

UPPER HEYFORD PARISH COUNCIL
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Minutes of Parish Council Meeting 18 December 2012

Present: Chairman; Lt. Gen. RC Menzies, Councillors: Pete James, Alison Graham, Jo Allen, Chris Scarrott, Roger Burt and Parish Clerk Jack Goodman.

Code of Conduct: The Chairman reminded Councillors of the code of conduct requirements under the Localism Act of 2011.

Consideration of Dispensations: The Chairman briefed the requirement to consider granting Councillors' dispensations to function in Council where a pecuniary interest may preclude consideration of essential Council business. Under the Localism Act, automatic dispensation for consideration of the Parish Precept is no longer given. The Council agreed to adopt "**Consideration of Dispensations**" as a standing item on the agenda to be considered and agreed in Council when appropriate. Dispensations for setting of the Precept will be considered at the Council's January meeting.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 15 November 2012 Council Meeting were approved by the Council as true record and signed by the Chairman and Clerk

1. Matters Arising:

- a. **Village Hall Project:** Cllr Allen briefed that new bi-fold doors have been installed and that enough funding is probably still available for new doors for and renovation of the entrance foyer. The construction of a patio will require further grant funding or fund raising efforts. The Council noted that when requesting grant aid for the patio, the extension of the car park should also be included in the request.
- b. **Parish Walls Project:** The Clerk reported that the contract has been offered to Paul Woodburn to repair the Somerton Road wall. This work will now need to wait until February or March of 2013 due to the onset of winter weather. Councillor Graham reported that no grant aid is available from English Heritage for wall repairs. However, other possibilities will be pursued such as the Lottery Fund.
- c. **Diamond Jubilee Memorial:** Councillor Allen briefed that the research to identify and price appropriate bulletin boards is still to be completed.
- d. **Cemetery Shed:** Councillor Burt briefed that the research to identify and price appropriate cladding for the cemetery shed is still to be completed.
- e. **Playground Project Update:** Councillor Graham reported that two of the three requested proposals for a new playground have been received. When all are available, a public consultation on the proposals will be organised, hopefully in January.

2. Finance:

- a. **Current Expenditure and Financial Position:** The Clerk presented and briefed the current budget status and expenditure/receipts ledger for the year to date. Relevant extracts were given to each Councillor for their files and are also attached to these Minutes for the record.
- b. **Precept:** There was lengthy discussion of the budget for next year and the precept requirement in light of the changes in the tax base calculations for the coming year. See item **3a.** below.

3. Correspondence:

- a. **Cherwell DC, Precept Timetable and Tax Base Review:** The Clerk briefed that Cherwell predicts a significant reduction in our Parish's Council Tax Base (Band D equivalent households). The reduction in tax base is predicted to be around 12%. This will result in significantly less Parish precept income unless the per household precept is increased. Additionally, the prediction is that central government will cap Council Tax increases at 2%. The Council concluded that, in principle, a small increase in the *per capita* precept would be prudent, with the additional budget shortfall being covered by funds previously earmarked to build capital reserves. Additionally, the Clerk was asked to pursue the possibility of recovering some of the lost Precept from the Government grant to Cherwell District Council.
- b. **Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) Briefing Paper on Dispensations:** Outlined options for granting of dispensations to consider setting of Precept. See header paragraph "**Consideration of Dispensations**" for Council decision.
- c. **Cherwell DC, Community Governance Review:** The Chairman briefed the upcoming review that will consider Parish organisation and boundaries within Cherwell District. The situation with Heyford Park is specifically listed for consideration. The timetable is such that the Parish Council needs to decide its response to Cherwell at the January Council meeting. It was agreed that the Clerk will investigate the various options as a matter of urgency and report to Councillors as soon as the information was to hand. Council members will liaise informally before the January meeting to facilitate reaching a conclusion.
- d. **Came and Co. Insurance, Public Liability Claims:** The Clerk briefed correspondence from our insurers highlighting the significant increase in public liability claims against Councils. The insurers recommend that weekly inspections of Parish property be conducted to highlight, document, and take action on potential hazards. Councillor Scarrott has agreed to conduct the inspections and liaise with the Clerk to correct problems. The inspections and actions taken will be minuted at each Council meeting.

4. New Business:

a. Registration of Village Green: The Clerk reported that follow up with Oxfordshire CC has confirmed that the application is progressing. A meeting is scheduled at the Green on the 15th of January for the OCC representative to go over the paperwork and review the property. The Chairman and Councillor Scarrott plan to attend with the Clerk.

b. Cherwell Parish Liaison Meeting: The Clerk briefed two topics from the meeting with Cherwell:

1) **Right to Bid:** New legislation will allow Councils to declare a public interest in property within the Parish that may be sold, and having done so, the legislation gives Councils the right to bid on the property should it come up for sale. It was stressed, however, that this did not confer a “right to buy”.

2) **Volunteer Connect:** The Clerk briefed on how Cherwell supported a programme to enlist volunteer drivers to taxi those in need to doctors’ appointments, for weekly shopping etc. The Council instructed the Clerk to canvas for drivers for the programme in the next Valley News.

5. Any Other Business:

a. Councillor Scarrott reminded the Clerk that Oxfordshire Highways has still taken no action on the eroding manhole cover at Rising Hill.

b. The Clerk reported that he has added Mr Kevin Allen to the list of approved contractors for minor works on behalf of the Council.

6. Date of Next Meeting: 17 January 2013

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:45 PM

Approved 17 January 2013

Lt Gen RC Menzies
Chairman

Jack L Goodman Jr, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
Clerk to the Parish