MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Merton Parish Council**

**held Tuesday 5th September 2023 at St Peter’s Church, Merton**.

**Present:** Cllr. Hyde, Chair, Cllr. Wesley-Smith, Councillor de Grey and Jean Williams Parish Clerk/RFO.

There were three members of the public present

**1 Welcome**.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

**2. To receive apologies and approve absences.**

Apologies were received from District Councillor Cowen, the absence was approved and accepted.

**3. To receive declarations of interest in any items to be discussed and grant any dispensation requests.**

None.

**4. Public Participation. Max 30 minutes.**

A resident voiced their disappointment about information they had received from their landlord asking them to clear all the planting from the ditch outside of their property.

The residents are tenants of a house owned by Flagship.

Councillor Wesley Smith explained that this was part of the role of the project Reclaim the Rain, she explained that the ditches and culverts were blocked and needed to be cleared. Reclaim the Rain project is working with agencies to have the ditches and culverts cleared. To date they are making good progress.

The aim is to prevent the repeat of the recent flooding in the village around the green.

A member of the public who is also a member of Reclaim the Rain working group, explained how the project was being managed, information was shared that all home owners in the area are required to clear any planting on the ditches, to give contractors access to the places they will need to work. Considerable work is required because the ditches are half the size they should be. The meeting was informed that all members of the village need to be on board and support the project, the more people involved the better the results will be.

Discussion took place in depth about water levels and water courses as well as the flow of water. People present at the meeting were reminded that the ditches and culverts had not been cleared for many years.

Reclaim the Rain are having some difficulties trying to discover the owners of various areas of land.

Residents were urged to attend meetings of the Reclaim the Rain project, especially those who have lived in the village a for considerable number of years because their knowledge will be very useful and help considerably in the way forward.

Councillor Mouser stated he would ensure that resident’s comments and concerns were brought to the notice of the Reclaim the rain team

**5. To receive reports**

**Report of the County Councillor.**

County Councillor not present, no report received.

**Report of the District Councillor.**

District Councillor Cowen not present, no report received.

**Report of the Parish Clerk.**

The parish clerk stated that all correspondence has been circulated to the Councillors as it arrived.

The Village Hall has now been made safe by Peter Sorenson, who has very kindly carried the work out for no cost.

The Clerk has had a message from a resident to say a slat on one of the seats in the bus shelter is missing, with a request for it to be repaired.

Councillors asked if Mr Sorenson would be agreeable to carry out this work, the Clerk said that she would ask him, but pointed out he was no longer living locally and he may not feel it a cost-effective job.

Photographs of the seat have been taken, the Clerk will send them to Mr Sorenson.

**6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 12th July 2023.**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed by all present and signed by the Chairman.

**7. Matters arising from the Minutes**

None

**8. To receive updates on ditches and drains.**

See Item 4

**9. To receive updates on Planning Matters.**

No Planning Applications received.

**10. To receive updates on The Post Box.**

The Clerk will re contact Royal Mail as well as Liz Truss.

**11. To discuss the site of the Telephone Box.**

Nothing further has happened re: the clearing of this area, the Clerk will continue to contact Network UK.

**12**. **To discuss the Councillor Vacancy**

Councillors discussed the vacancy the Clerk will include this in an article in The Waylander Magazine.

**13. To discuss grass cutting in the Village Hall Grounds and the future of the Village Hall.**

The Parish Clerk reported that she has been unable to find anyone to cut the grass around the Village Hall because their diaries are now full. Contractors do not want to commit to ad hoc dates. The Clerk had contacted Robert White who had verbally quoted the sum of £80, when the Clerk had asked him to confirm the amount in an e mail he had quoted £80 plus VAT. Councillors debated this amount and after discussion agreed on the sum because the VAT can be reclaimed. The Clerk will contact Mr White and agree that he can go ahead when he is able.

The Clerk had received a message from a parishioner re the future of the Village Hall. The person had suggested that the funding be used to maintain the grounds. Councillors said that this was not possible, the future of the building cannot be decided by the parish council it must be decided by the whole village.

**14. To receive current information on Reclaim the Rain**

See item 4

**15. To discuss an Emergency Plan for the Village in case of fire or flood**

A suggestion was made at the last parish council meeting that it would be a good idea to have a formalised plan for procedures to cope with an emergency in the village such as fire or flood. The clerk had obtained some information from Ashill, with recommendations for effective procedures to be adopted. On reading the information the Councillors realised that the requirements are in place on an informal basis. Councillors decided there was no need at this time to formalise the arrangements.

**16. To discuss the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge**

This item was raised by the Chairman, the Clerk explained that accepting the pledge means that the Parish Council agrees that all military personnel whether in active service or not and irrespective of their rank are eligible for equality of support. Councillors agreed unanimously that they sign up to the pledge.

**17.To receive the Financial Report to date.**

**Community Account 60629359** Balance to date  **£2,056.62**

**Payments Owing:**

Mrs Wellbelove Internal Auditor £ 25.00

Clerks Salary June, July & August £388.35

Clerks Tax Liability June, July & August £ 97.00

**Total £ 413.35 Balance £1,546.27**

**Community Account 03142361** (Village hall) Balance as of the above date **£2,905.61**

**Business Premium Account 80836257 £1,690.58**

**Accounts Owing**

The Clerk did not have this written report with her, she gave a verbal report and agreed to send the written report to the Councillors after the meeting.

The Clerk presented a budget plan for the financial year 2024 to 2025 in preparation for the next parish council meeting in January 2024 where the budget will need to be agreed so that the application for the Precept can be submitted at the end of January. Councillors accepted the plan for their perusal and agreement in January

**18. To confirm the date of the next Parish Council Meeting**

Councillors agreed that the date for the next Parish Council Meeting would be: Tuesday 9th January 2024, at 6pm.

**19. Any other relevant items not included on the agenda.**

None

**20. Items for the next Agenda**

The Budget and Precept Application

The meeting closed at 7:15pm

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Chairperson**