

Letcombe Regis Parish Council

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**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7pm
on Monday 18th December 2023 in the
Warborough Room of the Village Hall**

Present: Vice-Chairman Paul Batchelor (PB), Councillors David Barber,
Tom Griffin (TG), Gordon Lundie (GL) and the Clerk
Elizabeth Jenkins (EJ)

District Councillor, Paul Barrow

Members of the public were also present

Item		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence: Apologies received from Cllr Lapsley, County Councillor Constance was absent due to illness.	
2.	Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations.	
3.	Approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th September 2023 and Actions Arising: Councillors approved the minutes,	
4.	County Council Matters: Removal of the tree on Warborough Road. Cllr Constance was not present due to illness and the request to remove the tree will be followed up at a later date. i) Information Media Release – Grant to strengthen community groups Initiative to increase social connections in the County (see email sent 11 th of September). It was felt that there were several community groups and the original suggestion that the ones using the village hall should be contacted were unlikely to take the offer up. Completed	
5.	District Council Matters: Actions from earlier minutes iii) Wantage and District Community Transport Survey. This has been overtaken by the agreement for a rural bus service to run until 2025. The Parish Council would like to have view of the data which are being collected, however it would be a while before it would be available.	

<p>iv) Health Consultation Update from D. Cllr Barrow Cllr Barrow had hoped to update the PC on Wantage Hospital and noted the public meeting to be held in January however the main issue causing concern was the ambulance response times.</p>	
<p>6. Parish Council Matters: Actions from earlier minutes</p>	
<p>i) Potholes and Roads discussion with Cllr Gant Portfolio holder OCC The visit which had been cancelled twice is now due to take place on the 22nd January 2024. Confirmed by Cllr Paul Barrow. Ongoing</p>	
<p>ii) New hedging for the Burial Ground. Replacement hedging alongside the existing metal fence between the Burial Ground and the Recreation ground car park. Cllr Barber would look at the possibility of removing the fence. If this proved problematical Cllr Lundie was happy for the new hedge to be planted on the car park side of the fence leaving a gap between the fence and the new hedge in case it was later necessary to remove the fence. The Clerk confirmed the replacement hedging is due to be delivered in January. Ongoing</p>	<p>DB</p>
<p>iii) First Aid in the Workplace Training - For the Community Emergency Group The Clerk had checked councillors availability and the training has been arranged for Saturday 20th January 2024. from 10am to 5pm with a break for lunch at 1pm. Cllrs were notified by email 18 October 2023. Completed</p>	<p>All Cllrs.</p>
<p>iv) First Aid and Paediatric First Aid Training It was decided to hold this later in 2024, possibly in the spring.</p>	
<p>v) Village Maintenance <u>Six month review</u> Due to be held in January Ongoing</p>	<p>JL/EJ</p>
<p><u>Discussion of potential new maintenance contract</u> Cllrs Griffin and Lundie would meet to discuss a new contract Ongoing</p>	<p>TG/GL</p>
<p>vi) Burial Ground Records The Clerk attended the Cemetery Management and Compliance training earlier in the year and it was recommended that the Parish Council should move to the electronic system available through Scribe. The Clerk will contact Scribe for a quotation. Ongoing</p>	<p>EJ</p>
<p>vii) Review of the Community Led Plan Cllr Batchelor felt that some areas of the original plan were out of date and that it should be reviewed. Ongoing</p>	<p>PB</p>
<p>viii) Biodiversity Duty for Town and Parish Councils Oxford Association of Local Councils had brought the Biodiversity Duty information to the attention of Town and Parish Councils in their November</p>	

	<p>update. This comes into force on 1st January 2024 Councils to consider from time to time. There is no requirement for Councils to produce a biodiversity report, but it is recommended that they consider biodiversity when making decisions which could have an impact on biodiversity, such as managing buildings, recreation grounds, cemeteries and allotments. Further information is available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty.</p> <p>Following discussion Cllr Batchelor asked Councillors to report back to the next PC meeting in January.</p> <p>OALC are running a new training course on Addressing the Biodiversity Crisis on 20th February 2024. The Clerk would ask the Chairman if she is available to attend.</p> <p>7. Councillor Updates Cllr Batchelor <u>Town and Parish Councils Charter</u> Councillors discussed but felt that the development of a charter in itself was of limited value. <u>Fete</u> Councillors were asked to consider what form this should take and report back to the meeting in January.</p> <p>Cllr Lundie Trustees Report. <u>Minutes</u> Cllr Lundie who is also Chairman of the Trustees reported that the Trustees felt they did not need to forward their minutes to the Parish Council (PC). He would update councillors at PC meetings. He would be reported under the Councillor Updates heading. Report follows: <u>Treasurer</u> Mary Harwood announced that she will be stepping down at the at the AGM. A new treasurer will need to be appointed. <u>Hedges</u> The Football club were proposing to plant a hedge between the Football pitch and the Cricket Field The Riding club are going to plant a hedge round the edge of the Riding Field. <u>Hire Charges</u> These will be reviewed annually from now on. <u>Business Plan</u> The Trust will prepare a Business Plan <u>Children’s Playground</u> There will be an open morning for parents to view the playground on February 10th.</p> <p>8. Financial Matters i) Clerks Report Attached as Appendix 1</p> <p>ii) Ratification of invoices (see last page of Agenda)</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>EJ</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>GL</p>
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Paid by Cheque

Letcombe Brook Project Grant £700.00; Clerk October Salary £393.43; Clerk for purchase of David Austin Roses for the Burial Ground £131.85; Clerk November Salary £398.59; Emergency Phone (1p mobile) Automatic top up for August & December £20.00; Village Hall Hire Invoice LRVH-2022-299 £35.00; Mr M Light for the defibrillator electricity charge £60.00; Mr P Hodgson for the defibrillator electricity charge £60.00; Letcombe Regis Village Hall for the defibrillator electricity charge £60.00.

By Direct Debit

Monthly payment for PC mobile October, November, December (£7/month) £21.00.

By Visa

October salary PAYE inc card fee of 0.04p (postage is £1.25) £59.25;
November salary PAYE inc 0.04 card fee. £69.84.

Councillors ratified the payments.

iii) Summary of payments and receipts against the budget (for information)

iv) HSBC update

Visa debit card

The daily limit had been discussed and was set at £200 at the September meeting.

Bill Payments and daily limit

To discuss and agree on the daily limits for the Current account. With the exception of current projects, the PC's highest individual payment is to the Recreation Ground and Village Hall Trustees currently £905.25 paid twice a year on receipt of the Precept in April and September.

Suggested limit

The Clerk had suggested setting a daily limit of £1500 to enable more than one invoice to be paid per entry. Once authorised by any two of the four signatories. The exception being from the Clerk's salary for which she is obviously not a signatory. Councillors agreed on a daily limit of £1500.

For specific projects such as payments for the Children's playground etc, which may have invoices above the £1500 ceiling the Clerk would email all Councillors to agree a temporary rise to the limit as required.

v) Salary Award

The Government have finally agreed the new pay scales for financial year 1st April 2023 to 31 March 2024. For full time staff up to spine point 43 it is a flat rate payment of this is £1925/year and for part time staff it is an increase of £1/hour. Councillors approved the increase.

vi) Grant requests

The Parish Council had received the following grant requests.

Vale Community Impact (VCI) (Formerly Wantage Independent Advice Centre) Supported 391 residents on different occasions. Their services include community support, Debt counselling and budgeting, Grants, loans, legal advice, Transport to hospitals, surgeries etc. Befriending visits and consultations etc.

<p><u>Home Start</u> Home Start are a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through their challenging times. They report they have helped 14 families in the Wantage Area. Councillors discussed the applications and awarded a grant of £250 to VCI acknowledging that they give a lot of support to the village. They did not award a grant to Home Start Clerk. The Clerk would write to both applicants with the PC's decision.</p>	EJ
<p>9. Draft Budget for 2024-2025 An updated version had been given to Councillors at the meeting and the final version will be discussed at the Parish Council Meeting on January 15th. The Clerk will then send the precept request for 2024-2025 off to the Vale of White Horse.</p>	
<p>10. Planning Applications: P23/V1437/S73, Letcombe Bowers Farm, Letcombe Regis OX12 9NG Variation of condition 1 (Approved plans) on application reference P23/V0406/S73 to incorporate phased development of later additions/alterations (Variation of condition 2) (Approved plans) in application P21/V2403/FUL to incorporate revised design features, revised building position and car ports). Target Decision Date 15th August 2023 Councillors had no problem with this variation. Ongoing</p>	
<p>P23/V2513/MPO, Antwicks Stud, Letcombe Regis, OX12 9JD Removal of legal obligation related to Antwick Stud dated 11/02/1980 Start Consultaion Period 10th November, End Consultation Period 8th November, Target Decision Date 2nd January 2024. Parish Council comments follow: <i>Letcombe Regis Parish Council is voicing its concerns over the recent Planning Application P23/V2513/MPO to remove a longstanding legal obligation for the Antwicks Stud property. In 1980, the then owner, Mr McCourt was granted to build a bungalow on the site there was an undertaking between himself and the District Council that no land or buildings at Antwicks Stud may be sold or let separately from the property without the Council's prior agreement, but would not prevent sale or lease of the property as a whole. This legal obligation would prevent the property from being broken up due to lack of viability of the equestrian business. However there is no financial or commercial evidence to show whether or not the use of the land for an equestrian business is viable and the Parish Council request that independent factual evidence should be obtained before proceeding any further.</i></p> <p><i>The undertaking is just as relevant today considering that any expansion of property on the site would increase trafficto the site. The entrance is at the bottom of a narrow road which runs downhill to Antwicks stud and is a four way junction. The Vale have previously said that they would not allow any increase in traffic on what is already a dangerous stretch of roadway.</i></p> <p><i>While property development on the site may not be the applicants intention, if the legal obligation is to be removed by the District Council, Letcombe Regis Parish Council request that they do in a way to legally restrict the site from future development either by sale of the land as a whole or in plots other than that related to an equine business. It is important that any change to the original</i></p>	

undertaking does not encourage further unnecessary development in the countryside particularly in an AONB or as it now known one of the National Landscapes. It should also be noted that the village has no street lights, and is a Dark Sky area and wishes to remain so.'

**Ongoing
Deed of Dedication dated 17th March 2016 between the Parish Council and the Big Lottery. The restriction imposed on the title by this Deed ON 319053. Expires twenty years from 17th March 2016 so on the 17th March 2036.**

Agreement between the Vale of White Horse District Council and the Parish Council dated 6th September 2016. There is a restriction for this grant for a ten year period as above which ceases on the 6th September 2026.

Both agreements secure the investment of public money and ensure that the site continues to be used as a village hall and associated parking. All legal documentation which applies to the above is held in the official Parish Council Records.

It was agreed at the Parish Council meeting held on the 21st November 2016 that the countdown for this needs to be recorded annually in the Parish Council minutes until the end of the period on 17th March 2036.

**Dates approved by the PC but subject to change,
For Approval**

20th May 2024 Annual Parish Meeting to be followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting (Apologies this was missed of the list for approval at the September minutes)

Councillors approved the above date.

Approved

2024 - 15th January and 18th March. 20th May Annual Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting. (agreed at this meeting see above).

2024 - 5th July, 16th September, 18th November.

2025 - 20th January, 17th March.

Elizabeth Jenkins
Parish Clerk
3rd January 2024