

BIDBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE BIDBOROUGH VILLAGE HALL ON 24 APRIL 2023 STARTING AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Thorne (Chairman) and
Councillors Hawksfield, Moore, Shepherdson, and Mrs Vidler

In Attendance – Neil Harris (Clerk) and County Councillor McInroy and Borough
Councillor Allan

Prior to the commencement of the business of the meeting the Chairman reported that Jill Buckland, a long-standing member of the community, had passed away. It was agreed that the Chairman would pass on the sincere condolences of the Council to her family.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence was received from Borough Councillor Ms Willis.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosures.

3. Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 27 March 2023

It was **Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2023 including the confidential minutes be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023

There were no matters arising.

5. Report of the Borough and County Councillors

County Councillor McInroy stated that highways matters were dominating his inbox and in particular potholes. There was a delay in getting them fixed as there were tens of thousands of them across the County. He indicated that one of the problems was that there was not the same level of funding available this year as budgets had to be cut but he was trying to get them resolved as quickly as he could. The Chairman stated that she felt that the potholes were dealt with quicker if reported on the KCC online reporting system.

Borough Councillor Allan reported that the Joint Transportation Board were looking at Cycle Routes scheme and this was currently out to consultation.

6. Public Participation

The public had an opportunity to raise questions with the Council and for Councillors and the Clerk to respond where appropriate: -

- That the matter of litter bins would be taken up with TWBC Officers again particularly relating to the emptying service.
- A Parishioner asked the following question of the Council “Parishioners have been obliged to leave many recent council meetings as the press and public have been excluded whilst the reported subject of employment of a previous clerk was discussed and also latterly the ‘employment matter’ legal advice costs, although this later subject was apparently to do with pre-legal advice.

These topics have now become the subject of minute 20 in the last meeting minutes and all the subject matter has now been reported extensively in a statement by the Chairman posted on the public notice board and now included as agenda item 12 for tonight’s meeting after the public session has closed.

Certain matters reported as fact may be correct, but others may be construed as opinion or be based on incorrect information, inaccuracies, or misunderstandings. Please can you explain how it can be right to deprive the public of any opportunity to contribute, discuss, debate, or challenge these statements and to deprive past councillors, individuals referred to directly or indirectly, or others affected by these statements or inferences, from any right of response or opportunity to defend themselves”.

The Chairman responded that she had a right to make a statement about the position including her request for the reimbursement of funds. This was particularly relevant as incorrect information regarding this matter had been sent to her employer. In dealing with long standing issue not just a few but all Councillors over many years had been negligent in their duties.

- The Parishioners present wished to record their thanks to all of the outgoing Councillors.

7. Payment List

It was **Agreed** that the Payment List as circulated at the meeting and as set out below be approved: -

Name	Reason for Invoice	Net	VAT	Gross
Ashdown Garden Services	Grass Cutting – April	548.00	0.00	548.00
Ashdown Garden Services	Garden Maintenance - April	400.00	0.00	400.00
NPower	Street Lighting Electricity costs – March	100.31	5.02	105.33

Bidborough Village Hall	Hire of Hall January to March	83.00	0.00	83.00
Streetlights	Annual Maintenance Contract – First 6 months	384.72	76.94	461.66
Pallet Handling Penshurst Ltd	Materials for Coronation Seat	182.70	36.54	219.24
Kent Association of Local Councils	Annual Subscription for Membership	451.78	90.36	542.14
Neil Harris	Payroll and mileage for April (including payment for 10 days unused holiday entitlement)	1228.21	0.00	1228.21
HMRC	National Insurance and Tax Payment Month 1	488.70	0.00	488.70
KSS Air Ambulance Charity	Donation agreed at last meeting	300.00	0.00	300.00
Mr Ray Skinner	Payment for Custom Brass Plaques made by him to TMF	371.67	74.33	446.00

8. Planning Application - 23/00963/Full – 5 Home Farm View, Penshurst Road, Bidborough

It was **Agreed** to raise no objection to planning application 23/00963/Full - 5 Home Farm View, Penshurst Road, Bidborough.

9. Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Clerk reported that the Council had a duty to appoint an Internal Auditor each year. He suggested that last years Internal Auditor be reappointed for 2023/24. Last years Internal Auditor was Marian Hemsted and with having the new finance software in place this year's charge had been reduced from £1000 to £600.

It was **Agreed**

- (1) That Marian Hemsted be reappointed as Internal Auditor for 2023/24 at a cost of £600 and that she be asked to present her report direct to the Council.
- (2) That the appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024/25 be extended to include other potential Auditors.

10. Statement of Internal Control

The Clerk presented the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31 March 2023.

It was **Agreed** that the Statement of Internal Control for the year ending 31 March 2023 be approved.

11. AGAR Update

The Clerk updated the Council on the progress on the closing of the 2023/24 accounts and preparation of the AGAR. He indicated that good progress was being made but that it would be helpful if the Council agreed to purchase from the Finance Software company access to various video support at a cost of £35.

The Council thanked the Clerk for all the work he had done and was doing for the Council particularly on the Council's financial matters.

It was **Agreed** that the purchase of the various video support from Edge IT at a cost of £35 be approved.

12. Personal Statement of the Chairman in relation to Legal Expenses

The Chairman read out the Personal Statement she had issued with the Agenda clarifying her position in respect of the Legal Expenses on which she was seeking a refund.

Councillor Mrs Vidler indicated to the Council that she had a number of concerns over this matter and had asked the TWBC Monitoring Officer and the External Auditor to look at this. The Monitoring Officer had informed her that she was investigating the matter including discussing it with KALC.

The Clerk reported that the minute of the last meeting in respect of the reimbursement of the Chairmans legal expenses had been confirmed by the Council and that since the last meeting he had confirmed that all the bills had been paid. Therefore, in line with the decision made the payment could be made. However, he advised the Council that as this matter was under investigation by the Monitoring Officer it would not be appropriate to make this payment until this matter had been clarified with the Monitoring Officer and the conclusion of any investigation that could prevent payment.

It was **Agreed** that

- (1) no payment should be made until clarification had been sought from the Monitoring Officer in respect of the investigation she was undertaking and whether this prevented the agreed payment being made and
- (2) the Council would like to see the clarification it is seeking on the status of the investigation and the conclusion of the same investigation by Friday 5 May.

13. Oral Personal Statement of Outgoing Long Serving Councillor Doug Moore

Councillor Moore indicated that he had decided not to make his statement.

The Chairman reported that Councillor Doug Moore had served on the Council for 24 years helping the community as a whole for the whole of that period.

It was **Agreed** that the sincere thanks of the Council on behalf of the whole community be given to Councillor Doug Moore.

14. Duration of Meeting

7.00pm to 8.18pm