

Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council

Minutes

A meeting of Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council Meeting was held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 25th January 2023 in Warslow Village Hall.

Present: Chairman, Mr N Searston, Mrs L Peach, Mr P Moakes, Mrs A Wardman, Mr S Gould, the clerk, Mrs S Hampson, District Councillor, Mrs T Riley and a candidate to fulfil the one vacancy on the parish council.

Non-Confidential items

23.1.1 Attendance and apologies for absence

The members present completed the attendance register. Apologies had been received from Cllr. Mr N Gilman.

23.1.2 Casual vacancy – co-option of new councillor and declaration of acceptance of office

The clerk had contacted the election team at Staffordshire Moorland District Council and they had not received any applications to fill the casual vacancy and, therefore, advised the clerk that the vacancy could be filled by co-option. The clerk had received interest from one candidate who lived in Warslow. The clerk had sent documentation to the candidate to complete. Parish council elections will take place on 4th May 2023. The declaration of acceptance of office was completed by Mrs Allsop in front of the proper officer of the council, Mrs Hampson. Mrs Allsop had also completed the Register of Pecuniary Interest document.

Resolved: To co-opt Ms Cindi Allsop as a member of Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council with immediate effect.

23.1.3 Declaration of interest of councillors related to the agenda

Cllr. Mrs Wardman declared an interest in agenda item 23.1.14 related to the request for a donation towards the cost of an ECG monitor due to being a member of the Hartington Patients' Group. There was no need, by the other members present, to declare an interest in any items from the agenda.

23.1.4 Minutes of the previous ordinary meeting

The clerk had forwarded the minutes in advance of the meeting and these had been posted on the website.

Resolved: to accept the minutes as a true record of proceedings. The minutes were signed by the Chairman, Mr Searston.

23.1.5 Public speaking procedures document

This was available for any members of the public in attendance, however, there were no members of the public in attendance.

23.1.6 Public speaking

Please see above.

23.1.7 Update from the Village Action Group

Members of the Village Action Group had been invited by Cllr. Mrs Peach to attend the meeting to enable the group members to advise the parish council of the Action Group's role within the parish and to ascertain which provisions had been made in the parish, together with insurance details. Unfortunately, there was no representation of the group present at the meeting.

23.1.8 PCSO update

Chairman, Mr Searston had telephoned the PCSO, in advance of the meeting, for any police related updates appropriate to the parish council but in view of the length of the agenda, had invited her to attend the next meeting.

23.1.9 Update from the District Councillor

The District Councillor, Mrs Riley had kindly collected a copy of the latest electoral roll from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for official use by the clerk, in advance of the forthcoming elections in May 2023. This will enable councillors to obtain their unique reference numbers for completion of election documentation. Cllr. Mrs Riley advised that there had been a district council housing meeting and a precept meeting but there were no other items to bring before the parish council.

23.1.10 Final budget and precept setting for 2023-2024

At the November meeting, the clerk had prepared the first draft of budget items for consideration towards the precept setting meeting in January 2023. These figures included amounts for trial holes and legal fees related to acquiring a possible new burial ground, plus an amount for next year's parish council elections. Based on additional budget items, the 2023-24 expenditure figure far exceeded that of the previous year's precept amount. Any additional budget items had also been requested, prior to January 2023. The clerk and responsible finance officer suggested that consideration be given to raising the council's precept figure for 2023-2024.

The tax base figures had been received from Staffordshire Moorlands to enable members to see illustrations of the effect of different precept amounts on Band D properties. There had been a slight variation of the tax base in comparison to the previous year's figure. Increases to the precept in monetary terms would not be too significant for the band D properties; however, it was acknowledged that in percentage terms, this would appear quite an increase.

The clerk hoped that it would be possible to reclaim, through the Lengthsman Scheme, an amount of £400 and had sent emails and left a telephone message. Chairman, Mr Searston had also left a message but no response had been received by the meeting date.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the expenditure and the influence of the possibility of acquiring a new cemetery for the parish together with elections, the King's coronation and other ongoing regular expenditure.

Resolved: to precept for £14,000 for 2023-2024.

Resolved: to prepared a document to publicise to parishioners explaining the rationale behind the precept increase.

Resolved: the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to forward necessary documentation to the district council.

23.1.11 Update on wayleave agreement

The clerk had not received a response to her previous email to the land agent, Mather Jamie (associated with the wayleave agreement) and had made further contact by email. The details had been forwarded to Cllr. Mr Moakes to pursue.

Resolved: Cllr. Mr Moakes had spoken to the land agent's assistant, with a view to speaking later in the week.

23.1.12 Grit for Elkstones and grit bin for the primary school

The clerk had made a further request to Staffordshire County Council for additional grit for Upper Elkstones and the possibility of a grit bin at the perimeter of the primary school. The clerk had found the website very difficult to report matters which may not 'fit' their reporting process, including the initial map.

Cllr. Mrs Peach also reported she had experienced the same difficulties. It was also reported that the grit bin on Back Lane was also empty. The responsibility to fill this grit bin lies with Staffordshire County Council. Members discussed the possibility of sourcing grit elsewhere.

23.1.13 Archive

Cllr. Mr Moakes had arranged an appointment with the Staffordshire Archivist, at the end of January, to visit and view some of the parish council's documents held there.

23.1.14 Consideration of Section 137 donation to portable ECG machine for the surgery

Cllr. Mrs Wardman declared an interest in this item as a member of the Hartington Patients' Participation Group.

Hartington Surgery serves a high proportion of residents of neighbouring parishes, including Warslow and Elkstones. The clerk had received a request from the Patients' Group (a separate charity to the surgery) for funding towards a portable ECG monitor. Information had been sent to the councillors in advance of the meeting to aid their decision. The clerk and Responsible Finance Officer had made enquiries to confirm that the parish council could consider a donation, using Section 137 which permits donations at the rate of £8.82 per elector. An approximate percentage donation per parish council had been suggested; £200 being requested from Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council. Some other parish councils, whose residents attend the surgery, had also been approached for a contribution; however, it was noted that not all of the neighbouring parishes had been approached.

Resolved: in principle, to support a donation towards the purchase of the ECG monitor for the benefit of parishioners of Warslow and Elkstones but to await a response to a communication from the clerk highlighting that not all neighbouring parish councils had been contacted and if additional parish councils were to make a contribution, then the percentage required from each council could possibly be reduced.

23.1.15 King's coronation

The clerk had contacted the District Council, in advance of the meeting, to enquire whether there would be any grants available towards the forthcoming coronation celebrations but no response had been received in time for the meeting. An initial discussion took place regarding possible ways the parish could mark the occasion.

Resolved: to place the item on future agendas to discuss further.

23.1.16 Parish Council elections

As referred to above, these will take place in May 2023. The clerk suggested that in view of these, the parish council could consider holding an additional short meeting in April 2023. From the clerk's enquiries with the election team at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, the clerk had been advised that election packs will become available for candidates. The clerk cannot assist with the completion of candidates' applications. Unfortunately, Cllr. Mrs Wardman advised that she does not intend to stand again as a candidate in May 2023. Cllr. Mrs Wardman has provided approximately 30 years' service as a dedicated parish councillor

Resolved: to repeat the item on future agendas until the election.

Resolved: the clerk to request updates to the electoral roll.

23.1.17 Planning, appeals, planning decisions

A new planning application had been received for Pump Farm, School Lane, Warslow for the demolition of farm buildings and the erection of 2 new farm buildings and building operations. Members discussed this application but felt that a site meeting would be of benefit to clarify some aspects, including the building operations and any clauses that may be attached to the final decision.

Planning decision notices had been granted for recent proposals at Shay Side Farm.

Resolved: the clerk to seek an extension to the deadline for submission of comments and the parish council's decision and to also seek a site meeting with the planning officer concerned.

23.1.18 Items of account, clerk, lengthsman, wayleave, HMRC, general income and expenditure

Cq 730	S Hampson	January and February clerk's salaries	£472.48
Cq 731	S Hampson	January and February working from home allowance	£56
Cq 732	S Hampson	Mileage allowance	£6.30
Cq 733	WACFR	Donation to First Responders (Section 137)	£100

The clerk asked for consideration to be given to the bank statements being sent directly to her address rather than to the chairman's. In addition, she had suggested the use of a different internal auditor used by the other parish councils to which she is also clerk. A summary of the credentials and experience of the suggested internal auditor had been requested and submitted to members in advance of the meeting. The clerk had advised the insurance company to include the new noticeboard at Elkstones. It was reported that the parish council can include up to £10,000 of assets.

Resolved: The chairman remained happy to continue to receive the bank statements.

Resolved: The clerk to request proof of Professional Indemnity Insurance from an alternative internal auditor.

23.1.19 Highways

The clerk had attempted to report some highway issues on the Staffordshire County Council's website but had experienced some difficulties with pinpointing locations on the map without specific postcodes. Previously reported potholes remain outstanding. The clerk suggested compiling a list of postcodes for some areas to assist with reporting. The use of the system 'What 3 words' was suggested.

23.1.20 Items for the next agenda

Burial ground, Wayleave, Village Action Group, PCSO, grit bins and supply for Elkstones, asset register, possible disposal of assets. Additional items to be prepared by the clerk, as required.

23.1.21 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 22nd March 2023 at 7.30 pm (This a change to previously a previously advertised date. This meeting will take place in the village hall kitchen area due to a prior engagement in the main hall).

Confidential business

23.1.22 The burial ground

Cllr. Mr Moakes provided some information on recent conversations with the Diocese's Glebe Agent/Land Agent regarding land values. The clerk had resubmitted documents to the councillors regarding Public Works Loans. The clerk had also spoken to the Cemetery Superintendent at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council who reported he was not aware of any available funding or grants but would speak to other colleagues and report back to the clerk; this had not happened in time for the meeting.

23.1.23 Disposal of assets

The clerk had obtained the address where an old strimmer is being kept in Elkstones which belongs to the parish council. This had been provided to Cllr. Mr Moakes to retrieve and assess with a view to its disposal from the parish council's assets. Cllr. Mrs Wardman was able to provide a telephone number to assist with this matter

The meeting was declared closed at 10.25 pm

Mrs S Hampson,
Clerk to Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council
26th January 2023