

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held at 8pm in the Reading Room on Monday 9th January 2023.

Present:

Cllrs Bourke, Cox, Horden, Husband (Chair), Jones, Pryor, and Steed.

In attendance

Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) Cllr Paul Potter and the Clerk.

1. Apologies for Absence

(202) Council noted apologies from Surrey County Council (SCC) Cllr Helyn Clack and MVDC Cllr Simon Budd.

2. Declarations of Interest

(203) None.

3. Requests for Dispensations

(204) None.

4. Minutes

(205) Council **resolved** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th November 2022. The minutes were duly signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. Planning

Planning Applications

(206) Council **resolved** to ratify the submission of a supplementary representation submitted re: MO/2022/1107: Erection of new dwelling by utilising and extending existing double garage and store and demolishing existing barn, garage, and out-buildings on Land adjacent to Yew Tree Cottage, Reigate Road, Buckland, RH3 7BG, that had:

- (i) acknowledged a recent conversation with the Case Officer to clarify the extent of the “red line” and the relevance of the “blue line” in the application documents; and
- (ii) requested the attachment of an additional condition to any permission granted to require the removal of the structures proposed for demolition prior to occupation of the new dwelling.

Planning Notifications

(207) Council noted the following Local Planning Authority planning notification:

MO/2022/1787: Reduce height of one Sycamore tree by approximately 5 metres and thin by 20% and reduce height of one Laburnum tree by 2 metres at Dove Tree Cottage, Rectory Lane, Buckland, RH3 7BL. No objection.

Planning Policy

(208) Council noted MVDC had:

- (i) decided to “pause” before moving on to the next stage in its Future Mole Valley timetable; and
- (ii) await clarification on the government’s plans for the planning system and Green Belt before deciding its next course of action.

6. Highways and Airspace

Highways

(209) Cllr Steed advised Council:

- (i) there had not been any notified maintenance closures of the M25 affecting the village during three months monitoring of the HE twitter feed; and
- (ii) in view of the considerable number of twitter notifications Cllr Steed had stopped monitoring the feed.

Council **resolved** to consult with SCC should Highways England make extensive use of the diversion through Buckland for full closure motorway maintenance. **Action:** Cllr Steed.

(210) Council noted receipt of an update from “20s Plenty for Surrey”, a campaign seeking the introduction of 20mph speed limits in all towns and villages across the County. Council **resolved** to reaffirm its previous decision that Council does not consider such proposals appropriate for the roads in Buckland. No action required.

(211) Council noted:

- (i) Betchworth Parish Council (Betchworth PC) had circulated a draft proposal setting out safety improvements in The Street and invited comments from Buckland and Brockham parish councils;
- (ii) Cllr Steed had reviewed the draft proposals and prepared a response that had been sent to Betchworth PC for consideration;
- (iii) Betchworth PC had expressed thanks for Cllr Steed’s carefully considered response; and
- (iv) no further action is required until such time as Betchworth PC circulates an updated proposal.

(212) Council **resolved** to issue a letter to SCC to

- (i) express appreciation for the maintenance (application of slurry surface) to the section of the A25 footway between the driveway to Buckland Court and Old Road, work completed since Council last met on 14th November 2022;
- (ii) seek clarification as to when further maintenance along the A25 roadside footways will be scheduled;
- (iii) express concern that no action has been taken to address the regular ponding on the carriageway, verge, and footway close to the western boundary of The Pheasant / eastern boundary of Buckland Park Lake. **Action:** Clerk.

(213) Council noted:

- (i) as SCC contractors had now
 - (a) completed the second cut of 2022 of the inside edges of the A25 roadside verges during the week prior to Christmas; and
 - (b) flailed the eastern hedge/banks of Old Road mid December; and
- (ii) MVDC contractors had, during the first week of January, swept the footways through the centre of the village;

effort is now focused on completing the budgeted winter maintenance work.

Airspace

(214) Council noted:

- (i) Cllr Cox had attended a briefing to hear Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL):
 - (a) explain what progress has been made on GAL’s Airspace Change Proposal (ACP 2018-60) to redesign the arrival and departure routes that serve the operation in line with the UK Airspace Modernisation Strategy;
 - (b) outline the Comprehensive List of Options GAL has developed; and
 - (c) share an overview of the Design Principle Evaluation and Initial Options Appraisal process;

in advance of further engagement sessions being arranged for Q1 2023; and

- (ii) Cllr Cox had recently accepted an invitation to attend a virtual engagement session on Monday 30th January 2023, about the first of three rounds of options appraisal that GAL must undertake to support the development of the ACP.

7. Amenities and Events

Bus Shelter

(215) Council noted the contractor had recently advised their supplier hopes to receive the cedar shingles in time to undertake the work before the end of February. Council **resolved** to authorise the Clerk to raise a payment to Affordable Roofing for up to £1,334.40 including £222.40 Vat (the quoted inc-Vat fee cost of £3,804.00 plus a 15% contingency allowance of £570.60), upon receipt of the appropriate invoice.

- (216) Council considered the arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting, scheduled to be held on at 8pm on Monday 6th March 2023. Council **resolved** to accept an offer from Cllrs Cox and Jones to arrange refreshments. **Actions:** Cllr Husband to prepare an article for the March issue of the parish magazine (due to be distributed at the end of February) to encourage residents to attend. Cllr Husband to feature the forthcoming parish council elections in the Chair's address. All Cllrs to share relevant information and updates with Cllr Husband.
- (217) Council **resolved** to record a vote of thanks to Brockham Parish Council for extending the opportunity to Buckland residents to recycle their Christmas trees, and to Brockham resident Jason Keen for overseeing the tree shredding.

8. Finance

(218) Council noted:

- (i) Cllr Jones had verified the bank balances entered on the Q3 bank reconciliation against the bank statements, and having reviewed the cashbook against the bank reconciliation, signed the cashbook to confirm no anomalies had arisen between 1st October 2022 and 31st December 2022; and
- (ii) financial schedules circulated in advance of the meeting had included a year-to-date cash book, an analysis versus budget and bank reconciliation.

Account Payments and Receipts

(219) Council **resolved** to approve the following payments:

- (i) Information Commissioner Office £35 (by direct debit via Unity Bank);
Renewal of Annual Registration Fee : Data Protection
- (ii) HMRC £82.07, PAYE liability re: December salary payment;
- (iii) HMRC £81.87, PAYE liability re: January salary payment.

(220) Council **resolved** to renew its membership of the Surrey Hills Society for 2023/24 for a fee of £30.00. **Action:** Clerk.

(221) Council noted the following amounts had been credited to the Parish Council bank account since 14th November 2022:

- (i) £1,000.00 grant from SCC; and
- (ii) £500.00 donation from the Betchworth and Buckland Society.

Budget and Precept Request for the period April 2023 – March 2024

(222) Council noted a draft budget accompanied by a schedule of explanatory notes and draft assumptions and a copy of the latest full year forecast to 31st March 2023 had been circulated to Cllrs accompanied by a “wish list” of potential expenditure proposals relating to amenity improvements.

(223) Council, having reviewed the current year forecast and draft budget, **resolved** to :

- (i) acknowledge, given the current “cost of living crisis” a need to fully justify any discretionary spending;
- (ii) accept that as SCC and MVDC budgets remain subject to economic uncertainty it is reasonable to anticipate a continued need for the Parish Council to ensure it can meet the needs of the parish whilst maintaining appropriate financial reserves; and
- (iii) recognise the need to remain mindful that if the government decides to extend referendum principles to parish councils (by capping year on year increases in parish council tax) such a change would limit Council's ability to increase the precept in future years without incurring the significant cost (c.£4,000 per MVDC) of a referendum.

- (224) Council noted the Finance team at MVDC had recently:
- (i) notified a local tax base for Buckland Parish of £303.30 for 2023/24 compared to £324.00 for 2022/23.
 - (ii) advised Council that a proposal to apply a 4% increase to the 2022/23 concurrent service payment of £2,298 is being prepared for consideration by MVDC and agreed it would be reasonable, for the purposes of preparing a draft budget, to assume the 2023/24 figure will be set at £2,390;
 - (iii) advised Council a proposal to apply a 4% increase to the 2022/23 council tax support scheme payment of £888 is being prepared for consideration by MVDC and agreed it would be reasonable, for the purposes of preparing the draft budget, to assume the 2023/24 figure will be set at £924; and

(225) Council noted:

- (i) its Staffing Committee had met on 14th December 2022 to review the Clerk's terms of employment, following the recent publication of the National Salary Award and the recent completion of a job evaluation;
- (ii) the draft budget reflects the Staffing Committee's recommendation for Council to align the Clerk's salary to Scale Point 27 and agree to a reduction in contracted hours to 9.25 hours per week; and
- (iii) the Staffing Committee propose to meet in 6 months-time to provide an opportunity to review the adequacy of the reduced hours; and

resolved to approve the recommendations of its Staffing Committee. **Action:** Chair to sign an addendum to the Clerk's contract of employment.

(226) Council, having reviewed the draft budget, comprising a financial projection, proposals wishlist, explanatory notes and assumptions, noted:

- (i) an invitation to propose amenity improvements, featured in a parish update issued to residents via the email group and published in the parish magazine, had not generated any responses;
- (ii) if more than seven candidates stand in the forthcoming parish council elections, a contested election will be held, and c.£4,000 costs (per MVDC) be incurred by the parish council, prompting a need to replenish the £4,000 allocated election reserve;
- (iii) the current and projected levels of general (unallocated) reserves, whilst in accordance with the advice in the Practitioner's Guide (*"the generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority's general (unallocated) reserve is that it should be maintained at between 3 and 12 months net expenditure"* and *"The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months"*) are modest;
- (iv) the reduction in local tax base means that to raise £16,504.56, the exact amount of money for 2023/4 that was raised in 2022/3 will result in an 6.8% increase in the Band D precept attributable to the parish council element of the council tax.

(227) Council **resolved**:

- (i) not to budget any discretionary spend on amenity improvements for the 2023/24 budget year (2022/23 £1,000);
- (ii) to retain a budget for discretionary expenditure to £160 to fund the floodlighting to the church and renewal of Council's membership of Surrey Hills Society; and
- (iii) to budget to continue to undertake "maintenance of the footways alongside the A25", to ensure the investment that has already been made to improve the A25 footways continues to be safeguarded until such time as SCC Highways can be persuaded to invest in further footway reconstruction.

(228) Council **resolved** to:

- (i) set budgeted expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year at £19,819.00
- (ii) submit a precept request for the 2023/24 financial year of £ 16,504.56, the value required to balance the 2023/24 budget. **Actions:** Clerk to submit the precept request, signed by Cllrs Husband and Jones, to MVDC.

9. Formalities

Police Report

- (229) Council noted the report provided by Surrey Police had advised 5 incidents recorded in Buckland between 14th November 2022 and 9th January 2023: individual reports of: a vehicle seizure (no insurance) in Old Road and four traffic related incidents, each resulting in the issue of advice and/or a warning on the A25 Reigate Road.
- (230) Council noted budget consultations launched by SCC, MVDC and the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner and Surrey Fire and Rescue had been signposted in parish updates.
- (231) Council noted updates issued by the NALC, Surrey ALC, SCC, MVDC, Surrey Hills Society, Gatwick Airport and GACC had been circulated to Cllrs and key information published within parish updates.

10. Forthcoming Meetings

- (232) The Parish Council will next meet on Monday 13th March 2023 in the Reading Room.
- (233) Parish Council meetings are subsequently scheduled to be held in the Reading Room on the following dates:
 - 2023: 22nd May, 10th July, 11th September, 13th November;
 - 2024: 8th January, 11th March.
- (234) The 2023 Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 8pm on Monday 6th March 2023 in the Reading Room.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.33p.m.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

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