

## Ruscombe Parish Council

### Minutes of Meeting of the Parish Council

Held in the William Penn Room, Loddon Hall, Twyford

On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7:30pm

**Councillors Present:** Mr M Evans (Chair), Mr G Merrick, Mr P Evans, Mrs A Hasted and Mr J May.

**Others Present:** Mr M Andrea (TPC), Mr J Porter (Church Warden, St James the Great)

**Clerk in attendance:** Mr G Winder.

7:30pm Mr M Evans opened the meeting.

**195/23 Apologies for Absence:** Mr G Howe and Mr P Cassidy.

**196/23 Declaration of Interest:** No new interests to declare.

**197/23 Minutes:** Minutes for 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 circulated via email for approval. Proposed by Mr P Evans, seconded by Mr G Merrick and approved unanimously.

#### **198/23 Mr J Porter (St James the Great church roof)**

Mr Porter gave a detailed view of the works being considered at the church for Council to consider how it may assist with funding. Some key highlights of his talk are below:

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) looks after the churches in both Ruscombe and Twyford.

A report has been made to inform the PCC on the state of the church and lists repairs in order of priority using 7 levels. Levels 1-4 are the repairs that matter most. Mr Porter went on to explain the other levels.

The main finding of the report is that, with the exception of the roof, St James is in good condition.

The whole of the church roof needs replacing. Another tower on the east side hides some of the roof. This part is unlined whereas the rest is lined.

If nothing is done, the PCC is liable for the damage done to the building. The PCC is therefore responsible for taking forward the recommendations.

Mr Porter shared the structure of the PCC with Council, he advised that a new fundraising team had been set up.

The current inspector remains for five years. Over 5 years, it is estimated that £155k will be required. The current year is half way through having started in July.

Other repairs need to be done and much discussion is needed in the community to decide what to do.

The survey was not intrusive and was mainly conducted from ground level.

The PCC needs more grants received to help with a number of 'desirable' items done in parallel, still to be agreed.

St James is Grade I listed and is one of only five other buildings of such quality.

There is no mains drainage or WC, an old kitchen and needs new electronics too. The PCC would like to take out the Victorian pews and replace them with more flexible seating which could allow a meeting facility for RPC and other organisations perhaps.

The church is limited to 60 people at present due to limited fire escape access.

Mr P Evans asked how much the PCC has got available. Mr Porter was not sure as he is not the Treasurer but felt that there was around £20-30k for specific works. He also explained that the turnover of the joint PCC is £150-160k per year.

Mr P Evans further asked what is available from charity sources. This is to be confirmed as fundraising commences.

Mr M Evans stated that Council would need to look at RPC CIL spending and capacity to help.

Action: Clerk to update tracker and add spend projections to project list.

Mr Porter further informed Council that there had been a proposal to build a church hall but now the plan is to keep facilities within the existing church footprint.

**199/23 Public Comments sent to the Clerk or Councillors:** None.

**200/23 Update from Twyford Parish Councillor:**

Mr Andrea wished RPC good luck with the referendum tomorrow.

TPC is receiving tenders for the skate park.

TPC is looking again at Speed Watch for which a minimum number of volunteers is required. TPC may ask for help from RPC. This is waiting on clarification of the best source of equipment.

The proposed system can report to the police details of any repeat offenders.

**201/23 Update from Wokingham Borough Councillors:**

Mr Howe sent his seasons greetings to RPC via email and advised that there were no new updates to share.

**202/23 Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan:** Mr M Evans reminded Council that referendum day is tomorrow and thanked both Councillors and volunteers for their efforts. He suggested a social gathering for those involved in the new year. He advised Council that Mrs Hasted, Mr M Evans and Mr Merrick will attend the count.

**203/23 Planning Applications:**

232788 Brigham, Ruscombe Lane. Mr Merrick proposed that RPC enter no comment.

232740 The Hollies (TPO). Mr Merrick proposed that RPC enter no comment.

The subject of planning permission for the town sign was discussed and it was thought that consent for advertising would be needed to site it next to the pond.

A planter around the sign was considered and the need to avoid other signs noted. RPC needs to agree final price in order to progress further.

Action: Mr M Evans to contact Ms Castle to confirm design is okay. Mr Merrick will look into overall costs.

**204/23 Ruscombe Ponds:** Mr Merrick informed Council that the work on ponds is now finished for the season. CR removed the rest of the reeds and now lily pads may be seen. Painting of the railings is ongoing. Mr Merrick proposed that we move towards getting three quotes for work but build a relationship with contractors once a schedule of rates is agreed. Mr M Evans agreed with this approach.

**205/23 Pennfields Orchard:** Maintenance is ongoing.

**206/23 SID Maintenance:** All working, no issues.

**207/23 Trees:** Nothing to report.

**208/23 Loddon Hall RPC Rep:** No update.

**209/23 CIL Money:**

Action: Create a project list with projected spend.

Mr P Evans asked Mr Porter how donated funds would be held by PCC once granted. This action was taken away by Mr Porter.

**210/23 Finance:** Payments to consider:

Mr G Merrick Expense (Leaflet Printing – Higgs) £217.00 #1/11

CR Landscapes Tree Removal £120.00 #2/11

BDK Solutions Internet Domain Name Mgt. £120.00 #3/11

SCS Pennfields Orchard (Oct) £36.60. #4/11

Shareplan Leaflet Dist. Referendum Leaflets £300.00 #4/11

O'Neill Homer NP Referendum Prep £780.00 #5/11

SCS Pennfields Orchard (Nov) £36.60. #6/11

Window Flowers Winter Planters £2,410.80 #7/11

CR Landscapes Pond Clearance £1,054.08 #8/11

Clerk Wages and Expenses £1,388.93 Paid #9/11

SSE (Nov) £55.00: Paid Direct Debit #10/11

These payments were proposed by Mr G Merrick, seconded by Mr P Evans and approved unanimously.

**211/23 Reports from liaison rep:** No update

**212/23 Any other business:**

Mr M Evans drew attention to outstanding actions from prior meeting and the need to create a project list.

He also confirmed to Council that Mrs J Holmes has resigned with immediate effect and requested that Clerk chases Democratic Services for next steps to fill vacancy. He also advised Council that he intends to stand down as Chair in April 2024.

Mr M Evans closed the meeting at 8:30pm

Chair Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Chair initials \_\_\_\_\_