

# St Albans Parish Council

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## **MINUTES OF ST ALBANS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on Tuesday 26 September 2023 at Church Hall, Emmanuel Church, Church View Close, Nottingham, NG5 9QP**

**Present:** Cllrs D White (In the Chair), J Todd, F Lari and D Skidmore

**In Attendance:** Lynda Ogilvie (Locum Clerk), Cllrs D Gibbins and R Ellis (Gedling Borough Council) and 8 members of the public/

**Cllr White welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7.15 after a 15 minute period for residents to raise matters with the Council.**

### **418 Apologies for absence**

Cllr P Bryant sent apologies, which were accepted by Council.

### **419 Declarations of Interests – to receive disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests pursuant to Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 from Councillors on matters to be considered at this meeting**

Cllr White noted that one of the payments to be approved was to him for the purchase of items for the new planters. This is not considered a pecuniary interest, as it is for the repayment of expenses incurred on behalf of the Council

No other interests were declared.

### **420 To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023.**

Cllr White proposed that the Minutes be approved, seconded by Cllr Todd, three members voted in favour (Cllrs White, Todd and Skidmore), one against (Cllr Lari).

### **421 To receive Oral Reports from Councillors**

Cllr Todd reported that he had been in touch with Gedling Borough Council in connection with the WAG Grant Application for a firework display, and will give further information under the appropriate Agenda heading.

Cllr Lari referred to the knife incident at Muirfield Park. There have been other anti-social incidents in the area, and he felt that an important way to deal with this would be to encourage more community activities in the park, including the possibility of establishing a community centre.

Cllr Skidmore reported that he was in touch with other local councils who have experience of Speedwatch, and will report further when he has further information about Speedwatch and how it could operate in the parish.

Cllr White said that he has been involved with the recruitment process for a new Clerk, which he expects to be ratified later in the meeting. He has also (with Cllr Todd) completed the installation of the planters in the parish, including planting them up.

He and Cllr Todd had attended new councillor training courses run by the Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils, which they both found extremely useful. In addition, they had also both attended the NALC AGM, and again found this a useful and informative event. Exhibitors there included a company which provides interactive speed signs, and a company specialising in decorative lights – both of which are relevant to St Albans PC.

#### **422 To receive Reports from Gedling Borough Council**

Cllr R Ellis spoke about the knife incident at Muirfield Park. She has been in touch with the police officers involved, and has been told that they consider this to be an isolated incident. They have asked that anyone with information should pass this on to the police.

CCTV has been raised again, and the situation remains the same – permission has been granted for the installation of CCTV in the area, but there are technical difficulties in getting a signal for operating the equipment.

The Community Kitchen will restart on first week of half term (23-27 October 2023). In order to preserve finances, the decision has been taken to provide a meal at the Church Hall only, and not offer take-away food. All will be welcome.

#### **423 Clerk Update**

##### **a) Lamp post poppies**

Locum Clerk asked for a decision as to whether the Council wished to purchase lamp post poppies at a donation cost of £5 per poppy, and if so, how many would be required. Members approved the purchase of 100 poppies, proposed by Cllr White, seconded by Cllr Todd and all in favour.

Information on winter salt options had been circulated. Council felt that there was no need for additional salt this year, as there are still unused bags obtained last year.

#### **424 Lamp post Christmas lighting – updated quote**

An updated quote had been obtained, but it was agreed that further quotes would be obtained.

#### **425 Correspondence not reported under separate Agenda items**

Locum Clerk reported that there had been a number of emails received about a grant application. These had been circulated. There were no further items of correspondence to note.

## **426 Finance**

### **a) To approve payments as per payment list (*circulated separately*)**

Payments listed on the payment sheet were approved as follows:

Lynda Ogilvie

- Clerk duties July/August - £460
- Reimbursement of purchase of recording equipment £204
- Stamp - £1.60

NALC – payment for training course for Cllr White - £40

Proposed Cllr Lari, seconded Cllr Skidmore, all in favour

Cllr White – Costs associated with planting troughs - £726.03

Cllr White did not take part in this vote. All other councillors in favour.

Bestwood Lodge – Cost of hiring room for interviews - £150

Proposed Cllr Todd, seconded Cllr Skidmore, Cllrs Todd, Skidmore and White in favour, Cllr Lari against.

### **b) To complete and sign bank mandate changes**

The bank mandate to add members on as signatories has now been completed.

### **c) To note budget update**

The budget update, having been circulated, was noted.

### **d) To approve budget for training for new Clerk**

Members approved a budget of up to £1000 for training costs for the new Clerk, to be managed by the HR Committee.

### **e) External Audit update**

Locum Clerk reported that the external auditor had made an adjustment as to how the Locum Clerk invoices were recorded. There were no other matters reported. The signed off audit report is now being processed and should be sent shortly.

## **427 Grant Applications**

### **a) Warren Action Group – further consideration of grant application toward firework display**

Chair outlined the reasons why this matter was being considered again. WAG had been asked for a copy of their public liability insurance cover, and also a risk assessment for the event. Council had only received a redacted copy of the group's public liability cover. The Chair, Cllr White, stated that the Council did not wish to stop the firework display but as a public body, handling public money, it was obliged to ensure that certain criteria was met, and the Council's grant policy makes this clear.

The Council had asked the National Association of Local Council's legal team for their advice, and this confirmed that it was for the Council to make an assessment of the documentary evidence it required in order to award the grant.

Council members expressed their views on this situation.

*8.00 pm As the meeting had become disruptive, Chair adjourned the meeting to allow those present to take a break.*

*8.20 Meeting was reconvened.*

After further discussion, it was agreed that if WAG would allow the Locum Clerk to view an unredacted copy of their public liability insurance document, Council would be minded to approved the Grant. This was actioned, and members agreed that this was sufficient to allow the Grant to be approved.

#### **b) StARS – application for funding for half term family day**

A Grant application from StARS for £1648 had been received to cover costs for an outing to Warwick Castle during half term week. Participants will be asked for a contribution and the proceeds of this will be reimbursed to St Albans PC.

Cllr Lari proposed that the Council approve the Grant less the anticipated reimbursement from participants. This proposal was not seconded.

Cllr Todd proposed that the Grant be paid in full, seconded by Cllr Skidmore, three members in favour, Cllr Lari abstained.

#### **428 To Review St Albans PC Grant Policy**

Cllr White went through the background to this Agenda item. Having produced an initial draft review of the Grant Policy in July, it has now amended it so that the total sum which could be awarded to each recipient in any one year would be £1500. The Grant Application will also include a monitoring form so that the Council can be appraised of the benefit felt by different sections of the Community.

Cllr Lari proposed that the decision on adopting the new Grant Policy is delayed to the next meeting, and that in the interim a working group is established to consider the reviewed policy. Cllr Lari's proposal was seconded by Cllr Skidmore. Two members (Cllrs Lari and Skidmore) voted in favour, two members voted against (Cllrs White and Todd). As the vote was even, the Chair declined to use his deciding vote, and the motion failed.

Cllr White proposed adoption of the new Grant Policy, second by Cllr Todd. Two Councillors (Cllrs White and Todd) voted in favour, one against (Cllr Lari) and one abstained (Cllr Skidmore). Therefore the motion was passed and the new Grant Policy adopted by Council.

**429 To update on discussion relation to possibility of providing sporting/community facilities in the parish**

Cllr White reported that he was in touch with potential partners for this project, which include several community groups, and has received positive feedback so far. A working group will be established to consider options further.

**430 To discuss Hedgehog Highway project**

An initiative to provide hedgehog surrounds to enable hedgehogs to move easily from one garden to another was considered. Members agreed to purchase one box of 50 hedgehog surrounds with information leaflets at a cost of £150. These will be made available to interested residents. Proposed Cllr Skidmore, seconded Cllr Todd and all in favour.

**431 To set up HR Committee with authority to approve costs and administration for Clerk training.**

This proposal was approved. Cllr White proposed Cllrs Bryant and Todd to be on the Committee, seconded by Cllr Skidmore, all in favour.

**432 To consider resolving that under Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 1(2) the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it would likely disclose exempt information**

Members of the public left the meeting room.

**433 To receive report of interview panel and approve appointment of new Clerk**

Following interviews, the recommendation of the interview panel is that Ms Claire Baker be appointed as the new Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. Her appointment will commence on 1 October 2023, on the salary and hours offered in the job advertisement. Lynda Ogilvie will offer her full support as she settles into the role, and will continue to manage the Council's finances until such time as the new Clerk feels ready to take this on.

The appointment was proposed by Cllr White, seconded by Cllr Skidmore all in favour.

**434 To note date of next ordinary meeting: 31 October 2023**

**There being no further business, Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20.57 pm**