

St Helens Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at 7pm on the 12th December 2016 at St Helens Community Centre.

In attendance:

Chair: Mr Earnshaw

Councillors: Cllr Bacon, Mr Campbell, Mr Coleman, Mr Robertson, Miss Ryan and Mr Thomson.

Clerk: Mrs Dyer

6 Members of the public.

133/2016 Apologies for absence.

Apologies received from Victoria Duckett.

134/2016 Declarations of Interest

a, The Clerk reminded Councillors of the obligations to keep their Register of Interests up to date and complete and issued a reminder that their spouses/partners interests are also their interests and should be included in the declaration.

b, No declarations received.

135/2016 Minutes: To approve the minute of the last meeting of the Council held on the 14th November 2016.

Mr Thomson requested an amendment to minute 135/2016.

“130/2016 Councillor’s reports and requests for items to be included on future agenda.

Mr Thomson asked that a handy man be found to put up the dog signs.”

He would like it amended to say that Mr Earnshaw asked that a handy man be found to put up the dog signs.

Mr Earnshaw disputed the amendment.

Mr Thomson proposed the amendment be accepted.

2nd Mr Campbell

For

Mr Thomson

Mr Campbell

Mr Coleman

Abstained

Cllr Bacon

Mr Earnshaw

Mr Robertson

Miss Ryan

RESOLVED - minute amended as per proposal.

Mr Campbell proposed the minutes be signed as true and correct

2nd Mr Coleman

RESOLVED – Minutes and amendment approved as true and correct.

136/2016 Progress reports – To receive reports for information only from :

a) The Chair

The Chair reported that he had attended the IWALC meeting and would like the minutes of IWALC meetings put on the Parish Council website.

He reported the resignation of the Clerk.

b) The Clerk

Clerk's Progress report:

She confirmed that she had written to Alex Minns, as requested, last month and have heard back from him – he is reluctant to do anything re parking on the Green as he does not believe it is practical and does not have the resources to enforce.

She has requested an update on the situation with the beach huts but has yet to hear back from the IW Council – The Parish Council will need to consider their position with regard to continuing to run the Duver toilets shortly as the budget will need to be approved within the next few months. She asked if Councillor Bacon could chase this up as the Parish Council need to know their plans sooner rather than later.

She has reported some issues raised at the last meeting again to Island Roads. There has been a change of District Steward recently and some outstanding issues were not handed over to him, he has promised to follow up.

She has now found some handy men to quote for some works.

She has received some figures from the IW Council regarding Greens management, however, they have not included any legal, or insurance costs. The IW Council have an in- house legal team, enforcement officers and parks inspectors. We would have to either buy into their services or appoint our own. These costs have not been factored in.

They have also not included the time spent by Lee Matthews, Tricia Stillman or Jackie Ellis who deal with the bookings and other management issues.

She has dropped the light head from Nelson's Quay off with FW Marsh to see if it can be repaired.

She has received some correspondence from a concerned resident about the lack of facilities for colostomy bag users within the disabled toilets. They are asking the Parish Council to consider installing shelves in the disabled toilets and suitable bins to ensure they can be changed hygienically as in many public toilets this has to be done on the floor. Using the floor is unsuitable and that facilities should be available for this in disabled toilets. If Councillors agree she will ask the handy man to quote for the installation of a stainless shelf in both toilets.

c) Councillors

Miss Ryan asked if the Clerk could make a list of useful contacts and information to hand over to the new clerk.

Mr Coleman believed there was a lack of follow up on some of the things agreed by Council. He asked that an Action Log be created and sent to Councillors to remind them of the things they have agreed to undertake.

Mr Thomson asked whether anyone has claimed the wood left behind in the toilet blocks? He said that the Clerk was supposed to inform him whether the wood belonged to either the Village Fayre or the Sports and Carnival committee. The Clerk said that she thought that had been established at the last meeting as both representatives from the Sports and Carnival and Village Fayre were present and they had made no claim on it, therefore it was free to be removed.

137/2016 Public Forum

Members of the public are permitted to ask questions or give opinion on agenda items.

A member of the Public reported that over 70 Evidence forms had been completed to prove 20 years of usage of the Old Railway line as a footpath. He asked the Parish Council to support his application to get the path added to the definitive map.

A member of the public asked why the appointment of a planning consultant was on the agenda when it hadn't been discussed by the parish plan committee. He thought the Parish Plan committee should discuss this first and make a recommendation to full council.

A member of the public raised that he was disappointed with the lack of knowledge amongst members of the Parish Council with regards to rules and regulations relating to the Village Green. He went through all the acts and regulations that related to the village green at some length and was asked by the Chairman, several times, to get to the point. He proffered his solution to the problem with parking on the Green he suggested that people be allowed to park on the Green on the proviso that they repaired any damage they caused.

138/2016 Footpaths –

a) To receive an update regarding the meeting with Mr D Clarke (IOW Council footpath manager) Meeting Report - meeting with Darrel Clarke, Jonathan Bacon (Ward member), Keith Ballard (RSPB) and Lisa Dyer (Clerk) on 8/12/2016.

The parish council requested a meeting with Mr Clarke to discuss the path from St Helens to Bembridge along the Old Railway track and whether it could be added to the definitive map and also to discuss the status of other paths within the area.

Mr Ballard confirmed that the RSPB had registered the path as permissive and had allowed people to walk on it since they took ownership in 2004. The RSPB maintain the path and it has been formally registered since 2009 under a Section 31 as a permissive path.

Mr Ballard confirmed that the RSPB had no intention of closing the path as one of the main aims of the RSPB is to 'give access to nature' to the public.

He thought that the RSPB would be unlikely to dedicate the path as a public right of way for the following reasons.

- They don't need to
- The RSPB are a charity and shouldn't dispose of assets without good cause and consideration
- They have no intention of closing the path
- They can not support the path crossing the lagoon at the Bembridge end as the site is awarded the highest levels of conservation protection and is a triple sssi site.
- Registering the path may increase usage and as the path comes to a dead end people often cross the lagoon to exit the path. The RSPB would not wish to encourage this.
- He would be more inclined to recommend dedication as a footpath if a proper exit route was installed which diverts people away from the protected lagoon.

Mr Ballard also presented evidence of signs warning people that they had no rights over this land.

These signs were dated with the 1959 act. Mr Clarke confirmed that if any signs have been displayed evidence of 20 years usage would need to pre-date the erection of these signs.

Mr Clarke commented that

- Generally the Council consider permissive paths a positive thing and is grateful to the land owners for opening up land.
- You can still register a path after 2026 on the matter of usage therefore there is no urgency in that respect
- To prove usage would need to prove access for 20 years without force, secrecy or permission.
- As the signs along the track are dated with the 1959 is would be a reasonable assumption that they were erected before 1980 (The 1959 was replaced by the 1980 act) therefore you would need to prove access for the 20 years prior to 1980.
- However, if it can be proved that the signs were erected earlier it would need to be 20 years before that.
- If an application gets approved to register the path as a right of way the IW Council is under no obligation to maintain it. The RSPB maintain the path at present.
- If a previous owner of the land had granted permission for people to walk along it then usage would need to be proved 20 years prior to that.
- The last application considered by Council was for a footpath in Bembridge and took around 4 years to be considered. It was refused.

Mr Ballard commented that the RSPB may consider dedication as a ROW if a suitable exit route could be obtained at the Bembridge end although this would need approval from the RSPB board and Natural England.

It was agreed that Mr Clarke would contact Mr Thorpe who know owns the harbour as it is believed he owns a parcel of land at the end of the footpath that would make a suitable exit route, with a view to possible dedication as a Right of Way if all parties and agencies are in agreement.

Mr Clarke would provide the Clerk with a map of adopted highways to enable us to research the status of the other paths in question.

Mr Ballard agreed to issue a written statement confirming that the RSPB has no intention of closing the path.

b) To agree on whether to pursue modification orders within the village

It was agreed not to pursue the order at present but reconsider at a later date. It was also agreed that the Parish Council work with the RSPB and the IW Council, in the first instance, and try to find a suitable exit for the footpath to allow the RSPB to consider dedicating the path as a right of way. The Parish Council agreed to write to the owner of the harbour and request that they dedicate a small piece of land as a footpath at the end of a track to provide a suitable exit route. They agreed to discuss again if this approach is unsuccessful.

139/2016 Computer and email problems.

a) To receive report from IT specialist regarding email and computer problems

Report noted. Report retained on file with signed minutes.

b) To approve costs for transferring email to new large capacity server

Mr Campbell proposed that the quote for transferring the parish council emails to a new server and the purchase of Office 365 be approved.

2nd Cllr Bacon

RESOLVED

Unanimous

c) To approve purchase of new laptop and printer

The Clerk had managed to source a laptop and printer of similar specification from an alternative source and the costs are:

£519.76 for both.

Mr Campbell proposed that the purchasing of a new laptop and printer be approved.
2nd Cllr Bacon.

RESOLVED.

Unanimous.

140/2016 To receive report and recommendations on the review of survey methodology.

Mr Coleman gave the following report:

ST HELENS – SURVEY INVESTIGATION – DECEMBER 2016

This investigation was undertaken to ascertain what method was used for the last survey and to make recommendations going forward in respect of future surveys.

1. TOILET SURVEY: THE DUVER AND THE GREEN, ST HELENS

The Parish Councillors distributed the survey by hand. It is estimated there are 730 households in the village however 650 surveys were distributed; no reason was given for the discrepancy. It is reasonable to assume that the village population is in the region of 1300, 161 of which responded, this equates to 12% of the residents.

The survey form/covering letter, if a little long, was self-explanatory and the results were all positive for keeping the toilets open on both sites in varying degrees. So whilst it can be seen the majority of respondents voted in favour of keeping the toilets open it cannot be stated that the majority of residents agreed with the decision.

Going forward we need to ensure any survey(s) are truly representative hence please find below some suggestion for future surveys dependent on the subject matter.

2. SURVEY OPTIONS

- Public meeting advertised extensively well in advance
- Survey forms located around the village in prominent places with a returns box in the same location plus a postal option. Places for consideration could be; The Post Office, Community Centre, Medical Centre, The Vine, Church, School, etc.
- Royal Mail provide a service where they will mail out the survey and receive the replies at an approximate cost of £1100. However replies will still have to be counted and analysed.
- Electoral Reform Service, a professional body who project manage the survey in its entirety, to survey the village the cost would be £1500 - £1750 dependent on replies.

3. CONCLUSION

Hand distribution is not effective, there are various options dependent on the type of survey being conducted and the effect on the Village. The decision on the way to conduct future surveys should be carefully considered by the Councillors before inception, **BUT** the councillors have been elected by the residents, hence they should be capable of making the majority of decisions without the cost associated with a survey.

141/2016 To consider proposals for horticultural project within the village.

Deferred to future agenda

142/2016 Best Kept Village – To consider future plans and use of prize money.

Deferred to future agenda

143/2016 Grounds Maintenance Contract Specification

To approve contract specification to enable the Parish Council to obtain quotes for Grounds maintenance.

Please see attached specification.

It was agreed to add the following to the specification:

Weed killing around the toilet block on the Green

To maintain the Village sign on Eddington Rd – Cleaning and weed clearance.

A monthly maintenance report.

Mr Earnshaw proposed the specification be approved with the above additions.

2nd Mr Campbell

RESOLVED – Contract Specification approved.

Unanimous.

144/2016 To approve the Partnership Agreement for Grounds Maintenance with IW Council.

To approve and sign the agreement between St Helens Parish Council and the IW Council for Grounds maintenance of the Village Green.

Mr Thomson proposed that the agreement be approved.

2nd Mr Campbell

RESOLVED

Unanimous.

145/2016 Housing Needs Survey - To approve costs for delivering Housing Needs Survey and collection methods for completed survey.

The Clerk explained that the Post Office offer a business reply service where you pay £94 for the license, standard postage for each letter and then 32p per reply delivered.

The outgoing costs are estimates at £980 including printing and postage. Then 32p per return received.

The Clerk suggested the Council may wish to offer an incentive to ensure the maximum number of returns.

Collection boxes within the village would reduce the cost of return postage.

Mr Thomson proposed that the costs of undertaking the housing needs survey be approved.

2nd Mr Coleman.

RESOLVED

Unanimous.

146/2016 Planning Consultant –To discuss and agree on employing a planning consultant to develop the Parish Plan.

Decision deferred until Parish Plan committee have met and made recommendation.

Mr Coleman proposed that a parish plan committee meeting be called.

2nd Mr Thomson.

RESOLVED

Unanimous.

147/2016 To approve Wedding reception request on Old Church Green.

Cllr Bacon proposed that the wedding request for the 22nd April be approved.

2nd Mr Robertson.

RESOLVED

Unanimous.

148/2016 Finance

- a) To receive proposals from Councillors for inclusions in next year's budget proposals.
Miss Ryan asked that cost be obtained for the installation of a new electric point and tree anchor on the Green.
- b) To receive finance report. The Clerk confirmed that the account had been reconciled and the balance stands at £34142.76.
Please see attached report.
- c) To approve invoices due for payment.

Invoices due for payment.

Pete Gaskin	Christmas trees, installation etc..	£450
SSE Southern Electric	(toilets green)	£87.94
SSE Southern Electric	(toilets Duver)	£145.33
Lisa Dyer	(laptop & printer refund)	£519.76
St Helens Community Centre	Hall hire	£52.00
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Day Wreath	£50.00
Lisa Dyer	Christmas Lights - Refund	£111.45
Lisa Dyer	Office Broadband Use	£45
Lisa Dyer	Mileage	£34.54
Lisa Dyer	Stamps – refund	£30.96
Pete Gaskin	Digging in cables/ electric connection	£100
Lisa Dyer	Stationary – refund	£17.49

Miss Ryan proposed that all invoices be approved for payment.

2nd Mr Campbell

RESOLVED – all invoices approved for payment.

Unanimous.

149/2016 Date of next meeting

To confirm the date of the next meeting which is scheduled for 9th January 2017.
Mr Coleman requested that the refurbishment of the anchor go on the next agenda.
Next meeting was agreed for the 9th January 2017.

Meeting closed at 9.12pm.