

LEICESTER FOREST EAST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Parish Council Meeting on Friday 14th June 2024, held in the Reg Neal Room of the Parish Hall, Kings Drive, Leicester Forest East, commencing at 1.00pm.

Present: R. Darlison (Chairman) P. Kitchen (Vice-Chairman) D. Dawes
M. Bozzoni C. Wells D. Di Palma

District Cllr Coar (via the telephone)
Mrs L-A. H. O'Brien
Mrs H. E. Mann – Clerk to the Parish Council

24.109 To receive apologies for absence

None.

24.110 To receive disclosures of interest in accordance with the code of conduct

Cllr Bozzoni declared an interest in agenda item 24.113 (j). Council has previously granted him a dispensation in relation to this interest (until May 2027) which allows him to remain in the room whilst it is discussed but not to vote.

24.111 To receive reports from County/District Councillors

County Cllr Nick Chapman sent his apologies – he was attending a meeting at County Hall.

District Cllr Coar gave an update over the telephone:

Potential Childrens' Home

Over 50 complaints have been received from residents regarding a potential new children's home on the Taylor Wimpey estate. One of the main issues is parking. Also, it is understood that there may be a covenant preventing houses on the estate being used for business purposes which may be problematic for the potential childrens' home

Tesco Junction

The white lines and yellow boxes have been repainted.

Flooding A47

The issue with flooding on the A47 seems to be sorted.

Potential Pizza Restaurant

This planning application is no further forward as the parties cannot agree on an exhaust system to prevent smells leaving the shop.

General Election Boundaries

Charnwood ward is now called Leicestershire Central ward and the boundaries have changed. Contact electoral services at BDC if you want to know the exact boundaries. Your polling card will state where your polling station is.

Forest Park Table Restaurant

The council asked about rumours that this restaurant is being turned into accommodation for refugees. This is not true as far as District Cllr Coar is aware and he will raise this issue with Blaby District Council for clarification.

The council thanked District Cllr Coar for the update.

24.112 To adjourn the meeting to receive questions from Members of the Public

None.

24.113 To discuss Finances:

(a) To approve EOY accounts

Employee Costs

For Employee costs comprising of Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Premises Officer salaries, Employer's NI and Pension an £8k saving was made due to Employer's Pension Contributions being budgeted at 30% however we were advised by Pensions after the budget process to reduce the contribution to 18.7% hence the £8k saving.

Income

Due to a change in interest rates bank Interest received was much higher than expected resulting in additional income of nearly £4k being received.

Administration Expenditure

Overall a saving of £3,749 was made against administrative expenditure including £1,844 Councillor laptops, £565 Christmas Tree and £935 for office Equipment Costs.

The net effect of Income over Expenditure being £7,724.

Life Magazine

Income of £150 was received that was not budgeted for with Hampsons asking to advertise in the Life Magazine and a saving of £490 was made due to printing and distribution cost being lower than budgeted for.

Grants

Only 1 Grant request was made by the Library for £1,523 resulting in a saving of £3,477 against the Grants cost line.

Parish Hall Income

Income was £4,220 down against budget, with £2,330 less income being received by Regular hirers as we lost a couple of hirers during the year, Yoga on Tuesday evenings and Synergy exercise on Wednesday's. £1,890 less income being received for occasional hirers.

Parish Hall Expenditure

It is stated in the report that an overspend of £3,910 For Parish Hall Expenditure however this also includes expenditure for the Canopy of £6,672 and architect's fees of £2,754 once these are transferred to EMR's a saving of £5,516 was made with this mainly being made against repairs and maintenance and parish hall decorations.

Therefore, the net effect Parish Hall income over expenditure being £1,296.

Parks Income

Income of £951 was received against Budget and this is due to a resident making a donation for her husband's memorial bench.

Parks Expenditure

Overall Parks Expenditure was £11,625 over budget. This was due to an overspend on Tree & Hedge Maintenance, fencing of £4k that was not budgeted around Kings Walk Park, Play Equipment Maintenance. Even though a £3k saving was made against grass cutting and £3k for Footpath Maintenance there was still a net effect of £11,625 overspend.

Highways and Trees Expenditure

A saving of £4,883 has been made against budget due to Christmas Tree Light, benches and MVAS training not taking place this year.

Street Cleaning

A small overspend of £94 for litter picking incurred.

Parish Activities

No income was received for Parish Activities. Expenditure for Parish Activities and the Film Evening were overall in line with budget.

Overall total income received was £209,400 compared to a budget of £208,643. Therefore, additional income of £757 was received.

Overall total expenditure incurred was £218,535 compared to a budget of £223,859 with a saving of £5,324.

Actual expenditure for the year was £218,535 with income of £209,400 being received. Therefore, an overspend of £9,135. However, we the have to transfer the cost of the canopy and architects fees of £9,426 to earmarked reserves leaving a general reserve figure of £188,163. This is a movement of £291. Therefore, we have only had to spend an additional £291 compared to the general reserve figure of £187,872 at 31.03.2024.

Council noted that this shows a lot is being done for the public for a tiny precept increase. Thanks was given to the Cllrs who have volunteered to do various works. The council also gave its thanks to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk who, it said, had done exceptionally well this year managing the finances of the council.

Resolution: The council resolved to approve the end of year accounts for the financial year 2023-2024.

(b) To receive the Annual Internal Auditor's Report (AIAR) 2023/2024

The council received and noted the Annual Internal Auditor's Report (AIAR) 2023/2024.

(c) To receive internal auditor's narrative report

The council received and noted the internal auditor's narrative report, specifically noting the internal auditor's comment that *'the council continues to exhibit consistently high standards of governance and accountability that are well above average.'*

(d) To consider recommendations or matters arising from the internal auditor's narrative report

Resolution: Council resolved, on the advice of the internal auditor, to add the petty cash account to the monthly bank reconciliation.

The council is currently in the process of moving to a gov.uk website.

The Clerk will publish the Internal Auditor's narrative report alongside the AGAR starting from this year.

(e) To complete and sign the Annual Governance Statement (section 1) of the AGAR 2023-2024

Resolution: The Council completed and approved the Annual Governance Statement (section 1) of the AGAR 2023-2024.

(f) To receive and sign the Accounting Statements (section 2) of the AGAR 2023-2024

Resolution: The Council received and approved the Annual Accounting Statements (section 2) of the AGAR 2023-2024.

(g) To receive and consider the bank reconciliation 2023-2024

This was previously approved at the April meeting.

(h) To receive and consider the breakdown of reserves held

This was previously approved at the April meeting.

(i) To agree the dates for the period of public rights (30 working days including the first 10 working days of July)

Resolution: The council resolved to have the period for the notice of public rights as Tuesday 18th June to Monday 29th July (30 working days and to include the first ten working days of July).

Cllr Bozzoni declared an interest in agenda item 24.113 (j) but council has previously granted him a dispensation (until May 2027) so he was permitted to remain in the room but not to vote.

(j) To approve item 1&2 on the order paper for June 2024

Resolution: The council resolved to approve items 1 & 2 on the June 2024 order paper.

(k) To approve all remaining items on the order paper for June 2024

Resolution: The council resolved to approve the remaining order paper payments, subject to Cllr sign off for one item which was queried.

Cllrs Darlison and Kitchen to authorise the June 2024 order paper payment.

(l) To note bank the reconciliation for May 2024

Noted.

(m) To minute bank balances

As at 31.05.2024

Unity Trust Current Account - £334,865.06

Unity Trust Savings Account - £30,085.89

(n) To note the monthly accounts

Noted.

(o) To note top line budget items

April 2024 Accounts:

- The first precept payment has been received of £92,970.00
- The internal audit has been paid – £450.00
- The annual website hosting and maintenance fee has been paid.
- The £1,000 overspend, as previously resolved upon, to Rialtas for the accounts package shows in this months accounts.
- Hall hire bookings are slightly under budget.

(p) To discuss reserves

As at 31.04.2024:

General reserves – £269,065.00 (high as precept just received)

Earmarked reserve – parish hall development – £57,247.00

Earmarked reserve – paths around the parish hall – £25,005.00

Earmarked reserve – parks/play area development - £25,005.00

(q) To consider any grant applications received

None received.

The Assistant Clerk left the meeting.

24.114 To confirm minutes from the Council meeting on Wednesday 15th May 2024 as a true and accurate record

Resolution: Resolved to confirm minutes from the Council meeting on Wednesday 15th May 2024 as a true and accurate record.

24.115 To discuss matters arising from those minutes:

(a) To consider clerk's emergency policy

Resolution: Subject to adding a line to explain that the chair of the council holds a sealed envelope with the login password for the clerk's computer, council resolved to adopt the Business Continuity Policy.

Clerk to:

- *Add a line to explain that the chair of the council holds a sealed envelope with the login password for the clerk's computer to the Business Continuity policy, add adoption date and add to website.*
- *Look into doing an action plan for the Business Continuity Policy – this is a dry run to test all the issues listed in the BCP.*
- *Leave Business Continuity Policy on the council agenda for July, September and October council meetings.*

24.116 To receive planning applications/decisions/enforcement cases received after the Planning meeting was held

(a) 22/0455/FUL – 29 and 29 Bosworth Way – alteration to combine into one property and change use from (C3) to children's care home (C4)

Resolution: Resolved to object to planning application 24/0455/FUL - a potential new childrens home - one Cllr will draft a response for the clerk to send to BDC.

24/0488/HH – 29 Wardens Walk – proposed single storey side and rear extension and front porch - No comment.

24.117 To discuss matters arising from the Planning and Parks Committee meetings held Tuesday 4th June 2024

(a) To approve spend by the Parks committee from the paths around the parish hall earmarked reserve of up to £25,0005 on re-laying and adding to the existing slabbed path

Resolution: To allow the Parks committee to spend from the paths around the parish hall earmarked reserve of up to £25,0005 on re-laying and adding to the existing slabbed path.

24.118 To review the following Policies:

(a) Safeguarding policy

Resolution: Resolved to make no amendments to the Safeguarding policy.

Clerk to update reviewed date on the Safeguarding policy.

(b) Data breach policy

Resolution: Resolved to make no amendments to the data breach policy.

Clerk to update reviewed date on the Data breach policy.

(c) Subject access request policy

Resolution: Resolved to make no amendments to the Subject access request policy.

Clerk to update reviewed date on the Subject access request policy.

(d) Financial Regulations – interim review to consider several changes including to add capability to approve a year’s worth of fixed staff salaries and not to sign invoices as they show who has approved them on Unity Financial Regulations – paragraph 5.6 already provides for annual authorisation of salaries.

Resolution: Resolved to approve the bank rec each month and not just note.

Resolution: Council resolved that the clerk will minutes the names of the two Cllrs who will authorise payments that month in the minutes for ease of reference.

Clerk to:

- *Bring a list of regular salary and employment payments to a future council meeting so that these can be approved annually. (Only slightly differing employment expenses will need approving at monthly council meetings – e.g. if overtime is worked.) This will prevent quorum issues meaning salaries cannot be paid.*
- *Change future council agendas as not all payments will need authorising every month.*
- *Add a note to the Plan of Work to bring annual salary and employment expenses approval to council a year after it is initially approved.*
- *Bring internal Controls Policy to July council meeting for review as it is this policy that states invoices must be signed by two Cllrs, present thinking is that this may not be necessary as the online bank account shows which two Cllrs authorised any payment anyway so it is duplication of work.*
- *Clerk to add to future agendas an item to show which Cllrs are authorising the payment’s for that month, for ease of reference.*

24.119 To consider progress on 2024-2025 projects:

(a) Parish App – May 2024 – update

Basic app now set up – clerk to have training on this 17.06.2024.

(b) Outside power supply and to replace lights in Reg Neal room for LED – June 2024 – to receive amended quote over budgeted amount as requirements have changed (2 sockets instead of 1)

The Parks Committee has asked for a second socket which will push the quote over the budgeted amount and anything over the budgeted amount needs to be approved by council, it cannot be approved by committees.

Resolution: If the quote for the LED lights in the Reg Neal room and two outside sockets (which can be turned off from inside) is £500 plus VAT, or less, then the clerk is to accept it.

(c) Replacement Sliding Doors for Parish Hall – October 2024

Ongoing.

(d) 3 new bins for Kings Walk Park and moving them to different locations + extra bin near MUGA and installation of all – February 2025

Ongoing.

(e) Scarification of wildflower garden – April 2024 – update

Scarification and planting of wildflower seeds was completed 05.06.2024.

24.120 To consider Blaby District Council's Parish Charter

Resolution: Resolved to sign up to BDC's parish charter.

Clerk to inform BDC that LFEPC is signing up to the parish charter.

24.121 To consider what to do regarding the council's savings account as Market Harborough Building Society do not allow administrators on an account unless they are also signatories

Despite being assured twice by Market Harborough Building Society that the clerk and assistant clerk could be non-signatory administrators on the account, it appears they cannot. Therefore, what does council want to do with its savings? At present it has a Unity Trust Bank saving account but must be mindful that should that bank fail the FSCS will only guarantee £85,000. However, adding the clerk and assistant clerk as signatories is exposing council to a fraud risk.

Clerk to:

- *Move some more money into Unity Savings Account; and*
- *Keep 'To consider what to do regarding the council's savings account as Market Harborough Building Society do not allow administrators on an account unless they are also signatories' on the July council agenda.*

24.122 To receive quote to redecorate foyer, café and kitchen areas plus quote to redecorate parish office

Resolution: The council resolved to accept the quote for £1400 to redecorate the foyer, café area and kitchen plus the £350 quote to redecorate the parish office.

24.123 To receive quote to remove radiators in parish office and move electrical switches

Resolution: Resolved to accept the quote of £755.00 to remove radiators and move several switches and sockets in parish office.

24.124 To consider whether or not to publish LiFE magazine in the pre-election period

Resolution: Resolved not to publish LiFE magazine due to pre-election period.

24.125 Plan of Work

Noted.

24.126 Clerk's report

Rialtas

Rialtas do a three-year long contract and then a rolling contract – there is no mechanism to fix the prices in, for example, another three-year contract.

Film Evening

The film evening thanked the parish council for supporting it financially.

Clerk to inform film evening the council will continue to support it financially going forward.

Other updates

- The Premises Officer's partial retirement and Assistant Clerks change in hours are both going well so far.
- The air conditioning unit has now been fitted in the parish office.
- The new CCTV has now been fitted in the parish office.
- QUO may not be able to make Picnic in the Park. If so, council asked the Clerk to look into a children's discos or similar.

24.127 Councillors' forum

Nothing.

24.128 Delegates reports

Nothing.

24.129 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 17th July at 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.