

ST. NICHOLAS HURST PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD IN ST NICHOLAS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HURST
ON THURSDAY 18TH JULY 2024 AT 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Curry (in the Chair),
Boyd, Ewart, Robinson and Smith.

OFFICERS: Mrs. M. Bradshaw (Clerk).

PUBLIC: Four Members of the Public.

9465 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Eastaugh and Openshaw.

9466 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared.

9467 Community Hub

The Chair welcomed all present and indicated that only one item was on that evening's agenda. She explained that Councillor Robinson had been leading the early stages of the project and asked him to provide an update.

He explained that he had been working with Glyn Crocombe, Chairman of the Martineau Trust. The initial cost, based upon one quote only, was in the region of £243k, excluding VAT. He explained that if the community hub was built and owned by the Parish Council, the project could benefit from reclaiming any VAT paid. However, if the Martineau Trust funded the project, with simply a CIL contribution from the Parish Council, they would not have the same benefit.

Additionally, Councillor Robinson had had some initial discussions with Officers from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) with regards to possible sources of grant funding. This was in very early stages of discussion.

Discussion followed as to the benefits, or otherwise, of the Parish Council owning the building. It was agreed that, in time, legal advice would have to be taken and an appropriate legal agreement be drawn up to reflect the arrangements, along the lines of a full repair and insure lease.

Councillor Boyd stated that he favoured the Parish Council both building and owning the building as he felt that would strengthen control and deliver best value.

Other Councillors agreed in principle. He noted that the area he was most concerned about was the project management and would wish to see a detailed project plan, robustly managed. Councillor Robinson would not be project manager and, in time, one would need to be sought.

Councillor Boyd asked how the Parish Council would go about releasing such large sums of CIL. The Clerk explained that she is required to provide a Regulation 121B Monitoring Report to WBC annually, which is displayed on the Parish Council website – this report indicates what CIL monies have been spent and what are still held. She confirmed that she would circulate to Councillors the current CIL position. When the time is appropriate, the Clerk will liaise with Officers at WBC to confirm the position regarding this large scale expenditure.

Councillor Robinson confirmed that the next step is to seek pre planning advice which he believed to be in the region of £1500. He sought Councillors agreement to this next step. Agreed unanimously.

Parishioner, Mr John Osborne, asked if the Chair would be willing to take a question. The Chair confirmed that there was not a public forum at this meeting but she would take a question if pertaining to the community hub. Mr Osborne recognised that the Parish Council was using a significant amount of CIL to support this project and queried whether there were other projects in the Parish which would equally benefit from such funding. He asked whether the community supported the project and, if a referendum was required for PWLB additional funding, would it be supported.

Councillor Smith replied that the vision for a new community hub had been on the Parish Council's agenda for some years now. It had been minuted and was also the subject of an article in the last edition of The Hurst Word, circulated to all households. To date, no parishioners have come forward with any alternative projects which they wished the Parish Council to consider CIL funding for. Councillor Smith said the Council would be very receptive to alternative ideas but none had been presented.

The Chair confirmed that she believed the original plans for the hub were too optimistic and that the revised plans would provide a more realistic, fit for purpose space. She believed if the project could be brought to fruition it would provide a light and bright space for the Scouts, Youth Club, Parish Council meetings, community activities, parties and meet ups. With the Village Halls totally booked out, the additional space was desperately needed.

Mr Osborne queried whether Councillors were happy that this choice reflected Parishoner's desires. Councillor Boyd said he would happily defend the Parish Council's decision as he believed the hub is not only needed but desired.

RESOLVED:

- the Clerk to circulate an updated CIL report to Councillors; and
- pre planning advice to be sought – cost approximately £1500.

The meeting ended at 8 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....