

**Minutes of a meeting of CROMHALL PARISH COUNCIL held on  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 7:30pm at Cromhall Village Hall**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mark Daniel (Chairman), Hannah Bryan and Daren Jeffrey

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Cllr. John O'Neill (SGC Ward Cllr) and 3 members of public

**CLERK:** Emma Pattullo

**Approved at the subsequent meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

**Signed copy held by the Clerk.**

**2024/01/1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Residents raised the following concerns:

- Pot holes on Rectory Lane – becoming dangerous;
- Flooding on Priest Wood Lane due to blocked drain;
- During the recent periods of heavy rain, sewage was seen flowing out of the foul drainage manhole onto the B4058 at Longcross.

**2024/01/2 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Lorraine Palmer and Mike Line.

**2024/01/3 Declarations of interest and requests for dispensation**

None received.

**2024/01/4 Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 should be accepted as a true record. The minutes were duly signed by the chairman.

**2024/01/5 Exclusion of public and press**

It was RESOLVED that no item of this agenda warranted exclusion of the press and public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

**2024/01/6 Planning**

**2024/01/6.1 To review and resolve response to the following planning applications**

The following planning applications were reviewed and responses RESOLVED as recorded:

- i. P22/04731/F - Land Off Bristol Road Cromhall GL12 8AQ - Erection of 31 no. dwellings, with access, landscaping and associated works. Creation of 10. space shared car park (reconsultation on revised plans). *RESOLVED: Objection, reiterating the previous reasons for objection including lack of provision for outdoor recreation and lack of safe pedestrian routes to Longcross and Farleigh Lane from the site entrance.*

**2024/01/6.2 To note the following planning decisions**

The following planning decisions issued by South Glos. Council were NOTED:

- i. P23/02826/F - 9 The Burltons, Cromhall, Wotton Under Edge - Erection of single storey side, rear and front extension to form annexe ancillary to main dwelling (resubmission of P23/02023/F). *Decision: Approved with conditions.*

**2024/01/6.3 To resolve a response to the South Glos. Council Local Plan Phase 3 consultation**

Councillor Jeffrey had drafted a comprehensive response following attendance at a briefing session run by SGC. It was RESOLVED that as Cllr Jeffrey's comments summarised the situation well, these would form the basis of a full response to be submitted by the Clerk.

#### **2024/01/7 Items for decision**

##### **2024/01/7.1 To consider renewal of the contract with South Glos. Council for provision of localism services**

It was RESOLVED to accept the proposed three year contract from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, which includes grass cutting and emptying of waste bins. The quoted cost for the first year being £788.50, with future years subject to an index linked increase.

##### **2024/01/7.2 To consider entering into negotiations for renewal of the school field lease**

The current lease expires August 2024. It was RESOLVED that the council should pursue renewal of the lease on similar terms to the existing lease. The Clerk will approach Tortworth Estate to discuss how this can be progressed.

##### **2024/01/7.3 To review quotations for replacement of benches at Townwell play area and select a supplier**

Following consideration of the various proposed options, it was RESOLVED that two Glasdon "Eco Rest Seats" should be ordered; these are made from wood-effect recycled plastic so should be longer lasting than wooden benches and require less maintenance. The seats will be fixed into the existing concrete slabs.

##### **2024/01/7.4 To determine future responsibilities for management of the defibrillators**

The clerk reported that the new defibrillator has arrived and is due to be fitted on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January. It will need to be registered with the ambulance service and will then be ready for public use.

A new 'guardian' is required since Andy New has resigned from the council. Cllr Daniel agreed to take on this responsibility.

##### **2024/01/7.5 To determine arrangements for the council's postal address**

The previous PO Box subscription has now expired. Renewal would be £396 for one year, which seems expensive for the few items of mail which the council receives. An alternative provision would provide better value.

It was RESOLVED that the hall committee should be approached to ask whether a post box could be erected on the building wall, near to the hall's own box. The council's address could then be "c/o Cromhall Village Hall".

##### **2024/01/7.6 To determine a date for the May annual council meeting**

Dates for 2024 meetings were determined at the last council meeting, however the hall is not available on 21<sup>st</sup> May which was the agreed date for that month.

It was therefore RESOLVED that the May meeting will therefore return to the usual fourth Tuesday date, i.e. 28<sup>th</sup> May. The clerk is not available on that date so the agenda will be minimal.

##### **2024/01/7.7 To consider request from Cromhall village hall committee for a letter of support for grant funding bid**

The village hall committee are applying for grant funding from the West of England Rural Fund, towards resurfacing of the hall car park and improvements to the rest of the outside areas of the hall.

It was RESOLVED that the council will send a letter of support for this grant bid.

## **2024/01/8 Items to note**

### **2024/01/8.1 To receive report from the Clerk**

The clerk reported on various matters which she has been working on since the last meeting:

- Developed a draft council budget for the next financial year;
- Submitted the annual Community Infrastructure Levy spending report to SGC;
- Reviewed the Local Plan consultation and circulated a summary report to councillors and to residents via the website;
- Reported both councillor vacancies to SGC and publicised via the website and noticeboards;
- Applied to open new bank accounts with Unity Trust (ongoing, due to problems with identification documents for one councillor);
- Ordered the new defibrillator and arranged fitting;
- Liaised with the Streetcare parish works team – a list of jobs for them to do during their week in the parish needs to be drawn up.

### **2024/01/8.2 To receive report from SGC Ward Councillor**

Cllr John O'Neill reported on various matters:

- The Local plan is proposing that Cromhall should be allocated a requirement to take 30 new homes; capacity at the school is a limiting factor, also lack of guaranteed public transport;
- Developments across the local area will require improvements being made to the M4 junction 14 which is operating over capacity;
- South Glos. Council budget discussions are ongoing; it is expected that charges for some services (such as provision of garden waste bins) will increase and that charges will be introduced in SGC-owned car parks;
- The planning application for a solar farm at Varley Farm has been approved by SGC Development Control Committee despite the arguments of the parish council and local residents against this development. The committee considered that the benefits of provision of 'green' energy and contribution to the climate emergency outweighed the local objections.

### **2024/01/8.3 To receive update on road safety matters**

Cllrs Jeffrey and Bryan reported on work they have carried out looking at the feasibility of a pedestrian crossing on the B4508 between Church Lane and Spring Lane. The council has previously been told that this would not be feasible as it would be too close to the blind summit at Longcross and that approaching vehicles would not be able to stop in time. However, timings suggest that cars typically take around 9.5 seconds to reach the current dropped kerb crossing point from the top of the hill, and HGVs around 13 seconds. Similar timings were observed for vehicles approaching from the bend in the road, travelling southbound.

It was also noted that there is a considerable width of verge at this point, possibly enough to accommodate a central refuge area.

It was agreed that this issue should be added to a future agenda for the council to consider a formal approach to SGC to request that the feasibility of a crossing should be looked at again.

#### **2024/01/8.4 To note advertising of two casual vacancies**

It was NOTED that the council currently has two vacant seats. The vacancies have been reported to SGC and advertised on the council's noticeboards and website. The deadline for an election to be called is 30<sup>th</sup> January; if no election is called then the council will be free to co-opt to the vacant seats at the February meeting.

#### **2024/01/8.5 To note article in recent "Five Alive" magazine re: road safety**

Councillors NOTED a lengthy article by a CRPS representative in the recent issue of "Five Alive". It was further noted that the comments were basically the same as were made to the December parish council meeting and that the council had responded at that time, thus no further response was required.

#### **2024/01/8.6 To note play area inspection reports**

Cllr Line has agreed to resume regular inspections of the playground. The clerk will work with Cllr Line to review the inspection checklist to ensure it is fit for purpose.

#### **2024/01/9 Financial matters**

##### **2024/01/9.1 To note spend against budget to end December 2023 and approve bank reconciliation**

The budget monitoring report to end of December 2023 was noted. The bank reconciliation was checked and signed by Cllrs Daniel and Bryan.

##### **2024/01/9.2 To note receipts**

It was NOTED that there have been no receipts since the last meeting.

##### **2024/01/9.3 To note payments made under prior approval and approve payments to be made**

The payments schedule and invoices were checked and signed by Cllrs Daniel and Bryan.

It was NOTED that the following payment had been made under Financial Regulations item 4.5:

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Total</b>
T Norris	Microsoft 365 subscription	£59.99 (inc. VAT)

(The above payment to the former Clerk was made as the software subscription had been registered to her personal payment method since the council does not currently hold a payment card. Unfortunately, this was not realised until the automatic renewal had gone through.)

It was RESOLVED that the following payments should be made:

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Total</b>
C Maidment	Clerk salary - arrears	£104.00
E Pattullo	Clerk salary & home working allowance	£777.37
PATA (UK)	Payroll admin service	£38.40
Cromhall Parish Hall	Hall hire Jan-Mar 2024	£40.00

##### **2024/01/9.4 To resolve arrangements for internal audit for financial year 2023/24**

It was RESOLVED that internal audit should be carried out via the ALCA small councils' audit network.

##### **2024/01/9.5 To consider purchase of accounting software**

The clerk reported that she has been trialling two possible accounting packages, Scribe Lite and EasyPC. The use of a sector-specific accounting package was a recommendation of last year's

internal audit.

The Scribe Lite package has proved to be too limited to be of use. The same company also produce a higher-spec package, Scribe Professional, which would be more suited to the council's needs. Quoted cost is £269 for the remainder of this financial year and £420 per year in the future. It includes a number of automated reporting, budget monitoring and forecasting features but is not very flexible.

The EasyPC package is more basic and has limited reporting functionality but allows easy export of data to Excel for further processing if required. The quoted cost is much lower, £10 until the end of the current financial year and £78 per year in future.

The clerk recommended that, in view of the much lower cost, the EasyPC package subscription should be purchased. If it proves too limiting, it would be possible to change to a more feature-rich package in the future.

It was RESOLVED that this recommendation should be taken up and that a subscription to EasyPC should be purchased.

#### **2024/01/9.6 To review and adopt a budget for financial year 2024/25**

The clerk presented a proposed budget for the coming financial year.

Councillors considered the proposal in detail and made a number of amendments.

It was then RESOLVED that the budget should be adopted, subject to the amendments made during the meeting.

#### **2024/01/9.7 To determine the precept requirement for financial year 2024/25**

Following the budget process at item 9.5 above, it was RESOLVED that a precept amount of £23,497 should be set for the financial year 2024-25. This equates to £74.83 for the year on the average (Band D) household council tax bill.

#### **2024/01/10 Items for future agenda**

No further items were raised.

#### **2024/01/11 Meeting closure**

The meeting closed at 9:50 pm.

*The next meeting of the council will be held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Items for the agenda should be with the Clerk by 20<sup>th</sup> February.*