

## **Worth Parish Council**

### **Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held in the South Room, the Parish Hub, Copthorne on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 commencing at 7.30pm**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr Dorey (Chairman)	Cllr Phillips (Vice Chairman)
	Cllr Casella	Cllr Cruickshank
	Cllr Dymond	Cllr Gibson
	Cllr Lord	Cllr King
	Cllr Kipps	Cllr Stewart
	Cllr Pointer	Cllr Williams
	Cllr Wilson	
	Mrs J Nagy (Clerk)	No member of the public
	Mr A Beams (Locum RFO)	

**Prior to the commencement of the meeting, it was agreed that Cllr Phillips would act as Vice Chair in the absence of Cllr Scott, as per SO 3 q).**

#### **178 Public Question Time**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no members of the public present.

Speaking as a member of the public, Cllr Gibson asked what action the Council was taking in relation to the District Plan Regulation 19 consultation.

It was noted that the next Planning & Highways Committee meeting was scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> February, and a response would be agreed then. The Clerk will ask the Assistant Clerk to chase up meetings proposed with MSDC officers.

Cllr Williams asked that all Mid Sussex District Councillor be invited to attend on 5<sup>th</sup> February; the Clerk will ensure that they are invited.

#### **179 Apologies**

Apologies were noted and accepted from Cllrs Coote, Bingle, Hodsdon and Scott.

#### **180 Declarations of Interest**

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

#### **181 Minutes**

Cllr Gibson noted that at Minute 165, where he did not dispute that the cap figure of 3% in relation to County and District Councils, it is in fact 2%.

In addition, the increase for a Band D Property stated that the increase would equate to 11p a week, when in fact it would equate to 26p by his calculation.

It was agreed by all present that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were a true and correct record, without amendment.

#### **182 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman had no announcements.

#### **183 Correspondence & Action List**

The correspondence and action lists were NOTED.

#### **184 Committees**

The Minutes and actions therein of the following Committees as previously circulated were NOTED.

- Planning & Highways Committee, 11th December 2023  
Date of next meeting, 5th February 2024
- Finance & General Purposes Committee, 27th November 2023  
Date of next meeting, 5th February 2024

To note that the following meetings took place; actions will be discussed under Agenda Item 21.

HR Committee, 15th December 2023 and 12th January 2024

- Date of next meeting, TBA

### **185 Working Parties**

The notes and actions therein of the following Working Parties as circulated were NOTED.

- Copthorne Village Working Party, 10th January 2024
- Crawley Down Village Working Party, 12th December 2023 and 5th January 2024
- Co-Ordination Group, 5th October 2023, deferred from last meeting

Cllr Williams did not agree with the notes of the Co-Ordination Group meeting.

### **186 County Councillors' Report**

Cllr Gibson advised that his call in relating to the proposal to the introduction of booking time slots at East Grinstead Recycling Centre failed, and this will commence in February.

The County Council is in the final stages of agreeing its budget; a draw down of £3 million from reserves is being proposed. A £60 million funding gap remains, however.

All Councillors were concerned about the potential impact on local services such as roads and schools.

### **187 District Councillors' Report**

Cllr Phillips reported that the Council is concentrating on the District Plan Regulation 19 consultation.

### **188 Draft Budget 2024/2025**

The Locum RFO discovered a possible discrepancy in the budget figures agreed at the last meeting. It was therefore thought prudent to revisit the calculation.

It appears that the General Reserves figure of £430,000 as at September 2023, used to calculate the budget did not allow for c£80k in accruals. The Rialtas system showed a General Reserve figure of £352,000 at this date.

The Locum RFO reminded Councillors that it was recommended that a General Reserves figure of around 50% of the precept should be held, to cover the running costs of the Council, although it is not a legal requirement. With a precept demand of £420,000, it was possible that the General Reserves figure would be well below this advisory threshold at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. It was noted however, that the 2025/2026 budget could allow for a precept increase to build up general reserves if required.

After further discussion, it was AGREED by all present with the exception of Cllr Gibson who voted against, that a precept request of £420,000 was sufficient to support the budget.

**The Locum RFO left the meeting.**

### **189 Accounts & Financial Matters**

#### Outsourcing of payroll services

As reported to the last Finance meeting, the Clerk and Locum RFO were considering outsourcing

payroll.

The current Sage payroll package costs £450 per annum for up to 25 employees. The data on this programme is not migratable to the Cloud so would have to be backed up internally.

The Clerk has two quotes from organisations who can manage the Council's payroll, these being

- a) A company specialising in Council payroll.  
Cost = £368 a year plus a one off set up fee of £60 if it is set up at the start of the financial year or a one off set up fee of £120 if set up part way through a financial year.
- b) A local town council  
Cost = £705 a year plus a set-up fee of £50

The following would be covered

- processing the payroll
- providing payslips and pay reports
- completing the monthly online RTI submission to HMRC
- dealing with leavers and new starters
- calculating any statutory payments
- completing year end p60s

The actual payments would be managed by the Council.

It was AGREED by all present to cancel the Sage Payroll subscription and to outsource payroll to Company a) DM Payroll Services as from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024.

#### Purchase of Additional Gritting Salt

The Clerk referred to her report and the possible purchase of additional gritting salt.

It was agreed to ask the Grounds Supervisor to carry out an additional salt audit to ascertain the need, and to report back.

#### Removal of Copthorne Recreation Ground Play equipment

This matter was referred to the Copthorne Working Party after the last Council meeting. A reminder that the majority of equipment is out of order being unsafe.

The Working Party recommends that the swings, benches and fencing remain, but the remainder of the equipment should be removed.

The cost of this would be £3275.00, leaving the surface safe and without trip hazards.

It was AGREED by all present to remove the play equipment, except for swings, benches and fencing, at cost of £3275.00 + VAT, on Health & Safety grounds.

#### Conversion of SID Camera to solar power

The Clerk referred to her report, and the issue with re-charging the batteries, and then holding their charge.

There is an option to have the camera converted to solar power at a cost of £746.65 + VAT.

Councillors agreed to refer the matter to Crawley Down Working Party for its opinion and recommendation.

#### Internal Audit

Mulberry & Co, Internal Auditor have advised of an increase in fees. They are offering a three-year engagement term which would mean that fees would be £65 an hour. If renewed on an annual basis, the fees would be £70 an hour.

It was AGREED by all present that the Council would enter into a three-year engagement term with Mulberry & Co, to cover until the 2025/2026 audits, at a cost of £65 an hour.

## **190 Project Updates**

### CCTV

The positioning of one camera in each village has changed, requiring wayleave permission from WSCC Highways. The office is still liaising with WSCC.

### Bowers Place Parking

Mr Hitchcock is waiting for information from Adam Denby the WSCC Highways Regional Manager regarding what type of kerbing can be put through the tree root zones, as conventional kerbs laid in concrete are not allowed.

### IT Migration to Cloud- based storage

The Comms Assistant is chasing Focus as we are now ready to start file transfer.

### Copthorne Recreation Ground

Planning permission is imminent; on behalf of the Council the Clerk has agreed some pre-commencement conditions relating to drainage, site levels and materials for the car park. There is also the requirement for the erection of a fence between the MUGA and the Social Club.

The application for release of s106 funding for the MUGA is with MSDC for consideration at the Grants Panel meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February. The Clerk has asked for an additional £20,000 on top of the £145,000 request to allow for the additional works required. This addendum to the application has been accepted by MSDC.

The Community Ownership Fund bid has failed, as was envisaged. The Projects Clerk is working on a re-submission in time for the 31<sup>st</sup> January deadline.

It is hoped to start work on the MUGA in spring 2024.

Councillors NOTED this information.

It was NOTED that definition of a project and a reporting mechanism is to be discussed at the next Co-Ordination Group meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January.

## **191 Council Land and Buildings**

The working of this agenda item has been changed to allow only for consideration of matters where expenditure is required, as the management of land and buildings now comes under the remit of the Amenities & Assets Committee.

At its first meeting, which follow this meeting, the Committee will be considering a request to use Copthorne Recreation ground for a small funfair for one week in February.

Councillors are asked to NOTE this information.

## **192 Parish Awards Scheme**

The Council operates a scheme to recognise the work of organisations and individuals within the community. This is done via presentation of a certificate.

Crawley Down Working Party would like to suggest the following persons

- Andrew Metcalfe for his work with the CDRA
- John Sullivan for his work organising the Christmas Lights
- The person responsible for the knitted post box topper at the shops; the name TBA

Councillors AGREED these nominations.

## **193 Youth Provision**

The Youth Support Worker has registered to take a Level 3 qualification in Youth Work, free of charge.

Some sessions are now so popular that there is not enough supervisory cover in place to meet safeguarding requirements.

This is being used as "evidence" to try to recruit volunteers again. The Comms Assistant is working on ways for parents to notify in advance if their child will be attending to avoid turning away children on the night.

Upcoming events include an astronomy session on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at Crawley Down, and a cookery session during February half term in Copthorne. A local chef is taking this session, details are still being confirmed.

Cllr Pointer reported that she had dropped into the astronomy session. Fourteen children had attended, and all seemed to enjoy it.

Cllr Lord suggested that the Council contacts the Copthorne Astronomy Society to see if they could put on a similar session in Copthorne.

The Engagement report was NOTED.

#### **194 Website**

The usage report was NOTED.

#### **195 Anti-Social Behaviour**

The Clerk has passed reports of ongoing ASB in Crawley Down to the PSCO, with a group of youths causing trouble in and around the Haven Centre, and on into the village.

This has been taken up by the local sergeant, who has asked the PSCO to advise her of all recent reports with a view to increasing police presence in the village.

Councillors NOTED this information.

#### **196 Sussex Police**

The latest crime figures for November 2023 were NOTED.

#### **197 Representatives attending outside meetings.**

WSALC Clerks Forum, 11th January attended by the Clerk. Nothing of note to report, other than the ongoing national shortage of qualified clerks.

The WSALC Chairmans' Forum is due to take place on 23rd January.

MSDC Comms Group, 18th January attended by the Clerk.  
The Clerk was unable to attend due to work commitments.

Councillors NOTED these reports.

#### **198 Personnel**

**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 issues.**

During the closed session, the following discussions took place.

The HR Committee met on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

One recommendation, that the Council considers outsourcing payroll, was discussed and agreed under Minute 189 above.

The proposed updates in contract for the Youth Support Worker and the Assistant Clerk (Projects) were NOTED.

Actions taken in relation to training on the Rialtas Accounts package were NOTED.

It was AGREED by all present that that the Clerk would be appointed Clerk/RFO with the accompanying salary increase.

It was AGREED by all present that Leanne Bannister would be appointed to be data entry/accounts clerk on a contract basis at the advised hourly rate.

The decision of the HR Committee in relation the Clerk's holiday entitlement and lieu time was NOTED.

The proposed review of Job Description with office staff was NOTED.

The update in relation the Clerk's pension was NOTED.

It was AGREED that those members of staff currently on the NOW pension scheme would be transferred to the LGPS scheme as from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

**The meeting returned to open session.**

**199 Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024, to be held in the South Room, the Parish Hub, Copthorne

*Meeting closed at 9.05 pm*

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_