

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30 pm, Nov. 10, 2016

Present: Steve Hepworth (Chair), Peter Emery, Ben Owen, Robert Carpenter Turner, Alex Oliver, Polly Carson, Mike Golden, Debby Lester.
Apologies: Councillor Paul Oatway

098/16 **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous two meetings (Sept. 15 and Sept.17) were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising not on the agenda: none

099/16 **Precept:** Debby Lester, Responsible Financial Officer, recalled that last year the Parish Council had increased the precept from £4,000 to £5,000. With a tax base of 113.81 that meant a cost of £43.76 per household in Band D. This year, with fewer eligible to pay, the tax base had dropped to 111.05. That meant that if the precept was held at £5,000 the average household cost would increase to £45.02. The parish no longer benefited from a top-up grant and it remained likely that the precept would at some point be frozen. There was the issue of outlay on maintaining the White Horse which could amount to as much as £25,000, although there was the possibility of matched funding and the hope of a contribution from New College, Oxford, as owners of the land. After subtracting a surplus from the defibrillator fund due to be transferred to the Coronation Hall, the parish would be left with about £9,500. Regular yearly bills amounted to about £2,000, including playground upkeep and insurance, grass cutting, and spraying of the White Horse. The Parish Council accounts looked healthy for now but future costs and the possibility of a precept freeze must be borne in mind. She would not like to propose any increase unless the PC was duty-bound to do so.

After brief discussion, it was proposed Robert Carpenter Turner, seconded Polly Carson, that the precept be maintained at £5,000.
Agreed unanimously.

100/16 **Precept capping and referendums – appeal:** SH reported that Councillor Jane Scott, leader of Wiltshire Council, had invited support for her opposition to government proposals to cap Parish Council precepts and make increases subject to local referendums. Given that the deadline for replies was before today's PC he had replied, as Chair, in agreement with her view.

101/16 **Accidents – Lockeridge-Alton Road:** Peter Emery reported that a further accident had occurred on the hillside leading down towards Alton Barnes, again after rain. Cllr Oatway was seeking a site meeting, to include Wiltshire highways.

- 102/16** **Flooding, highways issues:** SH said that problems should be flagged up on the My Wiltshire app, as he had done over flooding on the road south of Honeystreet. It was then up to Wilts Highways to respond. The Parish Steward had begun culvert work at Alton Priors. A number of residents had been approached on the need to cut back hedges, in some cases by as much as half a metre. Uncut hedges were a danger which could force pedestrians off verges and onto the road, and obstruct drivers' sightlines. Wiltshire Council had asked the PC to approach residents. If there was no response the council would ultimately cut the hedge and charge them for it.
- 103/16** **Browns Lane light:** A request had been received from residents in the lane for the PC to approve the fixing of additional side shields on the new LED light. In discussion, while some concern was voiced over the brightness of the light, most believed the new setup was satisfactory. The proposal for extra shielding was rejected 4-1, with two abstentions.
- 104/16** **Planning application 16/09986/FUL, The Laurels, Honeystreet:** Members felt they could not take a decision without having viewed the site. Mindful that there was little time before the deadline for comment it was agreed members should meet on site to examine and then decide the PC's view.
- 105/16** **Planning application, The Priory, Alton Priors:** PE reported that the application, unanimously supported by the PC, had been withdrawn after Wiltshire Council made clear they would not grant approval, allegedly on heritage issues. Members voiced regret and hoped the applicant would seek expert advice to find a way forward.
- 106/16** **Defibrillator update:** SH confirmed the surplus due to the Coronation Hall, which would be responsible for future costs. A training event was scheduled for January 7, to be publicised on the parish website.
- 107/16** **Cheques and invoices:** Defibrillator fund surplus of £371.22 to Coronation Hall; £16.80 photocopying expenses to Steve Hepworth. Cheques approved and signed.
- 108/16** **AGM change of date:** Charles Reiss (Clerk) reported that May 4 next year scheduled for the PC AGM was also the date for local Council elections. The Coronation Hall was required as a polling station and it would not be possible to meet. After brief discussion it was proposed Steve Hepworth, seconded Alex Oliver, that the AGM and regular PC meeting be held one week later on May 11 starting at 7 PM. Agreed unanimously.

- 109/16 Internet:** Members reported that higher-speed fibre access was now available to Alton Barnes and Honeystreet, but not Alton Priors. This could be resolved by installing a cabinet alongside the telephone box at Priors, where connection was readily available. SH said he would continue to lobby Claire Perry MP and John Thomson, the Wilts councillor responsible for broadband.
- 110/16 Barge Inn / canal noise:** RCT said there were currently few boats moored and little noise. SH said that he had sent six emails to the Canal and River Trust seeking a meeting but with no response.
- 111/16 Wiltshire White Horses, arts project:** CR drew members' attention to plans by Wiltshire Council's Arts Development Service for a three-year project to celebrate the county's "Equine Chalk Hill Figures." Members agreed it would be wise to be aware of any activity involving the Alton White Horse. CR to pursue.
- 112/16 Pewsey Community Area Partnership funding:** SH reported that the partnership (PCAP) which gets nothing from Wiltshire Council was appealing for parish council contributions. He outlined the valuable work done for children and others. It was also suggested that the Coronation Hall could allow the partnership free use of the premises. Proposed Polly Carson, seconded Alex Oliver, that the parish donates £100. Agreed unanimously.

Any other business:

- 113/16 Power cut:** PE voiced concern over the prolonged failure to cut back a hedge in Browns Lane. As a result it had grown over electric cables, and to allow work to be done power for the surrounding area would have to be cut off. This could particularly affect pensioners and those working from home.
- 114/16 Parish council elections:** CR reminded members that the elections next May would include parish councils. He was seeking guidance from Wiltshire Council as to procedure.
- 115/16 Street light C38:** PE pointed out that the streetlight at the junction of the C8 and C38 (White Horse Cottage) had been out of action for many years. Ben Owen to raise with contractor.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 8.59pm.

pc minutes 10.11.16

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