

MESHAW PARISH MEETING

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7.00PM VIA ZOOM

Present: Jeff Souch (Chairman) and Sarah Vertigan (Parish Clerk)

In Attendance: Angus Cottey, Joy Cottey, Roger Creed, Amantha King, Celia Lerner, Trevor Olver, Brendan Shaw, Liz Smith, Tim Smith, Jill Souch, Mary Tait, Andrew Walton, Heather Walton

Apologies: Sally Meikle was unable to join due to technical problems

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming those who had managed to join via the internet and thanking Amantha King for facilitating the Zoom meeting via her personal account.

1. Minutes of the last meeting (the AGM) held on Wednesday 19 August 2020

The minutes, having been circulated to all those present by email prior to the meeting, were deemed to be an accurate and true account of the previous meeting. Mary Tait proposed that they should be adopted and Heather Walton seconded the proposal.

The Chairman will duly sign the minutes as soon as he is allowed to meet the Parish Clerk!

2. Audit Commission on the accounts for 2019/20

The Chairman explained that since out turnover is under £25k the Parish Meeting is authorised to sign off on the accounts after being audited by an independent auditor. This has been duly completed and a notice had been posted on the village noticeboard in August, in accordance with the Audit Commission, informing all members of the Parish that the accounts were available to be scrutinised if they wished by contacting the Parish Clerk. No one has asked.

3. To receive the accounts for present year-to-date for 2020/21 and to authorise payment necessary before the next meeting

The Parish Clerk had circulated copies of the current Cash in Bank and the Income & Expenditure to date for 2020/21 by email to all those present on the call.

The Chairman presented the current state of the accounts which showed that there was currently £11673.22 in the bank, which included £7292.17, being the balance of the funds received for the Feasibility Study, and approx. £1292 which is ring-fenced for the Social Fund. The remainder is the balance received for the Parish Precept from which payments are made to the PCC for the upkeep of the Church Burial Ground, contribution to the Community News, hall hire, website costs, Chairman and Clerk's expenses and sundries such as the annual Christmas tree.

The Chairman highlighted that payments had been made to the PCC of £600 for the upkeep of the Burial Ground and £414.40 to Rowena Riley for the Heritage Report for the Meshaw Together Project. He also mentioned that the Parish had been granted a loan of £495 for Covid-related expenditure, such as petrol. This loan will eventually be accounted for and any balance returned to the NDDC. The accounts were currently showing that our expenditure had exceeded income by £63.16.

Those present agreed that the accounts all looked to be in order and had no further questions. Trevor Olver proposed that they be approved and Roger Creed seconded the proposal.

4. Budget 2021/22 proposal

The Clerk had previously circulated the proposed budget to those present.

The Chairman presented the budget for 2021/22, which showed a proposed expenditure total of £890, made up of the Burial Ground grant, Community News, Website, Hall Hire, Electricity for Xmas tree lights and Chairman & Clerk's expenses for 2021/22. He highlighted that the precept would need to be increased to meet these costs and that it would necessitate a possible £2-3 increase on everyone's Parish Council Tax.

The Chairman then raised the matter of the Churchyard maintenance and a request from the PCC for a further increase of £150 in support to £750 per annum. There followed a discussion about the costs incurred by the PCC for the upkeep of the Burial Ground during the past two years since the practise of paying the Young Farmers £308 that was fully supported by the Meshaw Parish Meeting had ceased due to poor maintenance of the churchyard and complaints by locals concerning the state of the whole area. Last year it was agreed to up the level of support and it was agreed that the Parish Meeting would contribute £600 based on 4 cuts per annum. However the PCC report that they spent £1070 in 2019 and £1,200 in this last year given the initial catching up required after several years of neglect and during 2020 keeping on top of grass growth.

The Chairman advised his initial thoughts were that given the increase agreed by the Parish Meeting last year another increase so soon was unexpected and as the Parish Meeting ran a negative budget in 2020/21 of £260 to facilitate the support in a year when the Local Authority grant had been removed a further increase in the Precept might not be welcomed by Meshaw residents. However the Chairman had been doing some research on the level of Parish Rates in North Devon and Meshaw was one of the lowest priced. A further increase in Precept to £1040 would put up the Parish Rate by another £2 or £3 per home bringing a band D property contribution to £15 or £16.

Comment from the floor raised the issue of the PCC obtaining competitive quotations to undertake Churchyard maintenance and the PCC representatives agreed it would make sense going forward.

The Chairman then said that with the Meshaw Together Project the maintenance of the grounds would become more important to all and asked if those present should vote on the requested increase to £750 increasing the Parish Precept to £1,040 so the Authority can operate at breakeven in 2021/22. The proposed budget was unanimously approved by a show of hands.

5. Matters Arising

Defibrillator:

Amantha King had carried out extensive research in the best way forward for the Parish to acquire a defibrillator for the village and it seems the best solution is to lease one. The lease is for a period of 4 years at an approx. cost of £2k to include fitting and servicing. The cost will also include the training by South West Ambulance Trust for up to 24 people how to use it. It is required that someone from the village should check it once a week to make sure that it has not been vandalised or is not working. The Chairman advised that he had

arranged for a quotation from Western Power to provide electricity from the distribution pole in the square had proved expensive at £1,700 and in addition an unmetered supply annual certificate would be needed at an extra cost.

An alternative was suggested by Western Power and this required a power supply from a private property in the Square. Running costs would be minimal, £25 maximum and Celia Larner has most generously agreed to allow the appliance to be fitted to the side of her house. The Parish Meeting will then reimburse her for electricity used. It was further agreed that if Celia Larner should move from her house before the end of the lease, the Parish Meeting would investigate an alternative site for the appliance.

It is hoped that Jeremy Yabsley will be able to fund the initial 4-year lease but it was agreed that going forwards, the Village would fund a new lease through social events and fundraising initiatives.

These proposals were unanimously agreed by all those present and the Chairman will follow the installation through once the grant monies are confirmed.

Infra-red Thermometer:

Mary Tait had previously proposed that the Parish Meeting should purchase an infra-red thermometer for use by the village at an approx. cost of £30. However, after some discussion as to the effectiveness in detecting Covid-19, it was agreed to wait until the next meeting to see if the need for this was really necessary.

North Devon Record Office:

The Parish Clerk reported that she had received a request from NDRO for donations as the facility was continually being threatened with closure. All those present agreed that it would be a lost amenity and agreed that we should send them a sum of £50. This would come from our social fund.

Christmas Tree:

It was agreed that the Chairman would obtain a tree from Burrow Cross Christmas Trees at the beginning of December and that he, Angus and Tim would arrange a date/time to erect it in the Square. Celia Larner has kindly agreed to provide the electricity for the lights as in previous years.

Meshaw Together Update:

The Chairman reported that he and Tim Smith met a Director of a Company that specialised in Grade 1 and Grade 2 buildings and reordering Churches and the information obtained was very useful to our scheme. The Chairman advised that he was in touch with members of the DAC, the Church Planning authority and that the dialogue had been positive and they were helping to guide him through the process of obtaining agreement to alterations required to facilitate the Village Hub. The next steps will be to discuss heating, lighting, water, waste and seating.

It was agreed that the Chairman would circulate the current plans to those present but not to the wider population stressing that this was still just a proposal and not set in stone.

[At this point Andrew and Heather Walton had to leave the meeting to deal with an emergency.]

Planning Applications:

The Chairman reported that the application for the Chicken Farm opposite Amantha King's home had been approved but it was unclear if it would in fact go ahead.

An application at Bourne Bridge House for 4 residential units had been withdrawn.

Snow Warden:

The Chairman and Angus Cottey reported that there was a good stock of salt in all bins. AC agreed to drop off a bag to Amantha King as they were too far from the nearest bin.

Neighbourhood Watch:

Roger Creed reported that there was nothing major to report. There were a number of scams going around during the Covid crisis, one in particular for DPD regarding problems with deliveries, which should be ignored.

Website:

The Chairman thanked the Webmaster for keeping the website updated on a regular basis. Brendan Shaw reported that there had been a number of people logging into the website with 12 hits for News, 17 for the History and 21 for the Walks!

6. Any Other Business

Sally Meikle has proposed that the village organise a Nativity Scarecrow event. East Worlington is also organising one. It was agreed that it was a good idea and that participants should aim to have them ready by Tuesday 8th December.

Finally, the Chairman concluded by thanking the Covid Help Team for their efforts in helping the vulnerable and self-isolated.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50pm.