

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held in the Council Chambers on Tuesday 19th September 2023.

Present:

Cllr. B. Lamb	Vice-Chair of the Committee
Cllr. P. Crozier	Chair of the Council
Cllr. P. Dennis	

In Attendance: Cllr. P. Archer and Cllr. E. Wager

249. Apologies

Cllrs. Leithall, Grose, Maycock and Pengelly send their apologies. The Committee accepted their apologies.

250. Declaration of Interest

There were no declaration of interests made.

251. Notification of items for information at the discretion of the Chair. No action can be taken on these items

It was reported to the Clerk that acts of vandalism occurred in the Parish Hall garden on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th September 2023. Rubbish, a traffic cone and alcohol bottles had been left scattered the Parish Hall garden on the night of 16th September and the Fire Brigade had been called out on the evening of Sunday 17th September, due to records of a traffic cone and sliver door handle being set on fire. All the mess was cleared up by Councils' members of staff on Monday morning. It was also reported that pages from books left outside a house on Station Road for residents to borrow, had been ripped out and one book had been thrown on the roof of the Parish Hall. The Clerk was asked to report all these incidents to the Police. Cllr. Lamb has forwarded an email to both the Chair of the Council and the Clerk regarding the 2023 Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Grant scheme and suggested it be added to next week's Council agenda in discuss the Council applying for a grant to enhance the Council's CCTV.

Cllr. Dennis stated that there had been three consecutively PCSO drop-in sessions, but residents did not attend, therefore no further sessions will be scheduled. Cllr. Crozier confirmed he did attend one session.

Cllr. Lamb has received correspondence from the Co-Op Headquarters, stating that whatever happens with the Co-Op application to build a new store opposite Down View, the store in Fore Street in Bere Alston will close by the end of 2024. This is due to the safety of their staff and customers, the difficulties faced by the delivery lorries and also the non-accessibility of the store for non-able body residents and those with prams.

Minute amended and agreed on a the Full Council meeting held on 26th September 2023 'To it is unlikely that the existing store will remain viable beyond 2025.'

252. Matters arising from the meeting held on the 18th July 2023

The minutes were adopted and approved at a Council meeting held on Tuesday 25th July 2023.

Minute 167

Three members of the Landulph Parish Council recently visited the Peninsula and enjoyed a lunch and a walk of a couple of footpaths. Landulph Council will extend an invitation to members of this Council to visit their Parish, in due course.

Minute 168 (103) (28(619))

The Clerk has sourced the required spacing needed between each motorbike parking space and will work, alongside the Workman, to get the concrete slabs installed on the designated area.

Minute 168 (103 (28 (620 (548)))

The Parish Hall registration with the Land Registry is completed, but Cllr. Dennis highlighted two points on the completion registration letter which needs further clarification. The Clerk to follow up with the Land Registry.

Minute 168 (107)) The Clerk reported that the three-year long-term agreement the Council took out with the Zurich insurance, does offer a discount to each year, but the premium can still go up or down due to index linking. For this year the index linking was approx. 10%. The Clerk explained it was in small print in the contract, but not fully explained by the Insurance Agent the Clerk dealt with and Zurich apologised for not fully explaining index linking at the time.

Minute 168 (109 (2))) The Council's current website is not WCAG 2.1 compliance and the Clerk is looking for alternative website providers and quotes.

Minute 168 (111)) The Clerk has not yet received confirmation on which Parish Council will be taking over the funds for the Southern Links Committee. Until confirmed, this Council will continue to hold the funds and will pay the invoice for the training carried out in July and August 2023.

Minute 176 (3) Cllr. Dennis confirmed that the local Electrician, who undertook the ECIR testing on the distribution boards in the Parish Hall had added test date stickers to the boards.

253. To accept the September 2023 accounts for payment

Cllr. Dennis proposed payment of the accounts, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

254.To accept the F & G.P Detailed Receipt and Payment Report ending 31st August 2023

The Clerk gave an explanation on why a few items have gone over budget:

Nominal code 4240 Insurance - The Council's annual insurance had gone over budget by £391, due to Index Linking. The Council will need to ensure that an additional percentage in budgeted in for next financial year to take this into account.

Nominal code 4431 Fire Alarm service charge - the Clerk will look further into why this item has gone over budget by 47%.

Cllr. Dennis proposed acceptance of the report, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

255. To accept the reconciled bank statement ending 31st July and 31st August 2023

Cllr. Dennis proposed acceptance of the reconciled bank statements for July and August 2023, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

256. Monthly Audit to be completed by Councillors

It was discussed and agreed that the bi-annual audit check list produced, should be used as a check list for the Clerk and the Clerk will report back to the Council.

257. Discuss on reintroducing an Assistant Parish Clerk.

Cllr. Wager wished to discuss reintroducing an Assistant Clerk in the Council Office, to ensure work cover was available when the Clerk was on annual leave, or was required to work from home, which would ensure the office would be open on the days advertised to visitors.

It was discussed that the majority of the tasks undertaken by the previous Assistant Clerk had now been digitised. The Clerk also reported that very few residents visit the office and when the Clerk has been on annual leave, the Chair of the Council has provided cover.

Discussions took place on the cost of employing an Assistant Clerk, including a requirement to purchase a new computer.

If residents were unaware, they could now visit the office, the Clerk suggested perhaps introducing a weekly Friday Morning clinic for member of the public to come and speak to the Clerk and perhaps members of the Council.

After further discussions, Cllr. Crozier proposed the situation should be monitored and reviewed again in 2 months times. Seconded by Cllr. Dennis.

258. Review and approve the Council's Anti-Corruption Policy

The policy had been emailed to all Council members, prior to the meeting. Cllr. Lamb proposed deferring the review and approval of the policy to the next meeting. Seconded by Cllr. Dennis.

259. Review and approve the Council's Training & Development Policy for Staff and Councillors

The policy had been emailed to all Council members, prior to the meeting. Cllr. Dennis proposed deferring the review and approval of the policy to the next meeting. Seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

260. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

261. Agenda items for the next meeting

1. Training and Development Policy for Staff and Councillors.
2. Anti-corruption Policy.
3. Statement of Internal Control.
4. Interim report on number of visitors to the Council Office.

262. Questions from the public, at the discretion of the Chair

There was no members of the public present at the meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 8.22 pm.

Signed by the Chair

Dated 26th September 2023