

TOSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 26th January 2022 at Tostock Village Hall beginning at 8.15 pm

Present Cllrs O Boland, Johansson, MacDowall, Mellen, Richardson (Ch)

Attending Mr Peter Dow
7 members of the public

MINUTES

22.01.01 **Resolved: That Mr Peter Dow be appointed Clerk to this meeting.**

22.01.02 **Noted:** The following when Apologies for Absence were invited.

2.1 An apology for absence from Cllr P Boland which was noted.

22.01..03 **Noted :** That when any Members' declarations of Local Non-Pecuniary Interest and/or Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in subsequent Agenda items were invited and any additions, deletions or alterations to the Council's Register of Interests noted, none were forthcoming.

22.01.04 **Resolved: That, the Minutes of the Meeting of 11th October, as circulated and published, be agreed as a true record.**

22.01.05 **Noted during a Public Forum:**

5.1 The Chairman extended, on Council's behalf, thanks to Cllr. Wendy Turner who has, for family reasons, resigned her position and moved away from the area. Cllr Mellen agreed to convey to her appreciation of the work she undertook in supporting Tostock.

5.2 Cllr Mellen, as SCC Ward Member, added to his recently published Report the fact that an uplift in the SCC element of Council Tax is to be expected in the region of some 2.99%, including the hypothecated element for Social Care. He also gave notice of imminent anticipated closures of A14 for upgrading works, including replacement of the old concrete running surface.

5.3 Cllr Richardson, as MSDC Ward Member, confirmed that there were no definitive figures yet available for proposed Council Tax levels but that MSDC budgets show unallocated reserves in the low millions of pounds.

5.4 Mole activity on the Leys need attention and the Chairman undertook to take action.

5.5 The Chairman undertook to investigate the position regarding the Speed Indicator Device which awaits siting.

5.6 It was suggested that a Highways hazard remains on Church Road near the access to GL Cars Ltd.

5.7 The Chairman confirmed that the scheduled meeting in May would be the Annual Meeting of Council and that he would look into the possibility of convening an Annual Parish Meeting.

5.8 It was confirmed that SCC are in possession of details related to the necessary water jetting of the culvert at Flatts Lane and of a quoted cost of £400.00 for the works.

22.01.06 **Noted as Chairman's Announcements:**

6.1 The advertisement for a Clerk had generated no interest and advice from SALC suggests an increase on salary rate offered to a level in line with other similar councils. Meanwhile, the cost of a locum service did not seem justifiable and Peter Dow has given an assurance that he will continue to act as Meeting Clerk for the next 4 scheduled meetings if necessary.

- 6.2 The cost of any proposed events to mark the forthcoming Platinum Jubilee has been removed from the Council's published Earmarked Reserves as Mid Suffolk are offering grant aid and the Ward Member's Locality Budget could be directed towards assisting. The Chairman will act as co-ordinator, as necessary, should any group or groups in the village wish to initiate any events.

22.01.07 There was discussion regarding the Budget, as tabled, towards the setting of a Precept for 2022 / 2023 from which the following points emerged and the subsequent Resolutions unanimously agreed:

On a Point of Order, the Clerk tendered his non-binding advice that Cllr Boland would have no Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in subsequent budget discussions. The expenses relating to the recent Judicial Review, in which Cllr Boland was the Claimant would, of necessity, form an integral element of any such discussion. However, as the resulting costs settlement is a matter of fact beyond Cllr Boland's control and from which Cllr Boland derives no consequential benefit, no Interest exists. The Meeting accepted this advice and no Declarations of Interest were forthcoming.

- 7.1 The Precept figure in the Budget was indicative for the purposes of discussion;
- 7.2 There will be cost savings as a consequence of the reduced meeting schedule;
- 7.3 There are ring-fenced CIL funds which must be spent within a prescribed period and which should be the subject of discussion at the May meeting;
- 7.4 MSDC will accept no liability for the outcome of the Judicial Review for fear of setting a precedent and in light of their contention that the advice of the Monitoring Officer, which informed the process, is not binding, rather that it is indicative and for guidance only.
- 7.5 The relatively high level of unallocated reserve and anticipated reduced forward expenditure allows the theoretical shortfall in covering the legal fees outstanding from the judicial Review process to be assessed as £6,363.00, as published.
- 7.6 There are options to cover the whole of this amount with a precept uplift or to borrow from MSDC at preferential rates over a number of years.
- 7.7 Dedicating all unallocated reserve to the fee payment would leave Council exposed to risk.
- 7.8 A 5% Precept uplift, as postulated in the draft budget, would mean a Band D increase of £2.26pa which would be the subject of a full explanation in the Chronicle.
- 7.9 A reasonable way forward might be to borrow enough so as not to drain all reserves and the sum of £9,000.00 was suggested.
- 7.10 A reasonable loan term for £9,000.00 was suggested as 3 years.
- 7.11 Reduced reserves might well be augmented by grants and other funding meaning that Council could remain pro-active.
- 7.12 **Resolved: That Council should apply forthwith to borrow £9,000.00 from MSDC at a fixed rate of 1.79% payable in equal instalments over 3 years.**
- 7.13 **Resolved: That Council directs Mid Suffolk District Council to pay £10,474.00 (ten thousand four hundred and seventy-four pounds) as the precept upon them as Charging Authority for the year 2022 / 2023.**
- 7.14 **Resolved: That Cllrs Mellen and Richardson be registered as signatories with the Council's bankers.**

22.01.08 **Noted:** That the date of the next scheduled meeting, the Annual Meeting, was Monday 9th May at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

22.01.09 **Noted:** That the Meeting closed at 9.23pm.