

## INKPEN PARISH COUNCIL

**The Minutes of the Meeting** of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 7.30 pm at Inkpen Sports Club. The meeting scheduled for Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January was postponed due to unavoidable absences.

**Those present were:** Mrs V Tomlinson (Acting Chairman), Mr K Evans, Mrs C Jones, Mr R May and Mrs. G Keene (Clerk). Also attending the meeting were: Mr D Hickman and Mrs P Weeks.

**1. Apologies were received from:** Dr D Thomas, Mrs L Wild, Mr D Wilson and Councillor Stansfeld, who were unable to attend the meeting.

**2. Hungerford Neighbourhood Police Report:** No report had been received.

**3. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting:**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015 were approved and signed by the acting Chairman as a true record. The Draft minutes had been displayed on the Inkpen website previously. No comments were recorded.

**4. Matters Arising:**

4.1 The Clerk reported that the fallen tree on footpath 47 had been reported by WBC to the landowner before Christmas and the Rights of Way team had promised to inspect the area next week.

**5. Declarations of Interest:**

5.1 Councillors are the sole Trustees of the Memorial Playing Field Trust and registered with the Charity Commission as the Corporate and Custodian Trustees. Trust meetings and funds are held separately as required by the Charity Commission and as confirmed annually to the External Auditors.

5.2 Councillors declared a prejudicial interest in the discussion on 'setting the precept'. The dispensation was actioned by the 'Proper Officer' (Clerk) and the discussion was allowed to take place. (Code of Conduct 4.5)

**6. Progress on Phase 2 of Superfast Broadband**

6.1 The Clerk reported that an email had been sent to residents outlining the Gigaclear rollout of Ultra Fast broadband in Inkpen and surrounding villages. The information was also displayed on the website. The sports pavilion would be part of the normal roll-out to make broadband available for meetings and local residents.

**7. Royal Berks Fire Authority Corporate Plan & Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-2019**

7.1 Consultation on the plan commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> January and closes on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 – councilors and residents are encouraged take part in the consultation. The document will be circulated for comments.

Correspondence :

7.2 Acknowledgements of S137 Parish Funding had been received from: St Michaels Church; Inkpen Table Tennis (new equipment); Inkpen Poors Allotment Trust (Christmas distribution for older residents); Inkpen 92 Group. The Clerk explained that groups were requested to confirm the grant received and how the grant would be spent. On request, the Clerk explained that St Michael's Church received the grant funding as a proportion of the news carried in the Inkpen & Combe Bulletin relating to the village, the proportion of church news was funded by the church.

7.3 The Inkpen 92 Group had received funding to enable the group to continue to use the village hall for their meetings – good attendance had been recorded for the first meeting of the year where a questionnaire had been completed to determine future speakers. 43 responses to the questionnaire had been analysed and this would form the basis of talks during 2016.

## 8. Proposed cuts in WBC Public Funding – Buses in Crises report ref. below

<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/buses-in-crisis-2015.pdf>

8.1 The Clerk confirmed that she had written to the Ward Members, Councillor Stansfeld and Councillor Cole about the proposed cuts to the Inkpen Bus Service – the communication had been forwarded to Richard Benyon MP. The loss of the public bus service poses a huge problem for Inkpen as, unless you have a car, you will be totally cut off from essential services e.g doctors surgery, hospital, dentist, banking, pensions, rail services and weekly/daily shopping needs, as there is no other means of travel. Living in the countryside is especially difficult for those on low incomes, in poor health or those who are out of work and without transport. WBC had imposed a cut of 3% to the public bus service in 2015/2016 and this had resulted in less service and less usage as it limited flexibility for users.

8.2 Following discussion it was agreed to:

- a) contact neighbouring villages to seek support in objecting to the proposed cuts in the public bus service for rural areas that have no other means of travel.
- b) send a copy of the objection to residents and ask them to support the objection.

8.3 It was noted that WBC will undertake a second consultation between 15<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March primarily on Buses and Library Service.

**Action:** Clerk

## 9. Financial update:

To note the In-Month Expenditure and outstanding invoices for payment:

a) The clerk gave a financial report to the end of December 2015 in line with the bank statements. New items of expenditure were agreed and cheques had been raised: Grass maintenance at The Green (Dec.) - £75; HMRC - £191; new market boards £242 from outstanding grant funding; Self Accounting Services - £36.

b) To consider the Parish request for the Parish Precept 2016/2017

The clerk had prepared and distributed a series of financial spreadsheets prior to the setting of the Precept for 2016/2017.

The financial statement showed the current balance and ringfenced grant funding, the cash flow forecast, projected the end of year 2015/16 and the Precept working sheet showed the projected spend for 2016/17

9.1 WBC has to make savings of £18.9m. *The Threats* to Inkpen are: Cuts in the Inkpen Public Bus Service; Winter Gritting – budget to be reduced by 10%; Salt bins – maintenance and refilling is to be a cost to Parish Councils; the additional bin service may be affected. There may be an opportunity to offset some of the proposed cuts if the Parish can accrue savings.

9.2 It had been reported widely that this was the worst financial crises for WBC funding for the next four successive years and the Local Authority were proposing budget cuts to services in 2016/17 onwards.

Following a detailed discussion, Councillors agreed that it would be prudent for the Parish to seek an increase in the Precept from £11,000 to £11,500, an increase of £1.18 per household per annum in Band D. Councillor May abstained from the vote.

9.3 The WBC invoice for the Election held in May was still outstanding as WBC had not raised the invoices for payment – therefore £1500 would be set aside for this payment to be made.

**Action:** Clerk to inform WBC of the Precept for 2016/2017

## 10. A list of other issues were itemised:

Councillor May opened the discussion by resuming his verbal and intimidating attack on the Clerk for organizing the cutting of long grass on the public area of The Green last year. NB It should be noted for the minutes that this cut was arranged, following criticism of untidy long grass as part of the duties of the Clerk, in line with Health & Safety requirements of maintaining a public area. This area is often used by children and long grass and planting obscures litter, including broken glass and other sharp objects, and

observes animal feces. The area has been mowed for the last 14yrs (minimum) in line with current legislation. It is not designated as a garden but as a public area in the village used by a wide variety of visitors and residents". The Parish Council has secured an agreement with a contractor for regular cutting. Councillor May has a 'Personal Interest' in Lower Green (Code of Conduct 4.3 Disclosure of Interest and Participation in discussion). Councillor May remained at the meeting.

Other issues raised:

- a) Drain and sewer in Lower Inkpen is leaking. WBC has been informed/Water utilities –no action for Parish Council.
- b) Dog poo is being placed in the bins at the playing field – these are emptied by WBC fortnightly on Wednesday of each week. No action required.
- c) Rotting timber on the Playground swing – the Health & Safety Inspector has advised and a replacement swing is on order. Delay in fixing the replacement is due to the amount of water on the field. No action required by the Parish Council. Referred to next Playing Field meeting.
- d) Hard surface on the Playing Field – not a Parish Council issue – To Note: professional services are required for safety reasons – refer to next Playing Field meeting.
- e) Ruts in the grass – another Playing Field & Charity issue – grass will flatten out when dry. No action.
- f) Other issues related to the Playing Field e.g broken guttering – refer to the next Playing Field meeting for consideration.
- g) Electrical transformer – trees adjacent to Pottery Lane are to be cut only by Southern Electric – all required work is in hand and the details published in Jan. Bulletin for residents. For safety reasons the power has to be turned off prior to work being undertaken. No further action required.
- h) Ditch repairs in Post Office Rd. should be referred to WBC as the rail is loose – **Action: Clerk.**
- i) All contractors working for the Council in public areas carry Public Liability insurance of £10m and are CRB checked as they are working in a public place. The Parish Council insurance does not cover the use of power tools - there is no cover for anyone using electrical or power equipment this includes lawn mowers.

**11. Next Parish Council Meeting** is arranged for Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 at 7.30pm at Inkpen Sports Club, subject to availability of Councillors and issues for discussion.

**Councillors are asked to note that all items for discussion and decision** should be recorded on the Agenda to allow due consideration to be given prior to the meeting and to inform residents. Meeting closed at 20.50 hrs.

Residents attending the Council meeting are requested to limit comments or questions to the public question time interval when Standing Orders are suspended.

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Signed:.....	Date: .....
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