

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF the 291st MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2013

Present: Cllr Mitchell in the Chair David Allison – Clerk to the Council

Cllrs Baldwin, Bennett, Brading, Dann, Edmunds, Getkahn, Jordan, Martin, Seeley and Wynne-Jones

Voting Members: 11

Not Present: Cllrs Ridley and Vane

Members of the Public: 4

CC1291/13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Brand, Isard-Brown and Shafe

CC1292/13 Declarations of Interest by Members

Cllr Bennett declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item CC1297/13 Budget 2014/15 as Treasurer of the Croxley Green Society. Cllr Mitchell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item CC1297/13 Budget 2014/15 as a Committee Member of the Croxley Green Society and also declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item CC1300/13 S137 Grant Application from Croxley Green Mummies as he was one of the performers with the Mummies.

CC1293/13 Representations from the Public

Representation was made by a representative of the Croxley Green Mummies regarding Agenda item CC1300/13 S137 Grant Application for Croxley Green Mummies. He asked that Council ratify the request for a Grant as the costumes used were looking worse for wear. He added that the Croxley Green Mummies was re-established in 1994 and had raised and donated some £5,300 to the Peace Hospice. It was a unique event in Croxley providing free family pre Christmas entertainment.

Representation was also made regarding Agenda item CC1297/13 Budget 2014/15 on the matter of the subscription to the Croxley Green Society which is included within the budget proposals. It was pointed out that the Society puts on two of the biggest and popular free to attend events each year in the area. It was categorically stated that the Society has been very open and honest with its dealings with the Parish Council ensuring value for money and that the support of the Council has never been taken for granted and that the monies provided to the Society are not in any way mal-administered as has been alleged in certain quarters. It was pointed out that the Council has always had the ability to alter, add or amend the amount of subscription and it was initialled fixed at £1 per head of the population in Croxley who were over 18.

In conclusion, it was stated that the Society is made up from volunteers and the aims were to make things better and special for Croxley Green residents and that if the Council doesn't have the human resources to directly organise such events, reliance on the volunteers of the various clubs and societies is a very good method of achieving the Council's goals.

The Chairman thanked the representative for his comments and proposed to the meeting that Agenda item CC1300/13 S137 Grant Application from Croxley Green Mummies be moved up the Agenda under Standing Order 9.1.6. The proposal was agreed. It was also proposed that the Agenda item CC1297/13 Budgets 2014/15 be moved to the end of the Agenda so that all other Council business can be undertaken before the budget discussions but that the matter of Subscriptions in the Budget be dealt with as a separate matter after CC1300/13

S137 Grant given the fact that public representation had been made on this issue and that the members of the public may wish to stay to hear the debate on this subject. This proposal was also agreed.

CC1300/13

S137 Grant Application from Croxley Green Mummers

The Chairman introduced this item and invited comments from Members.

Members fully supported the application. A discussion ensued as to the most practical method for the Grant to be accounted for in terms of the replacement/refurbishment of the costumes and it was considered that this should be by way of receiving appropriate receipts.

Resolved:

- That an S137 Grant for £500 be awarded to the Croxley Green Mummers;
- That the Grant will be released by way of appropriate receipts to the Clerk for the replacement/refurbishment of the costumes.

CC1297/13
(part
discussion)

Budgets 2014/15

(Part discussion on Budget Accounts Code 4024/102 Subscriptions & Donations)

The Chairman introduced this item and asked the Clerk to elaborate as to the build up of this particular budget item.

The Clerk advised and presented on screen that the budget is showing a figure of £7,400 consisting of:

HAPTC	1,503.71
SLCC	203.00
Community Development Agency for Hertfordshire	30.00
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	29.00
The Open Space Society	45.00
Direct Information Service (NALC)	90.00
Croxley Green Society	5,500.00

A discussion ensued regarding the subscription to CPRE but it was pointed out that this was a valuable source of information and should be continued. No comments were made on the other items with the exception of the subscription to Croxley Green Society.

It was pointed out that the most recent accounts for the Society (31 December 2012) have been circulated to Members. Members pointed out that the subscription provides excellent value for money and it was both right and proper that the Council should be supporting in this way the two major events during the year, the Revels and Croxfest. It was commented that the Council has historically been supporting these events by way of Grant and the subscription approach was more sustainable as it demonstrated to the Society the Council's commitment to support the events without the annual process of addressing Grant applications.

Resolved:

- That the budget for Subscriptions and Donations for 2014/15 be set at £7,400.

- CC1294/13 Minutes
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the 290th monthly meeting of the Council held on Thursday 28 November 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman.
- CC1295/13 Matters Arising
 CC1289/13 (The Future of Hertfordshire Library Service). The Clerk was asked if the library had been placed on the list of locally important buildings. The Clerk advised that the current Council meeting was earlier than usual given Christmas and this action was outstanding.
- CC1296/13 Committee Reports
- CC1296.1/13 Environment and Amenity Committee held on 3 September and 5 November 2013
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Environment and Amenity Committee meetings held on 3 September and 5 November 2013 be adopted as a report of the meetings.
- There were no matters arising.
- CC1296.2/13 Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 20 November
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 20 November 2013 be adopted as a report of the meeting and it was noted that the meeting scheduled for 6 November 2013 was cancelled.
- CC1296.3/13 Any matters arising
 CC1296/13 Highways. The Clerk reported that District Councillor Steve Drury had accepted an invitation to a Planning & Development Committee meeting to discuss his County budget.
- CC1296.4/13 Finance and Administration Committee held Thursday 14 November 2013
Resolved:
- That the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee held on Thursday, 14 November 2013 be adopted as a report of the meeting.
- CC1296.5/13 Any matters arising
 There were no matters arising.
- CC1297/13 Budgets 2014/15
 See above, part discussion before Minute CCCC1294/13, and below after Minute CC1301/13.
- CC1298/13 Village Hall Agreement with Croxley Green Community Association
 The Chairman introduced this item and referred to Minute FA942/13 from the meeting on 14 November 2013 in which certain recommendations have been passed to Council for ratification.
 The Chairman reminded Members that the Croxley Green Community Association had served notice on the Agreement between them and the Parish Council regarding the use of their hall as a Village Hall and the Agreement would terminate on 31 March 2015.

Members noted the position and considered that the existing agreement had worked well but it would be prudent to look elsewhere for a Village Hall as well as entering into discussions with the Community Association. It was suggested that consideration should be given to setting up a working party to take this matter forward.

Resolved:

- That the Council seeks alternative Village Hall arrangements within Croxley Green;
- That concurrent negotiations are undertaken with the Croxley Green Community Association regarding re-negotiating the existing arrangement;
- That consideration is given to a procurement/tendering process.

CC1299/13

Internal Audit Report (Interim) for the year ending 31 March 2014

The Chairman introduced this item and asked the Clerk to elaborate. The Clerk was pleased to report that the internal auditor had stated that the Council continues to have generally effective systems in place that should help to ensure the accuracy of detail for the Council accounts.

The auditor had identified that for the Clerks protection a nominated Councillor should periodically review the accounting records and that there was a procedural matter when closing the month end accounts.

Members noted the points made and suggested that the matter of a nominated Councillor to periodically review the accounting records should be discussed in more detail at a future Finance and Administration Committee meeting.

In connection with the section on Assessment and Management of Risk it was noted that the auditor had stated that no issues of concern had been identified but had suggested that the Council consider developing an overall risk management strategy. The Clerk advised that such a strategy was being developed and that when this work was complete he would bring the matter to the Finance and Administration Committee for discussion.

Resolved:

- That Cllrs noted the Audit report and that the response to the auditor is that the recommendations R1 and R2 will be addressed at a future Finance & Administration Committee meeting.

CC1301/13

Land Acquisition Working Group

The Chairman introduced this item and asked Cllr Bennett to elaborate. Cllr Bennett advised that a meeting had taken place with Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) on Monday 9 December.

The Parish Cllrs had pointed out that the Council was looking for ownership of the land associated with The Green and Stones Orchard and there appeared to be some apprehension by TRDC as to why ownership was an important aspect. The Parish Cllrs commented that these were community assets and therefore should be held on behalf of that community by the Parish Council rather than District.

TRDC stated that they would need to look at and provide clarification as to the status of the land and were thinking that perhaps a long lease rather than ownership might be an alternative option.

TRDC indicated that they would have to quantify the value of the land and a further meeting should be scheduled towards the end of January 2014.

Budget 2014/15

The Chairman introduced this item and asked the Clerk to elaborate. The Clerk presented on screen the draft budget schedule version 5 dated 13 December 2013 and stated that the draft Precept taking account of all budget submissions was showing as £292,799. The Clerk emphasised that with the changes in the tax benefit system this figure does not take into account any grant that may be forthcoming from TRDC. The Clerk added that TRDC had not as yet confirmed whether a grant would be forthcoming but indications were that if such a grant was made it would not be at the same level as last year and would probably be approximately 15% less. This in real terms would mean that a grant of £11,900 may be available but at this stage could not be guaranteed. The Clerk showed the effect on the draft Precept if £11,900 was received which would reduce the draft Precept £280,899.

It was agreed that for discussion purposes the budget model without the potential grant from TRDC be used. The meeting then went through the draft budget on a line by line basis. The following changes were made:

Page 3 Local Democracy – Funding for Annual Parish Meeting Referendum (£5,000): It was noted that this budget item had been put forward by Cllr Ridley who was not in attendance at the meeting to explain his proposal. Members considered that this was not a matter that should be budgeted for and a request was made for a formal vote to be taken to remove this item. Accordingly, it proposed and seconded that the £5,000 be removed from the budget.

Resolved:

- That the budget item Funding for Annual Parish Meeting Referendum of £5,000 be removed from the budget.

Page 4 Accts code 4051/103 Vehicle License & Insurance (£3,500): It was noted that the vehicle road tax and insurance had been paid for and the out-turn (Projected Actual, year end) was showing as £2,300. Accordingly, it was agreed to reduce the 2014/15 budget provision from £3,500 to £2,500.

Page 6 Accts Code 4260/107 Community Hall Membership Grant (£8,542): The Clerk advised that a submission from Croxley Green Community Association had been received in accordance with the principles of the Agreement for the Village Hall. The Clerk continued that the £8,542 was the figure which the Association had calculated would be required to support the Village Hall under the Agreement for the coming year. Members considered that as the Association had given notice of termination of the Agreement that it would be inappropriate to include their submitted proposal at a time when the Council would be entering into negotiations with them concurrent with looking elsewhere. It was therefore agreed that the current year figure of £7,100 be used.

Page 10 Accts Code 4605/211 Christmas Lights (£14,000): The Clerk advised that some of the figures had been computer generated by formula based on the Actual Year to Date spend to produce a guide to proposed budget figures. The Clerk added that in this particular case the formula based calculation was inappropriate and although the formula had been removed the figures had not been adjusted. It was agreed that a more realistic budget should be £8,500. The figure was amended accordingly.

Given the above changes the Clerk recalculated the Precept which resulted in a figure of £279,857. It was agreed that this figure and the updated budget be used as the basis for further discussion in January 2014.

A general discussion then took place about the Council's earmarked reserves and in particular the possibility of including into the budget as earmarked reserves further funds for assisting refurbishment, updating or provision of additional play equipment in local play areas.

CC1302/13

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.05pm.