

## **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2023 commencing 7.30 pm. in the Village Hall.

*Full reports and supporting documents can be found on the Parish Council website under Meetings, January 2023 Meeting Pack. Paper copies are also available.*

**Present** Cllr Irene Mitchell, Chairman.

Cllrs Mary Morrey, Janice Muckian, Michael Sherman, Lizzie Falconer, Ian Lamont, Matt Chick, Rob Macro

9 members of the public.

**1. Apologies for absence** received from Tony Shepherd, Babergh District Councillor Margaret Maybury.

**2/3. Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensation** None.

**4. To approve as accurate minutes of the last meeting of the Council**

It was proposed by Cllr Sherman, seconded by Cllr Chick, and agreed, that the minutes were a true record of the proceedings of the meeting held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December.

**5. Public Forum**

Mr Twitchett reported in June 2022 that the kissing gate had been damaged and enquired if CIL money could be used to have it replaced. Cllr Mitchell advised that she had met with the CIL team 3 weeks ago and clarified what District CIL and Neighbourhood CIL(NCIL) can be used for and it would be possible to use NCIL . The gate is on the long list in the Parish Infrastructure Plan discussed at the December meeting last meeting. This list of items and plans can be found in the December meeting pack on the Website. Council has yet to discuss this list in detail and place schemes in an order of priority but replacement of this important heritage item is definitely included.

Mr Twitchett noted the motion before Council to increase the precept by 20%, and enquired whether the surplus from the current financial year could be carried over into next year's budget to alleviate the amount of precept that may need to be requested. Cllr Mitchell confirmed the issue of the precepts would be discussed later in the meeting.

Mr Twitchett enquired as to where the costs of the portable toilets could be found online. Cllr Mitchell confirmed the costs are listed under Toilets Cleaning and Servicing, which is all one budget.

James Soane requested that all Councillors respond to the questionnaire for Neighbourhood Plan, with a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> February. Mr Twitchett requested clarification on whether the plan was a Village Plan or Town Plan. Cllr Mitchell confirmed Lavenham is described and designated as a Village.

Mr Twitchett asked if half the money from the precept would be spent on employing a new Parish Clerk. Cllr Mitchell stated this was incorrect and that it will be closer to one third and that is typical for larger Parish Councils.

**6. District Councillors' Reports**

None

### **7. Chairman's Announcements**

Public toilets: All of the public toilets are now open and fully functioning since December.

Parish Council Clerk: A new Clerk has been appointed, Mr Andrew Smith, and will be joining as of Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in a full time capacity.

### **8. Outcome of Phone Box competition**

Jane Bellward confirmed that entries have been considered and a decision was made to install in each of the phone boxes reference to the poems "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and "The Crooked Man". Currently costs have been obtained for the paint but not the labour quotes will be invited if Council approve.

Cllr Mitchell opened it up to the Council on whether the phone boxes should be refurbished or removed. Cllr Muckian believes that one of the phone boxes is listed, but would like to keep them either way, as they help towards the tourism of the village. Cllr Macro doesn't believe it will be a huge expense to refurbish them and would like to keep them. Cllr Muckian suggested a member of the village could do the refurbishment, Cllr Mitchell stated that the only issue is that it would require specialist technical skill to undertake the refurbishment. Cllr Lamont would like to keep them, as they are a part of the heritage of the village.

**Motion: Council approves seeking of quotes for the refurbishment of two Telephone Boxes  
Proposed: Cllr Muckian, Seconded: Cllr Chick. Carried.**

### **9. Planning**

Planning Applications Received:

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION - DC/22/06053

25 Prentice Street, Lavenham

Householder Planning Application - Erection of cartlodge (following demolition of existing garage), reconstruction of conservatory from plinth level, replace rear windows and doors

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - DC/22/06052

25 Prentice Street, Lavenham

Application for Listed Building Consent - reconstruction of conservatory from plinth level, replace rear windows and doors, reconfigure internal layout with partition walls.

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - DC/22/06123

1 Bolton Street, Lavenham

Application for Listed Building Consent - Removal of existing garden shed and erection of new garden office/storage space

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION - DC/22/06122

1 Bolton Street, Lavenham

Householder Application - Removal of existing garden shed and erection of new garden office/storage space

APPLICATION FOR CONSENT TO CARRY OUT WORKS TO TREE(S) PROTECTED BY A TREE PRESERVATION ORDER - DC/22/06157

High Parsons, Sudbury Road, Lavenham

Application for Works to Trees subject to Tree Preservation Order WS41/A1 - Fell 1No. Ash (T1), Remove side shoots on main stem of 1No. Oak (T2), Prune and reduce 1No. Apple (T3) by up to 1m and remove rubbing and crossing branches, Fell 1No. Eucalyptus (T4), Prune overhanging branches of 1No. Yew (T5) by 1-2m and trim back regrowth from lower stem.

**APPLICATION FOR WORKS TO TREE(S) IN A CONSERVATION AREA - DC/22/06249**

The Grove, 5 Lady Street, Lavenham

Notification of Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Reduce 1 group of Yew by 5-6ft and clear next doors property by 1m.

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION - DC/22/06072**

Ponders, Barn Street, Lavenham

Householder Planning Application - Erection of rear extension (following demolition of existing extension), construction of dormer windows, installation of new window to replace existing and installation of handrail.

**APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - DC/22/06072**

Ponders, Barn Street, Lavenham

Application for Listed Building Consent - Erection of rear extension (following demolition of existing extension), construction of dormer windows, installation of new window to replace existing, installation of handrail, installation of new staircase and alterations to internal layout.

**Proposed by Cllr Lamont, seconded by Cllr Rob Macro to recommend approval for all above applications. Carried.**

**Planning Applications for consideration at LPC meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023****APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION & LISTED BUILDING CONSENT – DC/22/05986 & DC/22/05987**

10 Lady Street, Lavenham

*Decision deferred to Lavenham Parish Council meeting on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 as agreed with planning officer, to allow time for full consideration.*

**Planning Decisions Received:**

DC/22/05836 Barnsdale, Bolton Street, Lavenham - Local Planning Authority does not wish to object to Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Reduce 1No. Sweet Chestnut (T1) by 1-1.5m all around. Reduce 1No. Silver Birch (T2) by 2-3m all around. Tidy 1No. Red Norway Maple (T3) and remove green reverted growth. Reduce 1No. Cherry by 2m all around and raise crown.

DC/22/05258 14 The Paddocks, Lavenham - planning permission granted for Erection of single-story extension for use as home office/studio.

USE RESTRICTION This single-storey extension hereby approved shall only be used for purposes ancillary to domestic use in connection with the principal dwelling known as 14 The Paddocks, Lavenham and does not permit the use of the accommodation for any other purpose. Reason - In the interest of the amenity of neighbouring residents.

DC/22/05175 10 Ropers Court, Lavenham - Refusal of Planning Permission, replace 24No. Windows and 1No. French Door on balcony. Replace cladding with James Hardie Plank.

Cllr Mitchell drew attention to the restrictions placed on application DC/22/05258 and the decision made on DC/22/05175.

**10. RFO Report****Invoices paid between meetings:**

The following invoice covered by NP2 budget: Project Orange, printing costs £101.24: Indigo Ross, printing costs £544.80.

Tatums Tearooms, supply sandwiches for interview panel, £39.00: Lavenham PCC, extra copies of December Lavenham Life for free distribution £210.00: Royal British Legion, 2

poppy wreaths for Remembrance Day £40.00: Avis Newsprint, printing 1200 copies December newsletter £166.00: Sterling Electrics, interim payment for Christmas Lights installation etc. (from budget) £1,000.00: County Washrooms, Church St toilets 45% of final invoice £11,155.32. 5% of final invoice for County Washrooms has been held back until the painted doors have been finished.

**Invoices received/for payment:**

JPB Landscapes, December ground maintenance & street cleaning £1,948.08: Kinex, phone a/c Dec £57.37: British Gas, Church Street toilets electricity £83.35: Payroll £999.75: Zoom, monthly remote meetings charges £14.39: Lavenham Community Council, village hall room hire £28.50: BT Business, broadband £24.28: SmartSurvey for public consultation, NP2 budget £54.00: Command Pest Control, Church Street toilets hygiene services £174.00: The National Allotment Society, annual membership £66.00: ICS, public toilet cleaning & consumables, both sites £723.93

Direct Debit payments: Paya Group, monthly service fee £43.08: BG Business, electricity Water Street car park £46.11: BT Group plc, monthly mobile charge £6.00.  
19/01/2023 LED lighting Loan Repayment due £3,759.79.

**Income (November):**

Total donations collected from car parks for (total cash & card donations) £616.15: Burial account £420.00: VAT Refund £1,660.85.

**Proposed: Cllr Falconer, Seconded: Cllr Sherman, that the financial transactions are approved. Carried.**

**11. Finance**

Council received a report from the RFO and Chair, setting out a review of the current year and the predicted financial position to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The report also addressed spending proposals and options for the precept for 2023-24.

**11a Income and Expenditure to December 2022**

Cllr Morrey noted a range of reasons for the underspend to date including higher than expected donations from the car parks on the previous year and the time it has taken to recruit a new clerk. The projected bill for the street lighting is very high, therefore it was decided by the Finance Committee to turn the street lights off overnight where safety will allow. Some public conveniences were out of use resulting in no income, but hoping to recoup in the coming year.

**11b Budget Setting and Precept 2023-24**

The Chairman opened this debate by referring to guidance from NALC on Local Council Finance, on the sequential process for reaching decisions on budgets which is to review the current year, consider spending plans for the forthcoming year and finally to set a Precept to reach a balanced revenue budget.

**Review of 2022-23**

Councillor Morrey opened the debate by advising Councillors of a predicated surplus of around £14,000 at the end of 2022-23. This sizeable sum arises, from combination of income being higher than expected and underspending on some budget lines. On Income, after a very slow

start, donations were better than expected and together with a refund arising from spending in from 2021-22, income will be around £8,000 more than planned. On spending, we had hoped to recruit a new clerk by October but the pay offered to a candidate was rejected so Council decided to conduct a second round of recruitment. The delay in recruiting a full time clerk has led to underspend on the pay budget.

The surplus of around £14,000 presents the opportunity for Council to earmark to reserves, some spending lines which would otherwise have to be included in the spending plan for 2023-24. If the eventual surplus is as predicted, some funds would be available for carry over to 2023-24 but this will not be known until after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

**Motion 1. Council is asked to approve in the following order of priority, in accordance with the National Association of Local Council guidance:**

- 1) Earmarking £2800 to general reserves for Elections
- 2) Earmarking £2000 to general reserves for LNP referendum in 2023
- 3) Earmarking £5000 to general reserves for Public Realm improvements
- 4) Applying 50% of residual funds to general reserves
- 5) Carrying forward 50% of residual funds to the 2023-24 revenue budget

Cllr Lamont referred to the outstanding balance on LNP funds, and asked why is that not being used to support the referendum. Cllr Mitchell confirmed the amount was already committed to completing the plan before the referendum and if there are still some residual funds left over at the end of the process, this will come back to the Parish Council.

Cllr Lamont asked for clarification on what constituted Public Realm, Cllr Mitchell confirmed it covered items such as litter bins, seating, grit bins, noticeboard, bus shelter etc. Cllr Lamont questioned why it is not a regular cost in the budget and proposed as a one-off special cost. Cllr Mitchell confirmed was in budgets in previous years and appears was not used so when Council had to review the budget in June 2022 because of poor income and donations received to that point, the remaining budget for grants and public realm were cut from the spending plan to ensure we remained balance.

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**Proposed by Cllr Morrey, seconded by Cllr Falconer. Carried.**

**Spending Proposals 2023-24**

The RFO set out for Council, proposals for each category of spend. The difference between 2022-23 and 2023-24 is approximately £17,000 which arises from staff pay, employer on-costs, the need for office space for employees. The sub-total for Public Realm has increased by £3,000 which is entirely related to Street lighting costs which have increased by 100% despite the reduction in hours of operation. Some reductions have been made to costs where in previous years they were over-inflated. The proposed figure for the play equipment was

incorrect and should be £600, therefore a further £300 will be added to the bottom line. In Public Facilities there is a reduced sum of £3,000 proposed for next year, despite an expected increase for Church St toilets and office energy. On exception items there are two errors - that the word 'earmarked' should be replaced with the word 'ring-fenced'. There will likely be need for external support to maintain the website, likewise a sum of £300 has been added for maintenance and annual electrical checks of office equipment has been added. Under Grants/Events there is an error which does not impact on the sub-total or total; £500 for First Meadow summer facilities should be included under Xmas Eve Community Carols. Council expressed the view that this should be funded from Events fund, but has been left in the Revenue fund until there is a formal motion by the Council to this effect. Energy Costs for Water Street is now showing in a single line, as there is only one energy account. It is anticipated that most of the costs will be recovered from EV charging and therefore a similar amount will be shown as income. A new line of Business Rates has been added as it has recently been discovered that car parks attract Business Rates. Overall the likely spend is approx. £6,000 less than budget. The amount required for 2023-24 is £17,000 more than in 2022-23. There is little scope for further reduction, therefore propose a spending plan for 2023-24 amended to now show £128,420.00.

Cllr Mitchell stated that the spending values had been carefully calculated from supplier prices. Cllr Falconer queried why there is no donations box at Water Street car park. Cllr Mitchell said it was due to the cost of installing and running it, and that initially the volume of vehicles would not warrant it but that in recent weeks more people are using this facility.

A consensus view emerged that a cash donations box should be installed at Water Street Car Park.

**Motion 2. Council is invited to approve the spending budget set out in Attachment 1.**

**Proposed by Cllr Mitchell, seconded by Cllr Falconer. Carried.**

### **Precept Considerations**

Cllr Macro introduced this debate by noting that there is no way of avoiding an increase in spending of approximately £20,000 in round figures and that the Council has to set an income level to meet this spending need.

Four options were set out for Council.

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Option 4</b>
Spending requirement	£128,000.00	£128,000.00	£128,000.00	£128,000.00
Babergh grant assumed	£10,700.00	£10,700.00	£10,700.00	£10,700.00
Burial Income assumed	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£6,000.00	£4,000.00
EV Income (broadly equals energy expenditure)	£1,200.00	£1,200.00	£1,200.00	£1,200.00
Donation Income assumed	£10,000.00	£5,000.00	£0-£5,00.00	£0.00
<b>Total Income before Precept</b>	<b>£27,900.00</b>	<b>£22,900.00</b>	<b>£17,900.00</b>	<b>£15,900.00</b>
Precept required to balance budget	£100,100.00	£105,100.00	£110,100.00	
Precept to provide safety net against further energy costs				£115,000.00
% average increase shown on tax bill	9.79	15.27	20.65	26.13
Estimated £s increase <b>per annum</b> from 2022-23 - based on Band D	£9.30	£14.50	£19.71	£24.81
Estimated £s increase <b>per month</b> from 2022-23 - based on Band D	£0.77	£1.20	£1.64	£2.07
Estimated £s increase <b>per week</b> from 2022-23 - based on Band D	£0.18	£0.28	£0.38	£0.48
<b>Assessed Risk Level</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium - Low</b>	<b>Medium to Low</b>
Rationale for assessed level of risk	8% of spending requirement dependent upon donations AND no safety net against unknown prices increases	4% of spending requirement dependent upon donations AND no safety net against unknown price increases	Worst case is Zero donation AND no safety net against unknown price increases  Best case is £5,000 donation income which would provide a safety net.	Donation income not required. Burial income reduces WITH  Additional safety net of 2% of spending plan. All risks considered

In each option, the only guaranteed income streams are the Precept and the grant from Babergh. All other income is variable.

Cllr Macro emphasised that that the spending plan for 2023-24 includes a very small contingency of £2,500 and he felt this may not be sufficient. It was important to bear this in mind when considering the precept. If the precept is set too low with no safety nets and prices increase further than predicted, there is serious risk that we would encounter financial difficulties. Council is required to remain solvent and this includes building in appropriate levels of contingency to deal with the unexpected. This rules out Options 1 and 2 which would require donation income of up to £10,000. Given recent experience and the economic outlook, it is high risk to assume that we would receive that level of donation.

Option 3 proposes a precept which together with the grant would mean any donation income would provide a chance of meeting emerging Public Realm demands next year. The poor presentation of the Public Realm is known to be a big concern to people of the Parish. Option 3 is the sensible option and is assessed as medium to low level risk. Option 4 is presented as illustrative only, to demonstrate what would be required to cover all risks including a reduction in variable burial income.

Cllr Sherman raised the issue of impact on families of adding 20.65% on to a bill. Cllr Falconer stated that the people most impacted would be property owners above Band D who would pay above the £0.38p per week for a Band D. Residents who claim Council Tax Relief would pay significantly less or none at all. Cllr Chick and Lamont expressed similar views to Cllr Sherman.

Cllr Lamont proposed an amendment that Council should adopt Option 2, seconded by Cllr Sherman. Seconded by Cllr Sherman. **This was Not Carried.**

**Motion 3. Council adopts Option 3 and accordingly sets the precept for 2023-24 at £110,100.00**

**Proposed by Cllr Macro, seconded by Cllr Mitchell. Two abstentions. Carried.**

## **12. Date of next meeting**

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.