

GROVE PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON 4th DECEMBER 2007 AT OLD MILL HALL, GROVE**

Present:

Cllr F D Parnell (Chairman)	Cllr K Jones
Cllr W Evans (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr M Mellersh
Cllr W R Ackers	Cllr J E Nunn-Price
Cllr I M J Caldicott	Cllr C Philips
Cllr S K Dexter	Cllr J M Stock
Cllr P L Hadcroft	Cllr H A Webb
Cllr A P Harker	Cllr I J Woodbridge

In attendance: 5 members of public
Mr Tony Hadland – Vale & Downland Museum (item 102 only)

Clerk: Mr G M Mundy

100 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from councillor D M Hadcroft. Apologies were also received from County councillors Z Patrick and J Moley and district councillor S Marchant.

The chairman explained that the district councillors were attending a Full Council meeting of the District Council.

101 Declaration of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting

Cllr Dexter and Cllr Jones both declared an interest in item 102.

102 Presentation from the Vale & Downland Museum Trust

The Chairman introduced Mr Tony Hadland of the Vale and Downland Museum. The presentation afforded councillors an insight in to the history of the museum, the current purpose of the museum and current funding arrangements. Several questions were then directed at Mr Hadland regarding the financial situation of the museum. Following the presentation the Chairman thanked Mr Hadland for a very informative presentation.

103 Sign minutes of the meeting held 23rd October 2007

It was **MOVED** the chairman and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting.”

104 Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting

- a) Item 86 – Policy of selling council land – The clerk informed the council that he had been in touch with other local Town and Parish Councils. None of those contacted currently has policies of this sort and all said that each case must be judged on its own merits and particular attention must be paid to restrictive covenants concerning the individual parcels of land. The Clerk was asked to arrange a meeting of the working group.

Clerk

1103

- Clerk
- b) Item 90 – Raising the Councils’ profile – The clerk informed the council that he had spoken to Cllr P Hadcroft and it was agreed that photographs and short bibliographies of Councillors would be published in the in the Parish Newsletter starting in the new year. The Clerk was asked to chase up those Councillors without photos and bibliographies.
- c) Item 91 – Areas of responsibility for individual councillors – Following a short discussion it was generally agreed not to sub divide Grove because it was felt that this would imply that Grove would be warded and residents may feel that they would be restricted on who they should contact.

105 Questions from the public

All

Mr Chown thanked the Council for supplying the information regarding the Local Development Framework meeting, which he attended. Mr Chown also submitted to the Council a personal summary of the meeting and also distributed photographs from the flooding of 20th July 2007. Mr Chown was asked if he could send the summary and photographs electronically to the Clerk, he agreed. *Clerks Note: The Clerk has received the summary report and photographs from Mr Chown, any Councillor who wishes to receive a copy is to notify the Clerk.*

106 County and district councillors’ reports

Clerk

Both County Cllr Z Patrick and District Cllr S Marchant had submitted written reports to Council due to their absence. It was agreed to distribute their reports to all councillors. A copy of the reports is attached to these minutes as appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

107 Local Plan

- a) Current issues – The chairman informed the Council that the latest newsletter is in the process of being delivered to all residents of Grove with the Courier free newspaper. Members expressed their concerns that not all residents receive the Courier paper. The Clerk was asked to confirm the distribution with Jeff Bishop. The chairman also informed the Council that the next Development Forum meeting would be held on Wednesday 12th December commencing at 7pm in Old Mill Hall and added that all forum meetings are open to the public. The chairman also explained that the powerpoint presentation shown at the forum meeting will soon be available on the airfield website.
- Clerk
- b) Report from Neil Boddington regarding the consultation on recreational space – The report from Neil Boddington was noted. Councillors commented that the report was not signed or dated and it was also noted that it was not obvious whom the report was from. The Clerk was asked to speak to Neil Boddington. The Chairman said that from the report above, both he and Cllr Ackers had drafted a response to the Vale (this was distributed to all Councillors). Cllr Dexter suggested and it was agreed that subject to receiving further amendments from Councillors by 11th December that the draft be submitted to the Vale in response to the consultation on recreational space.
- All
- c) Council response to ‘Your Vale – Your Future’ – Issues and Options report for future Vale Development – See comments above in Item 107 (b).

108 Council Chairman’s Communications

- a) Wantage, Grove & District Healthcheck – SWOT Analysis – The analysis was noted.

- b) Correspondence from the District Council – Mably Way Recreational Area – The chairman said that a letter had been received from the District Council regarding a meeting to discuss the Mably Way Recreational Area. The date of the 17th January was discussed and agreed. It was also agreed that the Clerk invites the district council officer and their consultant to the meeting, which should be at Old Mill Hall. The Clerk is also to invite Cllr Joyce Hutchinson to the meeting.

Clerk

109 Floods in Grove

- a) Storage of sandbags – The clerk read out a letter from Oxfordshire County Council regarding sandbags. The letter stated that it was not the responsibility of OCC to issue sandbags to residents, but to provide sandbags for highways, and in support of district councils. The letter further stated that in turn, the district council would primarily use them to protect their own property and social housing and that individuals are responsible for protecting their own property. The clerk also brought to the attention of the council an email from North Lincolnshire council, which stated, “North Lincolnshire council does not have a statutory obligation to provide sandbags”.
- b) Working group to take the flood issues forward – Cllrs Harker, Dexter and Caldicott volunteered to form a working group to take the issues forward regarding a flood emergency plan. The chairman informed the council that he had received a report from Sally Wallington regarding an update on the flood issues. The clerk agreed to distribute this to all councillors. It was also generally agreed that an interim report be produced by the working group prior to the next full council meeting.

Clerk

110 External Audit – Annual Return

- a) Audit opinion of the External Auditor – The Clerk read out the opinion of the external auditor to the council.

It was **PROPOSED** Cllr Nunn-Price **SECONDED** Cllr Parnell and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“to approve and accept the opinion of the External Auditor”

- b) Matters arising from the External Audit – The matters arising from the external audit had previously been distributed to all Councillors. The Clerk was asked to respond to the external Auditor as follows:
- Asset Valuations – Although the parish council recognises the need for asset valuations to take place, it declines the recommendation due to cost. However the council carryout an evaluation of its assets in conjunction with the renewal of its insurance policy every year.
 - Asset Register – An asset register was attached to the correspondence sent to the external auditor.
 - Budgetary Process – During the audited period the budgetary process was only monitored twice annually. This process was highlighted at the end of the FY and the Responsible Financial Officer has now instigated quarterly checks.
 - Minutes – Consecutive numbering of minutes does take place, however this is across a whole cycle of meetings. The minutes provided to the external auditor were from different meetings and were also selected pages, therefore would not be sequential.

1105

111 Thames Water Exhibition

The chairman read out an email from Thames Water in which they have suggested holding an exhibition in Grove regarding Water Resource Management (including the proposed reservoir) on Tuesday 22nd April 2008. The Chairman said that this clashed with a scheduled full council meeting. It was suggested and agreed that the full council meeting be re-scheduled for Tuesday 29th April 2008. The Clerk was asked to amend the council website and send a reminder to all councillors nearer the time.

112 Wantage Town Council minutes

The minutes received from Wantage Town Council were noted.

113 Information regarding grants to the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB)

The Clerk informed the council that he had received information from the OAB regarding the grant request made from them. The Clerk stated that the OAB have now requested that any grant received from the council would be used towards the building of an extension of their facilities to store equipment which help partially sighted people view their television screens more easily.

It was **PROPOSED** Cllr P Hadcroft **SECONDED** Cllr Nunn-Price and **RESOLVED** 12 in favour and two abstentions

Clerk **“to grant the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind the sum of £150”**

114 Referendum on Europe

The chairman invited Cllr Dexter to make a statement on this issue. Cllr Dexter said that at a previous committee meeting it would be a good idea to show leadership and undertake to hold a referendum on Europe before we are asked to do so by the electorate. Cllr P Hadcroft said that if a referendum was held the result could be construed as a political statement. It was generally agreed not to hold a referendum on this subject.

115 Military service personnel who live in the local community

Clerk Following a short discussion it was generally agreed to defer this item to the next full council meeting.

116 Council Objectives

Clerk The chairman informed the council that both he and the vice chairman had drawn up a list of proposed objectives. It was generally agreed to publish the objectives at the annual parish meeting and that the objectives were agreed to run for the lifetime of this current council. The agreed objectives of the council are as follows:

- To help and enable the committees to achieve their objectives
- To raise the profile of the council within the village and other statutory bodies
- To ensure that important consultation events are communicated to the village
- To ensure that the council stays within the agreed budget
- To increase the attendance at the annual parish meeting year by year

117 Committee Recommendations

- a) Environmental Services committee – On the proposition by Cllr Nunn-Price seconded by Cllr P Hadcroft **“to recommend to Full Council that the budget estimate for 2008/09 from the Environmental Services committee be set at £6,570”**

1106

Following discussion it was **PROPOSED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Stock and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“to reject the recommendation and return the budget estimate to the Environmental Services committee for further scrutiny”

b) Leisure & Recreation Committee

(i) – On the proposition by Cllr Parnell seconded by Cllr Dexter **“to recommend to Full Council to purchase a chipper/shredder at a cost not to exceed £6,000”**

Following discussion it was **PROPOSED** Cllr P Hadcroft **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk **“to accept the recommendation and purchase a chipper/shredder at a cost not to exceed £6,000”**

(ii) – On the proposition by Cllr Ackers seconded by Cllr Parnell **“to recommend to Full Council to set the initial budget of the Leisure and recreation committee at £35,975”**

Following discussion it was **PROPOSED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Dexter and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk **“to reject the recommendation and return the budget estimate to the Leisure and recreation committee for further scrutiny”**

c) Finance & General Purposes Committee – On the proposition by Cllr Parnell seconded by Cllr P Hadcroft **“to recommend to Full Council to set the initial budget statement for the Finance & General Purposes Committee be set at £181,163 and also a specific reserve is established for the Planning Consultant”**

Following discussion it was **PROPOSED** Cllr Parnell **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

Clerk **“to reject the recommendation and return the budget estimate statement to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for further scrutiny but to accept the recommendation to establish a specific reserve for the Planning Consultant”**

118 **Precept for 2008/09**

Clerk Because no budgets were set it was unanimously agreed to defer this matter to the next full council meeting. The Clerk was asked to check the reserve tables for each committee.

The chairman explained that in previous years the precept calculation resulted in money being used from the reserves, reducing them and also giving a lower precept than necessary. The chairman also explained that the clerk had spent a lot of time with Jan Gossett and Brian Spragg of the OALC going through the calculation and now understood them more fully. This has resulted in a possible large increase this year to correct the situation.

All Cllr Dexter suggested and it was agreed that the Council needed to agree what sort of increase would be acceptable to the electorate and would it be better to have one large increase or spread the increase out over a number of years. All committees are therefore to re-visit their budget estimates and see what expenditure can be cut or trimmed down.

119 Reports relating to the following

- a) Joint Environmental Trust for Grove. – The next meeting is to be held in January 2008.
- b) Wantage Joint Economic Forum. – The report on the Healthcheck SWOT analysis had been heard previously.
- c) Fair Trade Village update. – There was nothing to report.

120 Committee Reports

- a) Report of Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 30th October 2007 – The report was presented by Cllr J E Nunn-Price.
- b) Report of Planning Committee meetings held on 6th November and 27th November 2007 - Cllr J Stock presented the reports.
- c) Report of Leisure and Recreation Committee meeting held on 13th November 2007 - Cllr R Ackers presented the report.
- d) Report of Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 20th November 2007 - The report was presented by the chairman.

121 Accounts for payment as per Appendix

It was **MOVED** Cllr Stock **SECONDED** Cllr Ackers and **RESOLVED** unanimously

“that the accounts for the sum of £26,534.89 be adopted.”

122 Confidential items

It was **PROPOSED** the chairman and **RESOLVED** unanimously in accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972 ...

“that the press and public be excluded from the meeting to permit the committee to consider the confidential items.”

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm

Confirmed 29th January 2008

Chairman