

LEICESTER FOREST EAST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 20th September 2023, held in the Reg Neal Room of the Parish Hall, Kings Drive, Leicester Forest East, commencing at 7.00pm.

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

Mrs H. E. Mann – Clerk to the Parish Council

23.192 To receive apologies for absence

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept apologies for absence from Councillor Dawes.

23.193 To receive disclosures of interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Cllr Bozzoni declared an interest in agenda item 23.196(a).

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

None.

23.195 To receive reports from County/District Councillors

None.

Cllr Bozzoni left the meeting at 7.02pm.

23.196 To discuss Finances:

(a) To approve the order paper for September 2023

Resolution: The Council resolved to approve the order paper for September 2023.

Cllr Bozzoni returned to the meeting at 7.05pm.

(b) To note bank the reconciliation for August 2023

Noted.

(c) To note monthly accounts

Noted.

(d) To consider any grant applications received after implementation of new grants policy

None.

(e) To minute bank balances

HSBC Business Money Manager – as at 31.08.2023 - £244,434.32.

Unity Trust Bank – as at 31.08.2023 - £62,359.46.

(f) To consider top line budget items

Spend against budget as at 31.07.2023

Salaries

Under budget, no overtime worked and back-dated NJC salary award still awaited (which will be back dated to 01.04.2023 if paid).

Bank interest

£500 budgeted for the year but already received £827 due to interest rates increasing.

Clerk's expenses

Under budget as Clerk is only updating noticeboards once a month now, not twice.

Photocopier

This is likely to go over budget as Council has already spent £350 of the £700 budget. This is because the budget was done before the old photocopier broke and needed replacing. New copier more expensive.

Website

This was a one-off annual payment on which the Council has made a £70 saving.

Election Costs

£200 saving as no costs incurred due to the election being uncontested.

Long-Term hall Hire

Slightly under budget as a regular hirer was lost.

Occasional Hall Hire

Slightly under budget but seems to be picking up again from July.

Dog bin emptying and litter picking

Over budget as budget figure was prepared before the Clerk had to seek three quotes for the contract and prices increased.

(g) To discuss reserves

Reserves are as at 31.07.2023:

- General reserves - £216,111.
- Earmarked reserve – parish hall development - £60,000.
- Earmarked reserve – parks/play area development - £25,005.
- Earmarked reserve – paths around the parish hall - £25,005.

(h) To approve the minor amendment of a figure on the AGAR for 2022-2023

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the amendment of a typo on the AGAR in box 9, changing £997,750 to £997,730.

(k) To note that the Parish Council has passed its external audit and note the external auditor's certificate

Noted.

The Council thanked the Council staff for ensuring the Council passed its internal and external audits.

23.197 To confirm the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on 9th August 2023 as a true and accurate record

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the minutes from the meeting on August 9th 2023 as a true and accurate record.

Clerk to remove the word draft from the 9th August 2023 minutes on the website.

23.198 To discuss issues matters arising from those minutes:

(a) To discuss who will write which articles for LiFE magazine

1. Cllr Kitchen will prepare a Planning Committee article.
2. Cllr Dawes will prepare an article on trees/planting etc. on the parks.
3. Cllr Darlison will prepare a Chairman's article, including developments the parish Council has made recently on the parks.
4. The Clerk will write a short article detailing recent incidents of vandalism and associated costs to council tax payers.

Clerk to:

- *Ask both football clubs and the American football club if they wish to have an article included in the next edition of LiFE magazine.*
- *Ask Vista if they wish to include an article regarding developments and future building plans there.*

23.199 To receive Planning Applications/Decisions/Enforcement cases received after Planning meeting was held
(a) 23/0747/HH – 130 Hinckley Road – first floor and single storey rear extensions and associated alterations
No Comment.

(b) 23/0741/HH – 52 Hinckley Road – single storey rear extension
No Comment.

(c) 23/0768/HHPD - 108 Hinckley Road - The erection of a single storey rear extension which would extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse by 8 metres, for which the maximum height would be 3.9 metres and for which the height to eaves would be 2.6 metres
No Comment.

23.200 To discuss any matters arising from the Planning and Parks Committee meetings held Tuesday 5th September 2023

(a) To consider the Parks Committee’s recommendation to remove all three bins on Kings Walk Park, purchase three new round (lid over bottom-type) dual-waste bins, ensuring all three bins are within 10 metres of road to keep emptying costs low and to have the bins removed/installed by the handyman. The cost would come from general reserves.

The Clerk advised Council to add this project (to remove all three bins on Kings Walk Park, purchase three new round (lid over bottom-type) dual-waste bins, ensuring all three bins are within 10 metres of road to keep emptying costs low and to have the bins removed/installed by the handyman), plus the re-line marking of the car parks, to the 2024-2025 budget as there is currently no money in the budget for either project. Although money could be taken from general reserves to fund the projects, it is best practice to budget for plannable projects such as this so as not to deplete general reserves which should be used as a contingency only. After deliberation, the Council decided not to go ahead with this project or the car park re line marking until after a review of the accounts at the October Council meeting. There may then be a virement to transfer funds and allow these projects to come to fruition this financial year.

(b) To approve spend from general reserves on new AV equipment for the Film Evening

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the quote of £1,192.43 inc. VAT (dated 25.04.2023) from Noise Boys for new AV equipment in the Parish Hall, subject to there being an increase in that price of 10% or less.

Clerk to:

- *Contact Noise Boys to ensure their quoted price for new AV equipment has not risen by more than 10% and, if this is the case, accept the quote.*
- *Inform the Chair of the Planning Committee and organiser of the Film Evening when the equipment is being fitted so they can be shown how to use it.*
- *Print the Noise boys quote for new AV equipment and add to quotations file.*

(b) To approve final drawings form the architects for the alterations to the Parish Office

Final drawings still awaited.

(c) To accept quotes for tree surveys

Clerk to establish if the cheapest of the three quotes will include the tree works listed in order, i.e. urgent, priority 1, priority 2 and priority 3.

23.201 To review the following Policies:

(a) Complaints Policy

Resolution: The Council resolved to make no amendments to the Complaints Policy.

Clerk to update the review date on the website for the Complaints Policy.

(b) Vexatious Complaints Policy

Resolution: The Council resolved to make no amendments to the Vexatious Complaints Policy.

Clerk to update the review date on the website for the Vexatious Complaints Policy.

23.202 To consider adding cyber liability insurance to the Council's existing insurances as recommended by LRALC
The Clerk explained that LRALC advise Councils to obtain cyber liability insurance.

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the quotation for cyber liability insurance from BHIB at a cost of £345.25 per anum.

Clerk to:

- *Contact BHIB and accept cyber liability insurance quote.*
- *Print cyber liability insurance quote and add to quotations file.*

23.203 To consider how the Council wants to maintain the new canopy

Resolution: The Council resolved that one specific Cllr will clear any snow from the canopy.

Clerk to carry out a risk assessment of the Councillor removing the snow from the top of the canopy after they have sent a 'working at height' risk assessment to the Clerk for her to start from.

23.204 To consider future Parish Council events

The Council considered several options for events next year.

Clerk to:

- *Ask residents, in the LiFE magazine, if people want to add more to the Picnic in the Park event?*
- *Add to the 2024-2025 budget extra money for a bigger Picnic in the Park event for summer 2024.*

23.205 To consider reintroduction of agendas to noticeboards, adding minutes to noticeboards and for each Councillor to have responsibility for a noticeboard

Resolution: The Council resolved to continue to maintain the noticeboards as they are doe currently. This means agendas will be posted on the noticeboard outside the Parish Hall and all noticeboards will be updated with posters once a month.

Clerk to:

- *Look into the app that East Goscote Parish Council uses and establish the cost of an app. This will then be added to the 2024-2025 budget if appropriate. Also, check how an app would run alongside the Parish Council's existing website.*

23.206 To consider purchasing a get-well card and flowers for a prominent local resident

Resolution: The Council resolved to purchase flowers, fruit basket and a card to be sent as a get-well gift to a prominent local resident up to a value of £50.00

Clerk to purchase flowers, fruit basket and a card to be sent as a get-well gift to a prominent local resident.

23.207 To clarify certain details about the wildflower garden for the grounds maintenance contractor

A representative from LCC's forestry department recently attended site to investigate a potential Coronation Heritage Living Fund funded community orchard in the wildflower garden area. He also gave some advice to Council on the wildflower garden area:

1. Oxeye daisies and yellow rattle help prepare the ground for wildflowers so it might be worth planting some of those.
2. Brocks Hill County Park in Oadby has an orchard with wildflowers meadow (similar to what is planned in the wildflower garden) so it may be worth council having a look at species they have used there.
3. Council may need to re-seed the wildflowers every few years to keep it flowering.
4. The representative will go away and assess how many trees they think the Council needs for the wildflower garden/orchard area. Three fruit trees were suggested as number for the small patch of grass on the new car park area.
5. There is some training available on the establishment and maintenance of orchards which they advised Councillors, and possibly the Clerk attend. They will let us know of training dates.
6. The representative suggested getting the local school involved with the planting.
7. Additionally, the representative emphasised that it is important the local community knows it owns the orchard and that it can pick and eat the fruit when it grows.

8. A good mixture of types of fruit trees will be suggested for the orchard.
9. In addition to potential funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund, packs of free trees, which can be fruit trees, are likely to be available from LCC in November. Council may want to use some of these trees to start the orchard and to plant three fruit trees in the triangle of grass in the car park.

Clerk to:

- *Confirm to the Grounds Maintenance Contractor to continue to mow to the end of October, then next year just a wavy path through, (rather than mowing the whole area) until this time next year. Also, to ask the grounds maintenance contractor to quote to scarify both sides of the wildflower garden to allow the seed to be sown on the ground.*
- *Clerk to add to October Parks agenda to receive quote to scarify grounds for wildflower garden.*

23.208 To consider budget items for the 2024/2025 budget

- A Parish Council app to make Parish Council agendas, minutes, news, events etc. more accessible to people.
- Changing the heating in the Parish Hall for gas to electric (to make best use of the solar panels) to save energy and, therefore, expense in the long run.
- Changing the lighting in the Reg Neal room to LED to save electricity.
- Possible replacement laptops for Council staff (whose laptops are now relatively old).
- A battery for the solar panels to retain energy produced.
- More than the current £2,000 for parish activities.
- An outside power supply for the Parish Hall to make outside events easier.
- Replacement sliding doors (x2) for the Parish Hall as one is already failing.
- To extend the Parish Hall car park, adding additional spaces close to the MUGA, and re-line marking both car parks.

Clerk to add all these items to the 2024-2025 budget and obtain estimates for their cost.

23.209 To consider quotes for gas and electricity supply

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept quotes from British Gas for 3-month contracts for both the gas and electricity supply at estimated costs of £ 5,719.56 and £ 1,572.24 respectively. This is subject to the Clerk confirming there is no minimum usage on the gas as the Council is looking to swap from gas to electric heating.

Clerk to:

- *Check with Utility Aid that there's no minimum usage on the gas contract as the Council is looking to swap from gas to electric heating. If there is no minimum usage accept the quotation.*
- *Add the gas and electricity quotes to the quotations file, along with this minute and the document passed to Council detailing the three quotes.*

20.210 To consider spending £40 per computer to have each health-checked

Clerk to add to October Council agenda to purchase a new laptop for the assistant Clerk as theirs is the oldest laptop. Also, establish if Rialtas can run on an Apple laptop. Get quotes for an apple laptop or Windows laptop.

20.211 To consider booking in-house first aid training for Council staff (with additional spaces)

There's still £710 in the budget for training but the first aid course will cost £538 which would leave only £172. Although the Clerk has delegated authority to spend from the training budget, the cost of the first aid course, along with potential other future training for the Clerk and Councillors may take the spend over the budgeted figure. Therefore, the Clerk sought approval from Council to spend money on the first aid course.

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the quote of £538.00 for Skills Base First Aid to provide a first aid course at the Parish Hall for the three Council staff, plus any Councillors who would like to attend, plus then any hall hirers who would like to attend if there are still spaces.

Clerk to:

- *Add quotation for first aid course to quotations file.*
- *Arrange suitable date, with Council staff, for first aid course, book course with Skills Base and inform Councillors, and possibly hall hirers if appropriate, of date, time and number of spaces available. Book the hall on the bookings calendar.*

20.212 To consider purchasing additional dog bags from general reserves

Resolution: The Council resolved to spend £32.00 on 1,080 dog bags; this will mean 6 bags to be given put each day only.

20.213 To consider quotes to re-line mark the Parish Council's car parks from general reserves

The Council decided to look into this more after the October Council meeting accounts have been discussed.

20.214 To consider Blaby District Council's 'Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 onwards'

No Comment.

20.215 Plan of Work

Noted.

20.216 Clerk's report

Bank Mandates

The Clerk got both the HSBC and Unity Bank mandates signed as appropriate to ensure they are up to date.

Clerk to pass the bank mandates to Unity and HSBC as appropriate.

Quorum

The Clerk explained the importance of there being a quorum at Council meetings; without a quorum, the Council cannot pay its staff or its invoices. Also, another meeting will have to be called to pay these invoices but there must be an agenda published publicly and at least three clear days between publication of the agenda and the meeting itself which would cause a delay.

Date for October Council meeting

Resolution: The Council decided to hold the October 2023 Council meeting a week later, on the 25th October, as one Councillor will not be able to attend and that may cause quorum issues.

20.207 Councillors' forum

Nothing.

20.208 Delegates reports

The Council has reiterated another, local Parish Council's complaint to Blaby District Council's monitoring officer. An additional complaint may be filed with eh monitoring officer in the coming weeks.

20.209 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 25th October 2023 at 7.00pm.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.