

STEEPLE MORDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in the Cricket Pavilion on Monday 8th January 2024 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: J Clayton (Chairman), C Upchurch, O Parsons, K Austin, S Traverse-Healy, M Bird, A Gear, N Badger, M Carroll
District Cllr Williams, County Cllr Kindersley (part)
In attendance: Mrs S Walmesley (Clerk) with five members of the public.

1 Apologies for absence, declarations under the code of conduct and requests for dispensations

All Councillors were in attendance. There were no declarations made.

2 Ms Liz Watts- Chief Executive of South Cambridgeshire District Council

Ms Watts was welcomed to the meeting. The Chairman invited questions from the members of the public in attendance and then Parish Councillors. The points below relate to the questions on the 4 day week –

-The initiative was led by the Administration. In 2022 the District Council could only recruit five out of ten vacancies so relied a lot on agency staff. Different incentives were tried to attract applicants. The Leader of the District Council was asked, at the Local Government conference, if she was interested in a trial for a 4 day week. The Cabinet was keen to pursue with the shorter working week being an incentive to meet performance and recruitment targets and also address retention issues. The original three-month trial was not long enough to measure results and so the Cabinet agreed to extend the trial until the end of March 2024. Signs were that there was improved commitment, and the District Council was seeing positive results/signs regarding recruitment. After the end of the trial the District Council would be able to assess the success of the trial.

-Sickness absence had decreased since the beginning of the trial. The way sick absence is recorded has not changed.

-Employment contracts for staff had not changed. If the trial was unsuccessful the staff would revert back to a 5 day week.

-Before the trial it was difficult to recruit and retain staff as the local area (south Cambridgeshire) is expensive to live in. The pay is on a national scale. The District Council would spend time training staff, for example Planning Officers, who once trained would leave and join the private sector where they could earn twice the salary.

-Employees had been told at the very beginning that they could not work for another company on their day off. They had been asked what they did, on this day, and there was a real mix including caring, volunteering and catching up on their home life.

-The Cabinet decision for the trial followed the District Council consultation for decision making. This needed to be followed to prevent a Judicial review, Any decision for the 4 day week to become permanent would be a full council decision. Ms Watts confirmed that she had conversations with lots of Councillors.

-It had been noted that it was more difficult since the trial to make contact with the District Council. Ms Watts advised that the District Council aspired to high quality and contact centre complaints had gone down. There was a survey on the District Council website which people were encouraged to fill in. Concerns could then be followed up.

-The experience was that employees really wanted to make the trial work and were prepared to do things they previously would not have done,

-Staff Induction was now being moved back to in-person since Covid so was back on track. The recent peer review highlighted that some people did not have time for training comparing 2022 and 2023. More people though were training through eLearning where they could suit themselves as to the time.

- Employees are not forced onto a four day week, Some prefer working a full five days and this can be accommodated in certain positions. Team activities such as bin collections had to be a team decision.

-The reduction to four days had meant that this had changed the way people worked which was now at a more intense pace. Hours were not monitored. Either in work or homeworking employees worked where most appropriate. They were required to go into the office once

a fortnight for team meetings/workshops. Staff were also able to work in the office anytime they chose. People found ways to interact with their team.

-Overtime would only be paid for a very specific reason or unusual pieces of work. Holiday leave had been reduced by 20%. Employees had to stick to their scheduled day off, which was a Monday or Friday, unless there was a very good reason. This was all agreed within their team who focused meetings around Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

-At the end of the trial various agencies would present their findings made up of an analysis carried out by Cambridge University, Health and Wellbeing survey of staff and recruitment/retention information. It was envisaged that the trial would continue until the results were known around May 2024.

-Nothing had been heard from the Government regarding the information supplied as a result of the Best Value notice issued. Data was already being collected within the services so had not taken a lot of resource to provide.

-Costs associated with the trial for desk staff related to different well being surveys which the District Council would carry out anyway. For the refuse collection staff trial the rounds needed to be reorganised due to the increase in the district housing so this would probably have happened. It was too early to give savings on these costs but the District Council was definitely saving Agency staff costs.

Questions and discussion then took place on the following -

-It had been announced in the Government Autumn statement that a development corporation was to be formed. As part of this the Government must consult District Councils prior to implementation. Ms Watts advised that most activity was carried out by the Cambridge Delivery Group. There had been no consultation at the present time regarding a corporation.

-The water shortage group was made up of a number of agencies. At the present time growth through the LDP 2018 had been stopped. The group was useful to work with. Cambridge 2040 had got everyone around the table.

Cllr Traverse-Healy referred to the District Council audits which Ms Watts confirmed should be up to date by the Autumn. The auditors were appointed by the Government and there were too few to deal with all the District Councils so the vast majority were behind with their audits.

The Chairman thanked Ms Watts for attending the meeting and for answering questions which was very helpful.

3 County and District Councillors' reports

The Chairman referred to a possible General Election in 2024 and asked both Councillors to refrain from political views in their reports to the Parish Council.

3.1 County Council

Cllr Kindersley reported that gullies across the county had now been surveyed. There was now more information available on their location and how often they were cleaned. This should no longer be a problem. They were last cleaned in September 2023. Cllr Kindersley added, in answer to a question from a member of the public, that street sweeping was a District Council task.

Potholes had been a major issue in 2023 with further funds awarded by the Government for their repair. Cllr Kindersley acknowledged that it was frustrating when an issue with the same pothole kept happening. The potholes, and issues with pavements, should be reported on the County Council website.

Cllr Parsons asked for support with the LHI application for Odsey traffic calming which Cllr Kindersley confirmed. The 20mph scheme would again be inviting applications. The Clerk advised that she had not received any information on the latest round to date.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Kindersley for his report.

3.2 District Council

Due to the Christmas break Cllr Williams advised that there was not a lot to report. She had taken legal advice on the data release by South Cambridgeshire District Council, relating to the four day week, and would share with the Parish Council if she received any information.

The Government was asking for information on Planning and Recruitment. The Chairman advised that an additional question relating to this would be put to Ms Watts in the follow up letter.

Cllr Williams was thanked for her report.

4 Comments and observations from parishioners and members of the public

4.1 Traffic Speed

Concern was raised over the speed through the village particularly around the junction near the Primary School.

The Chairman advised that the Parish Council had tried tirelessly for traffic calming but the County Council could not see a problem. An appeal for Community Speedwatch volunteers had also been made with no feedback. Regular submission of data from the MVAS was submitted to the Police but without an active Community Speedwatch scheme in the village the police would not take an active interest. The Parish Council was again going to apply for a 20mph speed limit, The Chairman concluded that the Parish Council was doing everything that it was allowed to do.

4.2 Grasscutting

Reference was made to the grasscutting contracts. Councillors were asked that larger circles around the newly planted trees be left untrimmed when the new contract is agreed. Cllr Badger agreed to monitor.

5 To approve the minutes of

5.1 The Parish Council Meeting held on the 11th December 2023

On a proposition by Cllr Traverse-Healy, seconded by Cllr Austin, the minutes as circulated were taken as read and then approved a true record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Matters arising and carried forward from last meetings

6.1 Broadband Link to Church

The Chairman advised that there was to be a meeting of the PCC the next day where the proposal would be discussed.

6.2 Update on the Waggon and Horses -ACV Bid

There was no further news.

6.3 Prosperity Fund Eligibility

Cllr Williams confirmed that she had asked the question raised at the December Parish Council meeting and was awaiting a reply.

6.4 Tree Planting update

An update had been circulated to Councillors. Cllr Badger advised that tree planting was scheduled for the end of the month.

7 Finances

7.1 To receive the financial statement and to approve the payment of bills

THE PRINTWORKS(ROYSTON)LTD

Newsletters	£55.00
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NETWISE

Domain renewal Jan 24-Jan 25 (inc £4.00VAT)	£24.00
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SALARIES

Salaries and expenses Oct -Dec 23	£1675.11
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HMRC

PAYE October -December 2023	£408.20
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The following payments were also made between meetings –

DRAX

Streetlighting November 2023	£302.86
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STEEPLE MORDEN BOWLS CLUB

Electricity charge	£ 61.36
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AGREED. Proposed Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Traverse-Healy

7.2 Agreement of Budget/Precept 2024/25

The Finance Working Group had distributed a discussion paper prior to the meeting with questions and a recommendation to keep the precept amount the same as in the current year.

Councillors agreed that they would pursue the LHI for a speed reduction in Odsey and also a new litter bin.

A discussion took place on the newsletter printing. Councillors were advised that currently there were 40 copies printed, some of these delivered the rest left in the public buildings. It was thought that most residents now had access to the internet to be able to download a copy.

It was agreed that a note would be put in the February newsletter advising that in future the publication would not be printed. If there was a hard copy requested by a resident unable to use the internet, then a copy would be printed on an ordinary printer.

On a proposal by Cllr Traverse-Healy, seconded by Cllr Bird, with all Councillors in agreement the precept was agreed for 2024/25 as £32,500. The Clerk to make the demand to South Cambridgeshire District Council.

-Clerk

8 Recreation Ground/Conservation Area

8.1 Recreation Ground Checks

Cllr Badger confirmed all was well.

8.1.1 Water Fountain questions

There had been some correspondence on the village Facebook page relating to the fountain and why it was no longer in use. This had been discussed by the Parish Council in 2015 when it was agreed not to pursue the repair as most people carried ready filled water bottles. The Chairman added that it was also believed that there was a leak under the Pavilion which would be expensive to repair.

A discussion took place on a new wall mounted water fountain which would cost around £500-£1000. In these times of heatwaves and everyone trying to reduce plastic use it would be a forward-thinking move. Cllr Badger agreed to investigate for the next meeting.

-NB

8.2 Update on Play area repairs

The repairs were scheduled for the end of January.

8.2.1 Outdoor Gym Equipment Purchase proposal.

The working group would arrange to meet to discuss proposals. **CU,NB, AG,OP**

8.2.2 Monkey Challenge (awaiting outcome of application)

The first application had been rejected. Some amendments to the wording had been suggested and so the Clerk was in the process of preparing a second application.

-Clerk

8.3 Car Park Floodlight Repair

Cllr Bird reported that the floodlight had a PIR sensor failure that caused the light to be on permanently. A contractor had replaced the unit and it is back in proper operation. However, there was also now an issue with the second light which he was investigating.

-MB

9 Village Grasscutting 2024-2026

It was agreed to defer a decision on this until the February 2023 meeting.

10 Parish Council Projects 2023/24

10.1 Car Park Resurfacing -Section 106 Funding

Options were being investigated now that a budget of £5,000 had been agreed at the December Parish Council meeting.

-MC,NB

10.2 Update on Quotations for work Pavilion/Reading Room Decoration

Cllr Carroll advised that he had still received no interest from contractors in tendering for the decoration. He would work with Cllr Badger to come up with a plan for a working group to carry out the painting.

MC, NB

10.3 LHI Application 2024/25

Proposal for Odsey traffic calming/speed reduction

Cllr Parsons confirmed that the application would be submitted by the deadline date of the 12th January.

-OP

10.3.1 Odsey Traffic Island

The repair had taken place but there were still issues with visibility. Someone had hung a reflector jacket over the post as the reflectors were not sufficient. Cllr Gear would

send a photograph to the Clerk so that she could follow up with the Local Highway Officer. *AG & Clerk*

10.4 Additional Posts for MVAS

Details and an application form for the PFHI were with Cllr Austin. He would liaise with Cllr Gear over the proposed position for a post in Odsey. **KA & AG**

11 Planning/Tree work Applications

1.1 Planning Applications

11.1.1 Planning Ref 23/04465/HFUL

78-80 Flittons Farm, Station Road -Erection of carport and store following demolition of existing outbuilding

Recommendation -Support

12 To consider correspondence received including;

Correspondence received was discussed under agenda items.

13 Councillors' items for information and requiring the urgent attention of the Clerk

13.1 Cricket Club contributions to electricity

The Cricket Club had asked for the contributions to be reviewed. Cllr Bird suggested that the club be asked to work with the Football Club and Magpies to find the best way to split the 80% contribution. **-Clerk**

13.2 Building rubbish - Odsey

It was reported that there was a mound of building rubbish left in the car park by Zaheers. This was blowing around obstructing the path and road. The Chairman suggested that Cllr Parsons speak to the District Council Environment Officer and ask that he has an informal word with the property owner. **-OP**

13.3 Parish Council Vacancies

Cllr Carroll advised that he was aware of residents wanting to join the Parish Council. It was advised that there was a full complement of Councillors at present, and the next Parish election was not until 2026, but the residents were invited to come along to the monthly meetings. **-MC**

14 Date of next meeting – 12th February 2024

There was no further business. The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.03 pm

Chairman

Date