

# St Helens Parish Council

Minutes of the parish council meeting held at 7pm on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at St Helens Sports pavilion.

## **In attendance:**

**Chair:** Mr Earnshaw

**Councillors:** Mr Campbell, Mrs Parker, Mr Robertson, Miss Ryan, Mr Thomson, Mrs Yates.

**Clerk:** Mrs Dyer

Six members of the public.

## **13/2016 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Bacon sent apologies he was away on IW Council business.

## **14/2016 Declarations of Interest.**

None received.

## **15/2016 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th January 2016.**

Mrs Parker proposed the minutes of the meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 be approved as true and correct.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs Yates.

RESOLVED – Minutes signed as true and correct.

## **16/2016 Public Forum.**

A member of the public asked whether there had been any news regarding the removal of the cricket poles from the cricket Green?

The Clerk replied that she had been contacted by Lee Matthews and told that the club had been asked to remove them.

A member of the public raised that over the last 2 years the parish council precept had risen by over 40%, he asked if the parish council would ensure a more reasonable increase for this forthcoming financial year.

The Clerk confirmed she had formulated a budget for 2016/17 and that there were no plans for a precept rise for the coming financial year.

Mr Wade asked if the Clerk was aware of a recent incident in the toilet block on the Green.

She reported that she was and had been in contact with the local police officer who was dealing with the matter.

## **17/2016 To receive update on public toilets and to discuss future provision of public toilets within the village.**

Following a letter received (appendix 1) from John Metcalfe at the IW Council informing the parish council that the toilets would close on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 parish and town councils had been offered the opportunity to take over the running of the toilet blocks to ensure continuing provision locally. The clerk read her report (please see attached appendix 2).

The Chair offered the public a chance to comment on the issue.

A member of the public raised that tourism is the main industry on the Island and the tourist economy needed facilities like public toilets to thrive. He added that the idea that the IW Council would let the parish council receive any income from the beach huts was “pie in the sky”. He added that it was not the parish council’s job to provide public toilets but the job of the local authority.

A member of the public suggested that the IW Council sell the toilet block but with the condition that it should be run as a public toilet.

The Chair asked for Councillor’s opinions on the matter.

Mr Thomson said that the IW Council were holding a gun to the parish council’s head by threatening to close the toilets and that he had looked at the toilet blocks and thought they were in a bad state of repair and too big a liability to take on (report attached). He did not believe that the IW Council would pass over any income from the beach huts and thought that no further burden should be put upon the tax payers of St Helens.

Mr Thomson handed the Clerk paperwork to hand out to Councillors which contained an alternative motion and a report into the condition of the toilet block. (Please see attached appendix 3).

He also remarked that he believed that the closure of the toilets would result in a risk to public health. He also believed that if the parish council were to take over the toilets then a full structural survey should be undertaken at the expense of the IW Council.

Mr Robertson commented that the IW Council receive the income from the car park adjacent to the toilet block, the income from this should be used to fund continuing toilet provision. He likened the situation to the parish council to being in a game of poker with the IW Council and thought the parish council should hold their nerve. He doubted very much that they would close the toilet in the ward of the leader of the council in an election year and felt the parish council should refuse to take them over.

Mrs Yates commented that the 2011 survey was out of date and couldn’t be relied upon. She also thought that local business should pay to keep the toilets open.

Mrs Parker said that she felt the businesses in the area were already burdened with business rates and would not welcome the extra expense of contributing towards toilet provision she felt the parish council should consider taking them over as they were vital for local people and businesses.

Miss Ryan thought that the parish council should not agree to take over the toilets but undertake a survey of local people to gauge the opinion of local tax payers.

\*Mr Thomson proposed that the parish council adopt option 1 and requested a named vote.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mr Robertson.

**In favour** Mr Campbell, Mr Robertson, Miss Ryan, Mr Thomson and Mrs Yates.

**Against** Mr Earnshaw and Mrs Parker.

\*The Clerk and the Chair were unaware at the time that the paper work handed out by Mr Thomson contained an alternative motion (see appendix 3) and had the same numbering as the original motion. As this paper work was handed out mid debate the Clerk and the Chair did not have chance to look at it as the meeting was in session. This paperwork was not submitted to the Clerk within the correct notice period under Standing Order 7b. Following advice from fellow professionals the Clerk has recommended that the vote be retaken to ensure clarity. An extra-ordinary meeting will be convened to take the vote again to ensure the correct decision has been recorded.

**18/2016 To discuss taking over the responsibility of bin collection on the village green.**

The Clerk explained that the IW Council would no longer be paying for the bins on the Green to be emptied and had asked the parish council if they would consider taking over the responsibility of the bin collection.

No proposal forthcoming from Councillors.

**19/2016 To set and agree the annual budget and agree the precept request for 2016/17.**

The Clerk reported that she had formulated a budget for 2016/17. She reported that there had been a drop in the LCTS grant available from £1930 to £1333 and believed that a figure of £29150 should be requested for this coming financial year. This should result in no rise for local tax payers and ensure that services are maintained. (Please see attached appendix 4).

Miss Ryan proposed that a precept of £29150 be requested and the budget for the financial year 2016/17 be approved.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs Parker

**RESOLVED.**

**20/2016 To appoint representatives to the Community Centre Management Committee.**

Mr Earnshaw and Miss Ryan volunteered to represent the parish council on the community centre management committee.

**RESOLVED** – Mr Earnshaw and Miss Ryan appointed representative to St Helens Community Centre Management Committee.

**21/2016 Clerk's report**

**The Clerk reported the following:**

There had been some criminal damage/ activity at the toilet block on the Green. The disabled toilet door had been damaged and Mr Chester has been asked to give a quote to get it fix the door and bolt. The police had been informed and they will be keeping a closer eye on the area.

An update from Island Roads regarding the water pouring down Station Rd. They are going to meet with Southern Water and investigate where the water is coming from once they have thrashed out whose responsibility it is, it is likely they will install a land drain. However, they have to go through this process first.

Issues with rubbish on the Seafront reported. It appears that the bins there may have been missed on a few collection routes and have been overflowing. She has chased Island Roads to investigate. It would be helpful if Councillors could keep an eye on the situation down there to ensure it doesn't happen again. She asked Councillors to report to the Clerk if they suspect the bins are not being collected.

The paperwork for the VAT reclaim has been approved but there will be a delay in receiving the refund as the offices have been flooded and everyone has been relocated resulting in a backlog of claims.

The Clerk asked that Councillor's let her have the paper work they require typing up for the parish plan as she is hoping to include on the March agenda.

**22/2016 Finance report and approval of invoices due.**

The Clerk reported that the account had been reconciled and the balance stood at £28,128.73

Invoices due for payment

£15.30 Carole Parker Mileage.

£8.99 Lisa Dyer Mileage.

Mr Campbell proposed all invoices be approved for payment as per report.

2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs Yates

**RESOLVED – all payments approved for payment.**

**23/2016 Councillor's reports and items for future agenda.**

Mr Thomson asked what was happening about the dog signs.

The Clerk explained that they had been supplied without fixings and this had proved difficult to sort out without the correct tools. She promised to look into fixing them when she had a little more time.

Mr Thomson asked if there was still a dog warden?

The Clerk replied that she believe the role was now included in that of an environment officer and St Helens had not opted to buy into the contract for environment officers. She thought they still had the obligation to act on loose dogs.

Mr Thomson said there was some fly-tipping behind the toilet block and that it needed clearing.

The Clerk promised to chase this up with Nigel Leppard from the IW Council who looks after St Helens Green.

Mrs Parker reported that he had received complaints about dangerous parking on the Station Rd/Downsview Rd junction. The Clerk promised to ask the PCSO to monitor.

Miss Ryan reported that some of the beach huts had been demolished and look unsightly.

Mr Thomson said they were being rebuilt.

Miss Ryan also reported that the banner sited on the fencing at the end of Broomlands Close was obscuring the view of motorists and needs re-siting.

Miss Ryan also reported that she had received complaints regarding 6 abandoned cars in the car park. Clerk to report to the IW Council.

Mr Campbell reported a block drain on the bend at the bottom of Station Rd – Clerk to report to Island Roads.

Mr Campbell also reported a broken dog bin in Mill Rd – Clerk to report to Island Roads.

Mr Campbell reported that a plumbers van had caused damage to the West Green Triangle – Clerk to report to Alex Minns.

**Meeting closed at 8.33pm.**

Signed Chair.....

14<sup>th</sup> March 2016

## **Devolution of Isle of Wight Council Services**

I write further to our recent meetings in respect of the above in order to set out how I propose we might want to develop discussions in respect of the above. I suggest that this would be in a two stage process dealing firstly with public conveniences and then with other service areas including grounds maintenance and seafront concessions.

### **Public Conveniences**

The proposal which seems most acceptable to the majority of town and parish councils is that they take ownership of the facilities within their area and full responsibility for the use and costs associated with the asset. In return for transferring the freehold ownership of each asset the Isle of Wight Council would require covenants from the town & parish council as set out below:

1. It will only use the building as a public convenience and for no other purpose
2. It will not dispose of the building by leasehold or freehold without the Isle of Wight Council's written permission.
3. Where the Isle of Wight Council permits the disposal of an asset then it will be entitled to receive a share of the net capital receipt (after allowing for the costs of disposal and any improvements made by the town or parish council).
4. If a building is unused and falls into a state of repair that renders it unusable as a public convenience then the town or parish council will transfer the freehold back to the Isle of Wight Council.

It would be my intention that we try to achieve a transfer of the assets by the end of March 2016, if town and parish councils are agreeable. It will therefore be necessary to know at the earliest opportunity of your interest in the assets in your area.

### **Parks, Open Spaces & Concessions**

In my opinion these services are probably more complex to reach an agreement over and therefore may take some more time and discussions to work through. A transfer is further complicated by the current contract the Isle of Wight Council has for the maintenance of these areas. This ends at the end of 2018 and will be an important element of our discussions.

In simple terms I would propose that the Isle of Wight Council transfers the freehold of these areas to town & parish councils who would then be responsible for setting and paying for the standard of maintenance of the areas. The income from the concessions in an area would help to offset these costs.

The terms of the transfer would be broadly similar to those set out for the public conveniences. I would propose that we allow until the end of September 2016 to negotiate the terms and timings of any agreed transfers with town & parish councils with a view to implementation from April 2017.

The principles set out in this note are still subject to the approval of the Council, which I hope to achieve by the end of January 2016; works can still progress subject to the approval. At this point I will also be seeking confirmation in respect of public conveniences, that if terms are unable to be agreed with a town or parish council the Council will not consider funding the availability of the facilities.

I have asked Simon Dennis to lead on this 'devolution' project and he, working to Bill Murphy, will be responsible for liaising with town & parish councils from the point of this correspondence.

Thank you for your interest and support for these proposals and the constructive way you are working with us to secure the sustainability of these services for our local community.

Kind regards

John

**John Metcalfe** | Chief Executive

Isle of Wight Council | County Hall | Newport | Isle of Wight PO30 1UD

## Public Toilet Provision 2016/17 Report.

### **Background.**

The IW Council is going to close the public toilet block on St Helens Seafront on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 as they have a budget deficit and can no longer afford to keep it open. They have agreed that the toilet blocks across the Island that are proposed for closure can be devolved to town and parish council's if they wish to take over local public toilet provision.

The IW Council have offered some of the income from the associated concessions to town and parish council's to ease the financial burden to local councils. The relevant concessions in the St Helens area are the beach hut leases and the income from the seafront car park. The council are not willing to hand over any income from the car park as this has already been budgeted for. However, they are willing to negotiate over the beach hut income going forward but the lease is not due up for renewal until 2017.

In 2011 the parish council undertook a survey of local people and the overwhelming majority wished local toilets to remain open. (report attached).

Taking on the freehold of the toilets will mean taking on maintenance liabilities. The freehold deal offered by the IW Council has conditions attached. i.e. have to be used as public toilets. Taking on the freehold of the toilets would be a financial liability going forward. The buildings are prone to vandalism, in a poor general state and will have ongoing maintenance liabilities.

There will be an opportunity to redevelop the site if relevant planning permissions are sought. i.e. converting half the building into a commercial interest possibly generating income.

The water bill for the toilets block is unusually high, probably due to the freshwater tap sited outside. IW Council officers are looking into whether this tap needs to be provided as part of the beach hut agreement.

The Council have offered to enter into a "Tenancy at Will" agreement for public toilets with town and parish councils as they are aware of the short timescale between discussions with them and the closure date. The tenancy at will agreement will allow time for negotiations to continue whilst keeping the toilets open during that interim period. Tenancy at will agreements are a short term solution and will not be an ongoing solution.

### Options

1. Do nothing. Toilets on the Duver will be closed and the building offered for sale.
2. Take over the freehold of the toilet block on the seafront, run as they are at present including taking on the financial liabilities and maintenance costs.
3. Enter into a "Tenancy at Will" for the seafront toilet block with the IW Council for the interim period until information regarding the beach hut leases is available and negotiations over income complete. Offer public toilets for the summer months and then discuss again.

## Clerk's recommendations.

- ✚ **Option 3** - run over the summer months and re-evaluate.
- ✚ Disconnect the tap outside as soon as possible.
- ✚ **A Councillor led working group is formed to devise the way forward for public toilet provision throughout the village. With a remit to:**
  - Investigate the usage of both toilets.
  - Carry on negotiations with the IW Council over concession income.
  - Arrange for condition reports/building survey to fully understand maintenance liabilities.
  - Propose a plan for toilet provision for 2017/18.
  - Assess other possible uses for the toilet block/ possible redevelopment plans.
  - Investigate sources of grant income that may help fund provision of public toilets.
  - Bring recommendation to full council for consideration.
  - Cleaning contract revisions

St Helens Parish Council.

Provision of public toilets. Recommendations presented by councillor Ian Thomson.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 the IOW council will close all public toilets that are not taken over by town and parish councils.

Option 1. Let them close both toilets in St Helens and challenge them on grounds of Public Health. This would make a big financial saving for the residents.

Option 2. Keep open the toilets on the green and let the IOW council close the Duver toilets. The costs for the residents would stay the same and could be reduced if they were closed in the winter. Please read my report about the conditions of the building.

Option 3. Close the toilets on the green and take over the ones on the Duver. Providing the costs are no greater than currently paid by the PC.

Option 4. Take over both toilets and only open in the summer, again only if the cost is no more than at the present. The risk of this option is that the PC are taking on the responsibility for two buildings. Risk of high maintenance.

Summary. I do not believe that the PC should burden the tax payers of St Helens with any more costs for the provision of public toilets. Than they do at present.

The PC should tell the IOW council that they will not even consider taking over the freehold of any of the toilets in the village unless they have a survey by an independent surveyor as to the condition of the buildings. This to be paid for by the IOW council.

TOILET BLOCK ST HELENS GREEN 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

I visited the building on the above date in connection with an incident of the previous day. I reported the damage to the clerk.

While I was there I took the opportunity to inspect the fabric of the building.

EXTERNAL. All the woodwork is in a poor condition and requires painting.

Areas of brickwork require pointing.

The concrete bitumen lined gutter is leaking badly to all elevations, rainwater is penetrating into the brickwork. This could cause serious problems to the structural integrity of the building. The surrounding is quite frankly a mess and requires cleaning up. I have already mailed the clerk about this.

Internally. Gents. The ceiling is in a poor condition with black mould generally, it is really bad around the skylight. There are signs of water ingress on the ceiling i.e. staining and peeling paint. The whole place requires a deep clean.

LADIES. Suffers from the same problems as the gents.

DISABLED. All one can say is please go and have a look and come back to the next meeting and tell us all if you would like to use it.

CONCLUSION. The IOW council consider it fit for purpose then their standards are very low and the building is not in a good state of repair with the potential to cost the tax payers of the village a lot of money in the not too distant future.

I believe that the PC should hand back the keys to the IOW council and concentrate on the Duver toilets. The PC should not spend one penny more on the provision of toilets than they do now.

Expenditure	Budget	Actual	2017/18
Staff costs	8003.52	8003.52	8083.555
Payroll costs			178
pension 6%			483.21
<b>Total</b>			<b>8744.765</b>
<b>Admin costs</b>			
Mileage	150	85.61	150
Office/broadband	180	180	180
Printing/photocopying	300	141.98	175
training	0	10	50
subs	0	0	
postage	100	84.46	100
Clerk cover	50	38.79	50
Replace laptop/equip	0	0	100
Meeting room hire	200	249	300
Annual & Extra Newsletter	200	128	150
stationary	150	26.92	150
Toilets			
Cleaning	7280	7280	7280
Utilities	750	200	750
maintenance	750	0	750
Insurance	500	0	500
Toilets duver			5000
<b>Old Church Green</b>			
Gross cutting	1920	1920	0
Bins	0	189.08	0
Bin collection (amended)	1500	1500	2500
additional works	250	0	1000
Gross cutting Green/OCG	2960	2960	2960
<b>Misc Expenses</b>			
Christmas bu/bof st contribution	1000	870.99	1000
Insurance	508.3	388.88	510
Election costs	1500	0	900
Churchyard contribution	250	250	250
Wreath	50	50	50
Parish plan hall hire	0	21	50
Consultation expenses/HNS	300	0	100
Clk training	100	0	100
deffb contr	0	300	0
<b>Audit</b>			
Internal	120	110	120
External	120	276	276
Subs	280	280	280
Parish plan development ans	6688	1500	7500
Notice Board	1500	609	0
	37659.82	27653.23	42025.77

1% payrise awarded

LCTS 1990 last year

29150

1333

30483

\*Nelson's Quay Improvements

Provisional Tax base 558

Each

£1,000 adds

£1.80 annually

£'s

0% 25000

C/F projected in account at end of year

£'s

25000 0.11% reduction

Income

precept

LCTS

gross cutting contribution

vat reclaim

Alto balance

Interest

Total funds

-Projected expenditure

reserves carried forward.

Average band D cost per annum in £'s

2016-17 52.24

52.15 per annum

2015-16 52.26

Clerk's recommendation

Precept request of £29150