had only been received late that afternoon, he had not had time to assimilate it.

Cllr Gibson was not in favour of employing Mark Mulberry & Co, as he felt that an experienced clerk from another council would be a better option

The Clerk advised that Andy Beams, at Mulberry & Co, who had carried out the Council’s internal audit for the last few years was an ex-Town Clerk, with a background in the financial sector. He was also currently employed as a Locum Clerk.

Cllr Gibson was of the view that if Mr Beams knew the Council, he could not be seen as being independent. Councillors took issue with this comment, as Internal Audit was an independent and impartial process.

Cllr Mayor as a member of the CGR Working Party, said that he had not received the confidential document from Cllr Gibson. Cllr Gibson replied that he had only sent it to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council, and to the Chairman of the HR Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Coote, seconded by Cllr Webb and agreed by a majority vote, that Mark Mulberry & Co would be appointed to produce two budgets, one for each potential new village council, and an estimate of division costs; the Clerk will ask if this work can be carried out by Andy Beams. Two Councillors voted against, and two abstained.

Information Leaflet

MSDC has offered again the opportunity to include an information leaflet in the second consultation mailing pack, should both parties agree. However, in initial discussion with Councillors, it appears that the Council is not minded to do so.

It was AGREED not to include such a leaflet. Cllr Gibson, speaking as one of the promoters, said that they had not been invited by MSDC to include a leaflet.

Publicity

There is a dedicated "tab" on the Council's website page; the Clerk intends to continue to publicise information created by the Council on that page.

The CGR Working Party has been unable to meet, but it is generally felt that a statement should be put on the Council's Facebook page as soon as possible regarding the draft recommendations.

It was AGREED that a Facebook post would be issued re the Draft Recommendations, with a link to the recording of the MSDC Scrutiny Committee meeting at which they were agreed. Residents would be warned to expect another consultation mailing, and would be encouraged to respond. The same statement will be put on the Council's website.

38 Standing Orders

The Clerk referred to her report re the revised Standing Orders.

The following changes were agreed:

3. Meetings Generally w) – the wording "Discussion may take place, but no decisions made" will be removed. This was a previous addition to Worth PC Standing Orders, and was felt to be confusing

5. Ordinary Meetings j), i) to xxi) – whilst the Council does carry out all these activities, not all are considered at the Annual Council meeting. The Clerk will amend this section accordingly to make reference to when in the Council year, such activities are formally noted.

17. Accounts and accounting statements e) – "A completed AGAR shall be presented to all Councillors at least 14 days prior to anticipated approval by the Council". Fourteen days shall be amended to seven days.

After these amendments, it was AGREED by all present that the revised Standing Orders were formally ADOPTED by the Council.

39 Anti-Social Behaviour

The presence of CO² gas cylinders was noted.

It was reported that one PCSO had left having been appointed to be a warranted constable; the Clerk was not able to confirm this.

40 Policing

The latest crime figures were NOTED.

41 Website Data

The website data was NOTED. The Communications & IT Administrator was to be asked to give a presentation to the next Council meeting as to how to interpret the data.

42 Representatives attending outside meetings

Police Focus Group, 26th May, attended by Cllr Dorey and the Clerk

The meeting report was noted.

Cllrs Coote and Webb reported that they had attended a meeting of the Shelley Education Foundation, as Council representatives.

Cllr Scott reported that he had attended a meeting of the Crawley Down Village Hall, as the Council representative. The current planning application was discussed; the developer approached the Committee direct; they did not elicit the application. It is expected to be decided by MSDC on 21st June.

The AGM is to be held on 5th July. Cllr Scott is unable to attend; it was agreed that either Cllr Pointer or Williams would attend in his stead.

43 Personnel

The Clerk referred to her report.

The actions from the HR Committee meeting held on 24th May 2022, referenced in the Clerk's report were NOTED.

At this point the Chairman announced that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 the press and public would be excluded during the next item due to the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed, as it related to staffing matters.

The Clerk left the meeting. It was agreed that Cllr Cruickshank would take notes in her absence.

During the Confidential Session, it was AGREED by a majority vote that the Council would apply to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. If successful, the Clerk would re-join the Scheme, with backdated contribution costs to be borne by the Council.

The Clerk and RFO will prepare a report with costs for all staff to join the LGPS, which will be presented to Council at a future meeting for consideration.

The meeting returned to open session and the Clerk returned to the room.

44 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday, 27th June 2022

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____