

Draft Minutes
of a meeting of the
Yatton Parish Council
Finance, Personnel and Administration Committee
held on

10 October 2022

Held at Hangstones Pavilion, Stowey Road, Yatton, BS49 4HS.

Meeting Commenced: 7.30 p.m.

Meeting ended: 9.27 p.m.

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Edwards, Peter Lomas, Graham Humphreys, Chris Jackson, Jessie McArdle and Roger Wood.

In attendance: Clerk Aleana Baird and two members of the public.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

FIN 25/22: Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors David Crossman and Massimo Morelli.

FIN 26/22: Declarations of Interest

NONE.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

FIN 27/22: Public participation.

NONE.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

FIN 28/22: To confirm the minutes of the Finance, Personnel & Administration Committee meeting held on 25th July 2022.

RESOLVED: the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

FIN 29/22: If the Committee wishes to exclude the public for a particular agenda item, the following resolution must be passed:

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 11 on the ground that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business in discussion of personnel matters.

FIN 30/22: To consider a formal complaint about a streetlight in Ashleigh Crescent.

The Clerk had circulated all background information up to and including the formal complaint to Committee members. The complainants were also in possession of the same information as the Committee.

Chairman Peter Lomas introduced each Councillor and the Clerk and explained who held which role within the Parish Council to the complainants. He then explained the order of the procedure and what was entailed at each step as follows:

- **Complainants outline the details of the complaint.**

The complaint was based on the failure of the Parish Council to present the complainants' case in a fair manner by omitting the detail that the complainants were willing to fund the removal/relocation of the streetlight in the consultation letter sent to neighbouring residents. They alleged that this was negligent and misleading and prevented consultation respondents from making a fully informed decision in how they responded. There was a lack of transparency because the consultation letter was not shown to the complainants prior to the consultation commencing and the responding comments were not shared with the complainants prior to the Parish Council considering the outcomes of the two consultations carried out. In summary the Parish Council had acted unfairly and the consultation was a breach of their human rights under the Human Rights Act 1998.

- **The Clerk outlines the Parish Council's position.**

The Clerk had not been made aware of the details of the complaint about the consultation letter and therefore did not feel in a prepared position to make an immediate and appropriate response to that detail of the complaint. The Clerk's summary of Council's position was therefore based on the grounds of the complaint that had been received prior to the meeting as follows:

- 1) That the complainants were not being afforded an equitable service given that they live in the same village as those residents whose streetlighting was serviced by North Somerset Council who will relocate a lamp post to another mutually convenient position without consensus of resident agreement. That the Parish Council did not follow the same procedure as North Somerset Council and they were penalised by Yatton Parish Council's outdated procedures and inequitable service for the streetlights not serviced by North Somerset Council.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council owned 97 streetlights in the Parish which were likely to have been transferred to them by North Somerset Council or possibly Woodspring District Council decades previously, no details were known when it took place. She also advised that the Parish Council was not under any obligation to follow the same procedure as North Somerset Council but were free to make their own procedures on matters like this.

- 2) The information regarding the exact feedback from fellow residents was not shared with the complainants which goes against a transparent service in order to provide an opportunity to discuss and resolve concerns with neighbours.

The Clerk advised that in both of the two consultations that were carried out, it was clear that neighbouring residents were not in favour of either removing or relocating the light to the position suggested by the complainants. However the comments had now been provided to the complainants ahead of this meeting but with all references that may have revealed from which property the comments may have come from removed in

addition to all personal details. The Parish Council had been unable to disregard the views of the other neighbouring residents to accommodate one individual household with the reasons for the decisions on each consultation minuted. The minuted decisions had been provided to the complainants after each of the meetings that had looked at the results of the consultations.

- 3) The streetlight in question remains an obstruction to safe access to the drive. Repositioning would enable the complainants to park more vehicles on the driveway to enhance the safety of other residents. In addition this would allow safe and effective access to properties by service vehicles e.g. refuse collections and emergency services who frequently have to mount kerbs to avoid and navigate around parked cars which is causing on going damage to pavements.

The Clerk made no comment on this.

- 4) The streetlight was currently not working and was structurally unsafe, posing an increasing risk of significant injury to people and or damage to property, telephone lines and vehicles in the future.

The Clerk advised the light had been repaired and was now in working order.

- **The Clerk and/or Committee may question the complainants.**

The Clerk had no questions for the complainants.

Committee members questioned how long the complainants had lived at the property and what the reasons were for wanting to relocate the light.

The complainants advised of how long they had been at the property and explained the background history of the frontage to the property included the removal of hedging and shrubs and the installation of hard surfacing. They would be able to park 4 vehicles with ease if the streetlight was relocated, easing on-street parking in the road. They suggested that the light be relocated to outside between 8 and 9 or 11 and 12. They also suggested it would be better to consult face to face rather than write to neighbouring residents as this would be a better way to talk and resolve any issues.

Committee members questioned why they had not undertaken this themselves and what North Somerset Council had said in response to the formal complaint they had made to them. The complainants indicated they would not have felt comfortable about asking neighbours face to face about their views. They stated that North Somerset Council would be willing to relocate the light at the locations they suggested following consultation with other residents but understood that the Parish Council did not have to follow the same process as North Somerset Council in this regard.

- **The Clerk may be questioned by the complainants and/or Committee.**

There were no questions for the Clerk by either the complainants or the Committee.

- **The Clerk and Complainants may give final statements.**

The complainants stated that safety was paramount and the lighting of the road was very important to residents for reasons of feeling safe and reducing crime. They understood that the Parish Council were considering using part night timers and they questioned the impact of this on safety of residents and crime prevention. They had researched a lot of other roads in Yatton and felt that the combination of a streetlight being adjacent to a dropped kerb that was the length of the one the top of their road and outside their property was very unusual and therefore it would not set a precedent if their request to reposition the light was undertaken. They hoped that the outcome of the formal complaint would mean the Parish Council review their procedures in matters like this.

The Clerk advised that part night timers would be a way of reducing the recent high increase in electricity charges for streetlights. Councillor Peter Lomas stated that these timers were widely used already for North Somerset Council streetlights in the parish.

- **The Clerk and Complainants were asked to leave the room while the Committee discussed the complaint and reached a decision. The Clerk and complainants left the meeting room.**
- **The Clerk and Complainants were invited to return to the meeting. The Clerk and Complainants returned to the meeting room.**
- **The Complainants were advised that in consideration of the formal complaint the Committee had agreed as follows:**

RESOLVED: To dismiss the complaint on the basis that the main grounds for complaint were incorrect. The central allegation was that our process was flawed because we did not advise residents during the public consultations that the complainants were willing to pay the costs of removal or relocation of the streetlight. However, this was a deliberate decision as Yatton Parish Council did not consider it correct to potentially commit a third party - the complainants - to payment of an unknown amount of money for the work.

**The Complainants asked where they could take the complaint to next and were advised of the Local Ombudsman, they also asked if they are able to request the street light is relocated as they had suggested outside No's 8 and 9 or 11 and 12. The Clerk stated that the Council were not bound by the previous decisions they had made in 2020. The complainants were free to submit a request for consideration.

FIN 31/22 Finance

To authorise payments, to note receipts and petty cash payments for October 2022.

RESOLVED: To authorise payments, note receipts and petty cash payments for October 2022.

FIN 32/22 To consider a grant application from the Brownies.

RESOLVED: to approve a grant of £350 to Yatton Brownies.

This left a general grant balance £548.32 for 2022-23.

FIN 33/22 To review 6.3 of the Investment Strategy.

The Investment Strategy 6.3 read as follows:

Higher interest funds are with Lloyds Bank as three month interest bearing deposits. On maturity funds are returned to our current account. A new deposit is then placed for a further three months, the amount dependant on the next quarters expenditure. The Parish Council uses Lloyds Bank for its day to day banking.

The Parish Council now invested deposits with the CCLA Public Deposit Fund and was no longer using the three month fixed term deposit at Lloyds.

RESOLVED: to remove 6.3 from the Investment Strategy.

FIN 34/22 To plan the budget process for 2023-24.

The process was commencing in November with all the background work being carried out in advance of the December Finance meeting at which the budget would be finalised and recommended for review and approval by Full Council in January 2023. Committee members advised they were available on Thursdays and Fridays for daytime meetings on the background work.

FIN 35//22 To discuss outcomes from staff appraisals including any changes in working hours, pay grades and training.

The Clerk had carried out staff appraisals and discussed the outcomes from this process. The staff team continued to work very well together with no problems to report. There were however some requested changes to hours and a training course for some staff. The Clerk provided the background information on the changes and the training course.

RESOLVED: to approve a chainsaw training course and assessment for the part-time grounds person at a cost of £804 and to allow her to time sheet additional gardening hours up to 2 additional hours per week this autumn and winter. The two hours would become regular contracted hours from 1st April 2023 taking her regular hours to 29.5 per week. The equipment and PPE would be purchased in due course.

RESOLVED: to approve an additional 3 hours per week for the Finance Officer commencing 1st November 2022 making her regular hours 18 per week in line with her predecessor.

RESOLVED: to approve the administration assistant clerking Planning Committee meetings as required. The additional hours needed to carry out the work would be time sheeted only on the weeks when meetings took place up to a maximum of 6 additional hours.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

FIN 36/22: Clerks Report.

i) The Clerk advised that the staff were attending the Saltex trade fair in Birmingham NEC 2nd November 2022. It was free admission and would allow research into what was available in terms of maintenance, new ideas and products for all aspects of open spaces and recreation areas.

FIN 37/21: Future agenda items.

- Online banking.

Chairman

____/____/2022