

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Full Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 21st February 2024 commencing at 7.00pm
At Four Marks Village Hall, Lyminster Bottom, Four Marks

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllrs Briggs, Smith, Pullen (R), Pullen (M), McAllister, Medhurst (arrived at 7.20pm) and Speed.
STAFF:	Jo Tsigarides, Clerk
PUBLIC:	One member of the public
OTHER:	District Councillor Richardson.
APOLOGIES:	Cllrs Gebbett, Coulson and Black.

24.18 APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Apologies were received from Cllr Gebbett (health issues), Cllr Coulson (health issues) and were duly accepted by the Council. Apologies had been received by Cllr Black, and with no reason given, were not accepted by the Council. The Clerk was asked to contact the Councillor for a second time to confirm the reason.

24.19 OPEN SESSION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

MOP 1 congratulated the Council and in particular thanked Cllr McAllister for his representation at the Mount Royal/Gladman Inquiry.

There being no further items to raise, the Open Session ended at 7.02pm, Standing Orders were applied.

24.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Smith declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 11.4.

24.21 FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, seconded by Cllr Speed, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED To approve the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 24th January 2024 as a true reflection of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

24.22 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Cllr Briggs took the opportunity to remind Councillors about some of the key Standing Orders relating to behaviour in meetings. Councillors were also asked to be cautious about what they choose to post on their private Social Media accounts and the importance of public perception.

24.23 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

Roland Richardson introduced himself as the newly elected District Councillor and gave a brief oral presentation.

24.24 COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECT COMMITTEE

24.24.1 To note any matters arising/updates.

Cllr McAllister noted that Smart Marketing had only received twenty-four responses to the user's survey. Councillors had been asked to share this as widely as possible.

A meeting had taken place on the 20th February 2024 with the Sports Consultant recommended by EHDC. The Council had been asked to provide a scope of works for him to be sent as soon as possible.

24.25 OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

24.25.1 To note the Minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on Wednesday 7th February 2024 and receive a report from the Committee Chairman.

Cllr M Pullen informed the Clerk of an error in the Minutes which will be rectified.

24.25.2 MUGA resurfacing project expenditure for approval.

The Clerk advised that there was a shortfall of £5411.40 for the resurfacing project. The Council considered various options, including the additional edging but it was decided that following the recommendation of the Open Spaces Committee, the project was completed fully as per the quotation.

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr R Pullen, and with all Councillors in agreement in was:

RESOLVED to meet the shortfall of £5411.40 for the MUGA resurfacing from the playground maintenance fund by drawing funds from the earmarked reserve for playground maintenance.

24.25.3 Swelling Hill Pond de silting project expenditure for ratification and approval.

There was a discussion of works at Swelling Hill Pond with some Councillors from the Open Spaces Committee reporting that they were not totally satisfied with the works. It was agreed that £15 000 of the second invoice should be paid and that the remainder would be paid once the works were either satisfactorily completed or there was a plan in place to finish the project.

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr M Pullen and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to pay £15 000 to the contractor on the next payment schedule and to pay the balance once members of the Open Spaces Committee were satisfied with the works.

24.26 PLANNING COMMITTEE

24.26.1 To note the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 7th February 2024.

Cllr McAllister gave a brief overview of the Mount Royal/Gladman inquiry and was thanked for all his hard work.

24.26.2 To consider FMPC formal response to Draft Local Plan Consultation.

The Council considered the points (in circulated documents) proposed which were formulated at two Council working party meetings on February 13th and 15th 2024. The points were discussed in turn, with agreement that Cllr McAllister and the Clerk would put them into a summary document and send to EHDC along with the formal response from the NPSG.

On the proposal of Cllr Briggs, which was seconded by Cllr Smith and with all Councillors in agreement, it was RESOLVED to put the agreed points into the DLP formal response.

24.26.3 To consider Agent request to engage with the Council.

The Council had been approached by an Agent, regarding an area of land which is proposed to be included in the Settlement Policy Boundary in the Draft Local Plan. Councillors expressed frustration that they had been

approached about this area of land, given that it is not yet included and asked the Clerk to relay this to the Agent.

It was decided that in line with current policy, the Agent would be afforded the same rights as the public in that they could attend any meeting that they wished and speak in the Open Session.

24.26.4 To review Protocol on Planning Application meetings with landowners, developers, or their Agents.

The Clerk had prepared a revised Protocol based on the suggestions from the Planning Committee which would encourage more interaction with developers where a designated site was in question.

On the proposal of Cllr Medhurst which was seconded by Cllr Smith and with all Councillors in agreement, it was agreed to adopt the amended Protocol on Planning Application meetings with landowners, developers, or their Agents.

24.27 STAFFING COMMITTEE

24.27.1 Update from Committee Chairman regarding staffing matters and vacancy.

Cllr R Pullen advised that applicants for the RFO position had been booked in for interview.

24.28 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

24.28.1 To note the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 31st January 2024.

Minutes were noted.

24.28.2 To approve amendment to FMPC Financial Regulations.

Following the F&GP meeting which was held on the 31st January 2024, the delegated authority of the Clerk (Financial Regulation 4.5) was discussed, and the Committee recommended that it should be increased to £5000.

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Briggs, it was:

RESOLVED to increase the Clerk's delegated emergency authority to £5000, which could be utilised in agreement with the Chairperson/Vice Chair and another Councillor.

24.28.3 To review 'Effectiveness of internal controls' report and approve Committee recommendations.

The Locum RFO had prepared a review of internal controls and the F&GP Committee had reviewed this, recommending that the Council accepts the action, namely appointing a permanent RFO.

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Smith, it was:

RESOLVED to accept the report and the action plan.

24.28.4 To resolve to sign the lease agreement with The Scout Association and Trust Corporation and authorise any relevant FIT applications.

Cllr M Pullen had some questions relating to the lease agreement.

On the proposal of Cllr M Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr R Pullen, it was:

RESOLVED to move Agenda Item 11.4 into a Closed Session.

24.29 Officer report

24.29.1 To note clerks report and any listed correspondence.

The Clerk noted that two benches had been installed, one at the Cemetery which was purchased using a District Councillor Grant from Neal Day and the second was a memorial bench for local resident Clive Hawkins

which had been placed outside of the allotments. Cllr R Pullen thanked Cllr Smith for the time he had taken to varnish the Oak bench at the Cemetery.

The Clerk had been asked to contact EHDC enforcement by the Planning Committee regarding Longcroft Cattery in Fairfield Green which had recently been permitted a twelve month temporary permission to operate. It had been confirmed that enforcement would not be involved in monitoring whether the conditions were being met and would only respond to breaches reported directly to them. In the correspondence, the Council were reminded that there had not been any proven breaches since March 2023.

After several attempts at obtaining support from EHDC regarding the dog fouling issue at the Recreation Ground, an enforcement team had completed two patrols of the area, reporting minimal issues and discussions with residents where they were told that there were no dog fouling issues. Another visit from the team will take place soon.

The Clerk informed the Council about some additional correspondence:

20/02/2024 – Resident email regarding East Hampshire District Council speed camera initiative. Responded to.

20/02/2024 – Resident communication regarding concern over Swelling Hill Pond works. Responded to.

20/02/2024 – Resident complaint regarding individuals cutting a tree down around Hazel Road, escalated to EHDC.

24.30 FINANCIAL ITEMS

24.30.1 To receive and approve January 2024 payments.

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Smith, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to approve the January 2024 payments totalling £52079.35.

24.30.2 To receive and authorise February 2024 payments to date.

Cllr R Pullen asked the Clerk to note the reason for the payment on the wider circulation for all Councillors for better transparency and understanding.

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Smith, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to approve the February 2024 payments to date totalling £5681.91.

24.30.3 To note bank balances as of February 2024.

The bank balances were noted, and the Clerk was asked to obtain fuller financial reports from the RFO. The Councillors asked for an earmarked reserves report.

24.30.4 To approve energy Switch for Gas supplier and associated Direct Debit

The Clerk was asked to request one year fixed deals from the broker and consult the Finance and General Purposes Committee before agreeing to any new contracts. The chosen rate would be reported at the next Full Council meeting in March 2024.

24.30.5 Additional signatories for current account.

The Clerk suggested that it would be beneficial to have some additional signatories on the current account. Cllr M Pullen volunteered, and it was agreed that the Financial Regulations would need to be amended so that related Councillors could not sign the same payment schedule or authorise the same payment.

On the proposal of Cllr Briggs, which was seconded by Cllr Medhurst and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr M Pullen would be added as a current account signatory/authoriser.

24.31 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERTAION

24.31.1 To consider grant application

On the 11th February 2024, a request had been received by Tylers Trust for a grant. The Clerk had responded by asking for the amount required as well as other information such as the number of Four Marks residents that had been helped by the charity and accounts for the previous year. Although there was an assurance that the information would be received in time for the meeting, it had not been received and so there was not enough information for the Council to decide.

24.32 TO NOTE EXTERNAL COMMITTEE AND AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

24.32.1 Allotments – Cllr Speed

Cllr Speed had nothing to report. Cllr R Pullen asked whether the allotment association still monthly Committee meetings and Cllr Speed have confirmed that they do and although he had attended when first elected, that he had not recently been. Cllr R Pullen felt that it was important that Councillors attend meetings where they are representatives and Cllr Speed agreed to attend future meetings.

24.32.2 Benians Committee – Cllr Smith

Cllr Smith reported that the next Committee meeting would be held in April 2024 and that a meeting would take place between the Chairman of Benians Committee and Cllrs Pullen and Smith regarding the impact on the utility raise on their annual fee.

24.32.3 Oak Green – Cllr Briggs

The fly tipping at Oak Green parade had been removed by a contractor and the Laurel hedge overhanging the back car park had been cut back.

Cllr Smith reported that some of the businesses were considering forming an 'Oak Green traders association' and that he would keep the Council up to date on this.

Cllr R Pullen enquired about the CCTV in that area and the Clerk advised that there was a potential issue which needed further investigation. The issue with the bins was also raised.

24.32.4 Meeting extension

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Briggs and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOVLED in accordance with Standing Order 3z to agree to a meeting extension over two hours.

24.32.5 Village Hall – Cllr Gebbett

In the absence of Cllr Gebbett, Cllr R Pullen informed the Council that there had been a burglary at the Village Hall where the safe located on the stage had been ripped off the wall and some microphones had been stolen. The Village Hall Committee are currently reviewing and investigating this incident.

24.32.6 Highways

Cllr R Pullen had had a positive meeting with a police inspector in Alton regarding the East Hampshire District Council camera equipment initiative.

24.32.7 EHAPTC

The Minutes from the most recent meeting had been circulated to Councillors.

24.33 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

24.33.1 Village picnic preparations and funding

The date of the Village Picnic was confirmed as the 23rd June 2024. Cllr Speed had tried to contact various stallholders and businesses that he thought would be interested but had not had much success. The Assistant Clerk was working on the project.

24.33.2 To receive update on Cllr Surgeries

Cllr Medhurst would discuss a date with Garthowen Garden Centre and inform the Council.

24.33.3 To discuss annual Parish newsletter and progress to date.

The Clerk advised that the newsletter would be printed on bond paper that can be recycled. Cllr Briggs asked Councillors if they would like to help with distribution to help save costs, but the Clerk was asked to organise external distribution.

24.33.4 Vision Planning

This was still in progress and a report would be provided at the next Annual Parish meeting.

24.34 Meeting closed to the public at 9.15pm

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council have the right to exclude the public and press from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest and may pass a resolution, without notice, to do so.

24.35 To resolve to sign the lease agreement with The Scout Association and Trust Corporation and authorise any relevant FIT applications.

A discussion took place where some of the terms of the lease were explained to Councillors who were not involved in the initial meetings with the Scout group. The Clerk also explained that the costs of the FIT memorandum applications were not precisely known.

On the proposal of Cllr Medhurst, which was seconded by Cllr R Pullen and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to sign the lease with The Scout Association and Trust Corporation which would be returned to the Council's solicitor and to instruct the Solicitor to proceed with the relevant FIT application.

24.36 Meeting closed at 9.27pm

24.37 Next meeting: 20th March 2024