

**Minutes of the MEETING of the Town Council held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7.30pm at Bruton Community Hall.**

**Councillors present: Councillors Anderton, Bateman, Buckland, Coulter, Crawford, Fradley, Hood(Vice Chair), Jones, Robinson, Taylor, Whittock.**

**In the Chair: Cllr Anderton.**

**Officers present: Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk.**

**Somerset Councillors Trimnell and Power.**

**Members of the public: 8**

**Public session opened: 7:30pm**

Cllr Anderton opened the public session by requesting that Councillors and members of the public focussed their comments, if speaking regarding the Bruton School for Girls Trust consultation, to the elements of the consultation and not wider issues.

- The public meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 was well run, which was a difficult task under the circumstances.
- A member of the public believed that slowing down the process as a whole would be appreciated to permit re-evaluation of thoughts and to consider next steps. This process needs to happen more naturally and slower than the prescribed timescale.
- A member of the public felt that there is huge amount of ambiguity of what constitutes community interest. Community interest is crucial to the eyes of the consultation.

**Public session closed: 7.34pm**

**Meeting started: 7.34pm**

## **Minutes**

**23/122: Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972 s85(1)).**

Apologies were received from Cllr G Baker and Cullen.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] [for-against-abstain] that the apologies submitted were accepted and approved.**

**23/123: Declarations of Interest.**

Members to declare any interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI) they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any written requests from members for dispensations that accord with the Localism Act 2011 s33 (b-e) (This does not preclude any later declaration).

Cllr Coulter declared an interest in 23/131, Bruton School for Girls site

Cllr Robinson declared an interest in 23/132, Somerset Association of Local Councils consultation.

Cllr Anderton declared that two children went to Bruton School for Girls, his wife worked there, and his son is currently an employee of Kings School Bruton.

Cllr Buckland has been previously employed by Bruton School for Girls.

Cllr Fradley was previously a student at Bruton School for Girls.

Agenda item 23/131 Bruton School for Girls site, was moved to be the first item of business conducted.

Cllr Coulter left the meeting at 7.36pm

**23/131: Bruton School for Girls site.** To discuss the public consultation about the Bruton School for Girls site, decide whether a formal response from Bruton Town Council; if so what should the formal response be.

Cllr Anderton suggested that a general discussion takes place followed by collating the points to form a formal response. Cllr Hood had received a letter from member of the public who is not present this evening, which contains some of the history of the site, and making some suggestions about a possible way forward. He read from the latter section (summarised as follows):

- A new group of trustees formed from people who have a link and clear interest in Bruton School for Girls,
- A new trust puts forward to the Charities Commission a plan that the monies continue to be used for education for local girls/community use.

Cllr Jones had circulated a six point paper, to structure the discussion for the Town Council response to the Charities Commission:

The resolutions that will form the formal consultation response to the Charity Commission are:

1. Supports the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land at Bruton School for Girls, Sunny Hill, Bruton, including Designated Land, by way of a freehold sale.

**It was proposed and RESOLVED [10-0-0] to amend point 1 from Bruton Town Council 'supports the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land....' to read Bruton Town Council 'acknowledge the necessity of the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land.....'**

**It was resolved [10-0-0] to include point 1, as amended, as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

2. Does not believe there is any need to update the objects of Bruton School for Girls Trust to deliver this sale. If the objects are to be changed then to be varied and read as follows:

*"The provision of education in or near Bruton for girls and boys (provided that such boys shall not have attained the age of eight years) and by ancillary or incidental educational activities and other associated activities for the benefit of the community."*

**It was RESOLVED [10-0-0] to approve the proposed object as stated in blue, with the word education replacing the phrase, as indicated, and include point 2 as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

3. Believes that, if the objects do need to be updated, there is absolutely no justification to attempt to restrict delivery of benefits through King's School, Bruton.

**It was proposed and RESOLVED [10-0-0] to include point 3 as stated as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

4. Believes that the composition of the Trustees of both Bruton School for Girls Charity and Bruton School for Girls Trust presents transparent and undeclared actual and apparent conflicts of interest.

This point is best considered as part of a private response and not within the response by Bruton Town Council.

5. Requests that the Bruton School for Girls Trustees forward these representations to the Charity Commission, in full and unredacted, along with all other representation made from the Bruton and Pitcombe community. It was proposed that the meeting notes from public meeting that took place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 are also submitted to the Charity Commission.
6. Asks the Bruton Town Clerk to forward this response directly to the Charity Commission, and to publish it on the Town Council's website.

**It was RESOLVED [10-0-0] to approve the actions in point 5, and in point 6, with the amendments as stated.**

Further details of this agenda item can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the minutes.

Cllr Coulter rejoined the meeting 8.03pm

**23/124: Minutes of the previous meeting (LGA 1972 sch 12 para 41 (1)).**

To approve [the minutes of the last Town Council meeting](#) held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to approve the minutes from the meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 as a true and accurate record of that meeting.**

**23/125: Reports from Somerset Councillors:**

- a. Lucy Trimnell.** The next Local Community Network meeting takes place on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023. It is recommended to view the regular updates regarding the financial situation at Somerset Council, via the Somerset Council website. Somerset Council have sent a letter from the leader of the council regarding the precept, and discretionary services that could be withdrawn. Cllr Trimnell recommended that a larger budget provision as a contingency is set by Town, Parish and City Councils, and placed into reserves if required. Cllr Anderton confirmed that budget provision being considered and also consultation process has started.
- b. Tom Power.** The Somerset Councillors November report has been circulated. Cllr Power has been liaising with Highways regarding the unsafe parking on Station Road which is causing concern, and speaking about new signage for the doctor's surgery.

**23/126: Minutes and Recommendations from Committees and from those Working Groups that report to the Full Council:**

- a. Planning & Consultation Committee** – to receive the minutes from the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 if available, and to note or approve any recommendations and decisions as required.

The minutes were noted as received. There were no recommendations for approval.

- b. Events Committee** – to receive [the minutes from the meeting](#) held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023, and to note and approve any recommendations or decisions as required. None, but as many councillors to help on the day of the Christmas event please, meeting 3.30pm.

The minutes were noted as received. There were no recommendations for approval.

- c. Finance and Resources** – to receive [the minutes from the meeting](#) held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023, and to note and approve any recommendations and decisions.

- i. Somerset Council, Asset and Service devolution. This was discussed at Finance and Resources, with the suggestion of compiling a list of assets and services that Bruton Town Council may be interested in pursuing further with a view to making further enquiries for more detailed financial information, and then consulting with the community.

The minutes the meeting were noted as received. Cllr Jones provided a short verbal report. The meeting with the devolution representative from Somerset Council (28<sup>th</sup> November 2023) was overviewed, and the sense of urgency for decisions regarding possible asset devolution is not a high as previously thought.

The internal auditor visit was mentioned, and the work of the town clerk was commended on her work regarding the very positive internal audit report received.

- d. Town Committee** – to receive [the minutes from the meeting](#) held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023, and to note and approve any recommendations and decisions.

Cllr Coulter overviewed a very good meeting, and noted that the play area requires some attention.

- i. To approve general reserve expenditure of to fund the replacement fencing (28m) behind the MUGA at Jubilee Park as per the quote received of £980.

(This length of fence is currently chain link, and is to be replaced with wooden fencing)

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to support the expenditure of £980, as requested, from general reserves, to fund the replacement of the fence.**

- e. Climate Ecological Emergency Working Group** – to receive an update from the last meeting.

The Climate Ecological Emergency Working Group are due to meet next week.

- f. **South East Somerset Local Community Network.** To receive an update from the last meeting.

Meetings have taken place for both the Flood Working Group and Footpaths Working Group (notes have been circulated). Somerset Council Highways representatives will be at the next Local Community Network meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023.

**23/127: Clerk's Report.**

To receive a short report from the Town Clerk to update on ongoing matters. The report can be found at the end of the minutes in Appendix 2.

Riverside Walk, and the Legg Footbridge requires further discussion, and to consult with members of the public. Riverside Walk and Legg Footbridge are both to be an agenda item for Full Council early next year (February).

**23/128: LCN Youth Work.**

To receive a short verbal update from Cllr Jones regarding the youth provision, and to consider the contract (if available) for approval.

Cllr Jones gave a short verbal report, and overviewed developments with the youth provision. Castle Cary Town Council has concerns about being the main contract holder, which means that the contract will be held between individual councils and the youth service provider directly. The contract will be scrutinised by Somerset Council before being circulated to the individual councils to consider and approve. There are inconsistencies in the contract as presented, and it needs to be revised and brought back to Full Council for consideration in January 2024.

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There was a poor response to the vacancy for a Youth Worker, advertised recently by the youth provision contractor. The next actions are to re-advertise and interim measure to support the provision internally is being considered by the youth provision contractor. It is not envisaged that the youth provision will now start before February 2024.

**23/129: Highways Matters – to consider the following:**

- a. **High Street near Sexey's Hospital.** To consider the response from Highways regarding the enquiry to address the 'pinch point' at the parking bays in this location.

Highways suggest shortening the east end of the parking bay stretch at the 'pinch point' by one bays length to enable large vehicles to pass safely.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to agree the suggestion regarding the 'pinch point' made by Highways, and that no additional signage will be required.**

- b. Mill Lane Parking.** To consider the response from Highways regarding the parking at the bend on Mill Lane which restricts the access for refuse vehicles collecting waste from business premises along Lower Backway. Highways maintain that the only action possible is to install double yellow lines for a distance of 15m either side of the bend. Councillors are concerned that this is a large distance to have parking prohibited. The parking on Lower Backway causes the restriction to the turning area, not parking on Mill Lane.

**It is RESOLVED [11-0-0] to request the installation of double yellow lines on Lower Back way only, and to be in place for the minimum distance possible, less than 15m as suggested.**

- c. Station Road parking.** To consider the recommendation from Highways of introducing double yellow lines along both sides of the road for the complete section between Station Road and Church Bridge.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] the double yellow lines are supported, but to request that marked parking spaces can be installed towards Church Bridge, where safe to do so.**

- d. Parking at the old Church Bridge Stores.** To consider the response from Highways regarding the Disabled Bay removal, and the post with the time plate also being removed.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to leave the disabled parking bay in place, to remove the signpost and place the sign onto the building as suggested.**

- e. High Street disabled bay.** To consider the response from Highways regarding the removal of the advisory bay, to be relocated at an alternative position. To confirm the position.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to remove the advisory disabled bay at the old pharmacy (near to library junction). The statutory disabled parking bay that is required needs to go in front of the new pharmacy on the High Street.**

- f. Installation of a planter/bike rack/other street furniture outside Bruton House to prevent parking on the pavement.** To consider the response received from Highways, and discuss next steps.

The working group needs to meet to discuss options, make recommendations and then obtain quotes for consideration at a Full Council meeting. Highways support the placing of a planter, bicycle rack or similar at this location. Highways would not object to one of the planters at West End being relocated, but the working group will provide alternative suggestions. The costs of any installation at this location would need to be met by the Town Council.

- g. **Coombe Street/Quaperlake Street junction. To discuss the response from Highways to this request and to discuss any further action.**

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] not to progress this suggestion this at this time.**

- h. **Safe Crossing area on Frome Road, junction with Eastfield and the Bruton Enterprise Centre.** As a result of the meeting with Highways on 21<sup>st</sup> November, it is possible to consider the installation of double yellow lines from the uncontrolled crossing point on Frome Road, to prevent vehicle parking near to the crossing point, and also opposite the junction to the Enterprise Centre. To consider submitting the request to Highways for the installation of the double yellow lines.

This suggestion requires further consideration and consultation with the community in this area.

**23/130: Planning applications.**

- a. **To consider the following planning application:**

[23/02810/HOU 2 Patwell Street, Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0EQ.](#) Alterations to the fenestration facing the road.

This application was summarised by Cllr Fradley. The fenestration amendments are to bring the current windows in keeping with adjacent properties. The property was originally a shop front.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to support this planning application.**

- b. **St Catherine's Hill, road sign and mirror.** To consider suggestions that a road sign at the bottom of the road be replaced and that a mirror be installed opposite the junction with High Street.

The road sign was discussed and it was proposed to replace the St Catherine's Hill road sign, which has been missing for some time.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to request to highways to replace the road sign that is missing.**

The mirror on the wall of Sexeys hospital was not recommended for installation.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to not recommend installation of the mirror.**

Cllr Robinson left the meeting at 8.49pm.

**23/132: Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) consultation.** A consultation has been received from SALC to respond to regarding how the services that SALC offers can be assessed and whether changes or improvements can be made. Feedback has been requested before January 2024 if possible.

The chief executive office has resigned, and SALC is re-evaluating the service that it provides to councils in Somerset that subscribe to the organisation. The

consultation is a general question regarding the direction that the organisation should take. The organisation is vital to provide support to councillors.

The organisation is broadly supported by the Town Council, and this Town Council has benefitted from SALC support.

Cllr Robinson rejoined the meeting at 8.55pm.

**23/133: Bank Reconciliations.**

To approve the bank reconciliations for all the current and deposit accounts to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.

Cllr Fradley overviewed and signed the bank reconciliations.

**23/134: Accounts for Payment.**

- a. **To approve the schedule of payments for November 2023.**

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to approve the schedule of payments as circulated for November 2023.**

- b. **Schedule of payments for December 2023.** To delegate to the clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to agree the payments in December 2023, that are to meet contractual obligations, that are within budget limits or those payments that are for services and orders agreed by Full Council or Committees at previous meetings. The list of payments made will be presented to Full Council at the January Full Council meeting.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to delegate to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to agree payments in December 2023 to meet contractual obligations, that are within budget limits or those payments that are for services and orders agreed by Full Councils or Committees at previous meetings.**

**23/135: Internal Auditor and Internal Auditor Interim Visit Report.**

- a. **To appoint the internal auditor for accounting periods 2023/24 and 2024/25.**

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to appoint the internal auditor Auditing Solutions for the next two financial years (2023/24 and 2024/25) as recommended by the Town Clerk.**

- b. **To receive the internal audit report from the visit on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023, and note any actions required as a result.**

The report was presented to councillors and the actions noted.

**23/136: National Salary Award.** To note the National Salary Award has been agreed, and has been applied to officer's salaries. To note and approve that the

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award is backdated to 1 April 2023, and backpay will be paid in the November salary.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to agree that the National Salary Award be applied to all council officers, and the pay rise be applied and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 or the start date of employment in the current financial year, whichever applies.**

**23/137: To note and approve that the Assistant Clerk has successfully passed the probationary period.** To approve online access to the Town Council bank accounts for the Assistant Clerk to view account information, access statements and to set up payments.

**It was RESOLVED [11-0-0] to note and approve that the Assistant Clerk has successfully passed the probationary period and is now a permanent member of staff. It was further RESOLVED [11-0-0] to approve online access for the Assistant Clerk to view account information, access statements and set up bank payments.**

**23/138: Reports - to receive reports from:**

**a. Members representing the Council on outside bodies.**

Cllr Crawford gave a short verbal report regarding Bruton Museum, providing positive feedback about the fortnight of history and heritage events.

Cllr Fradley and Hood reported that Bruton Supports Ukraine appears to have reached a natural end of its work, with Ukrainian visitors either remaining within the community or having decided to return to Ukraine.

**b. Town Councillors.**

Cllr Coulter commented that members of the public are reporting that the traffic speeding on Dropping Lane is increasing, giving cause for concern, and is recommended to be discussed at the next Town Committee meeting in January 2024.

Cllr Fradley reported speeding vehicles on the Sunny Hill site car park.

Cllr Hood mentioned that One Planet Bruton have had 5000 bulbs donated (native species), and will be planting a large amount of these in the cemetery along the wall. The bulbs will take 2 years to start flowering. There has been engagement with the Town Council Grounds Maintenance Contractor to ensure that the locations of the bulbs are known for future maintenance.

**c. Chair.**

Cllr Anderton attended Remembrance Sunday Parade, and did the reading at the church. The annual Dove meeting for staff was held at Kings recently and marked the retirement of Elizabeth Balfour as editor. Phil Heavy, a

former Bruton Town Councillor, has passed away after an illness. The Chair and Vice Chair will represent the council at the funeral service.

**23/139: Date of the next meeting of the Full Council:** Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (largely about the budget).

Please note agenda items to the clerk for consideration by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

**Meeting closed at 9.08pm**

**END OF MINUTES**

## Appendix 1

### Bruton School for Girls Trust Consultations

The list of six proposals for consideration at the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023, during agenda item 23/131 which was heard immediately after agenda item 23/123 (declarations of interest).

#### Bruton Town Council...

**Point 1:** Supports the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land at Bruton School for Girls, Sunny Hill, Bruton, including Designated Land, by way of a freehold sale. The former School's buildings had sadly suffered from years of under-investment as pupil numbers had gradually fallen, and now fall into further disrepair while left empty. It benefits nobody in the communities of Bruton and Pitcombe for these buildings to remain derelict. The Town Council recognises that the current condition of the buildings likely makes modernisation unviable for any potential education provider. It is therefore in the Charity's best interests to sell the former School site to repay loans from King's School Bruton covering compensation to former Staff and Parents, and to forestall ongoing maintenance costs.

#### **Point 1 was discussed, with the following observations:**

- The former school site is deteriorating, and should be sold. In the current state the site is a drain on the Trust's resources in the form of insurance and maintenance costs, funds which will then be lost to the beneficiaries of the trust.
- Actions regarding the proceeds of a sale is a separate discussion for a future time.
- The worst possible outcome is that the site remain derelict on the outskirts of Bruton, visible from one of the main thoroughfares into Bruton.
- If something is to be made of the site, the site must be sold.
- It was suggested that Bruton Town Council should not be supporting the sale nor having an opinion as such.
- It was further suggested that the word 'support' should read 'acknowledge the necessity of' in the proposal statement.

**It was proposed and RESOLVED [10-0-0] to amend point 1 from Bruton Town Council supports the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land.... to read Bruton Town Council acknowledge the necessity of the Trustees' proposal to dispose of certain land.....**

**It was resolved [10-0-0] to include point 1, as amended, as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

**Point 2:** Does not believe there is any need to update the objects of Bruton School for Girls Trust to deliver this sale. *“The provision of a day or day and boarding school in or near Bruton...”* does not tie the Trust to this specific site. If Trustees wish to clarify that the Trust will no longer deliver education benefits via provision of a school, the phrase *“a day or day and boarding school”* could simply be replaced with *“education”*, so that the objects read...

*“The provision of education in or near Bruton for girls and boys (provided that such boys shall not have attained the age of eight years) and by ancillary or incidental educational activities and other associated activities for the benefit of the community.”*

**Point 2 was discussed with the following observations:**

- The charitable objects do not need to be updated in order for the sale to go ahead.
- The objects can be updated with the word education as indicated in point 2.
- It is not necessary to change the objectives at all.
- The proposed object is listed in blue as above replacing ‘the provision of a day or day and boarding school in or near Bruton’ with the word ‘education’.

**It was RESOLVED [10-0-0] to approve the proposed object as stated in blue, with the word education replacing the phrase, as indicated, and include point 2 as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

**Point 3:** Believes that, if the objects do need to be updated, there is absolutely no justification to attempt to restrict delivery of benefits through King's School, Bruton. King's School may be *a school in Bruton*, but then so is Sexey's School, and Bruton Primary School. Moreover, Sexey's shares greater common history with Bruton School for Girls, which was founded as its twin Girls' school, at a time when Sexey's was Boys-only. As recently as 1979, when the Grammar School system ended in Somerset, Bruton School for Girls was the Girls' Grammer, and Sexey's the Boy's Grammar. It is an anachronism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to pretend that local girls' education can only, or even most effectively, benefit through subsidising places at an expensive private school. Neurodiversity, identity, mental health, and other special educational needs, are some of the contemporary challenges facing girls, which were not present in the same way at the time that Bruton School for Girls was founded.

**Point 3 was discussed, with the following observations:**

- The delivery of benefits to be restricted to Kings School Bruton is not justified.
- The reasons are listed in the body of the text of point 3, and should be made in the Town Council response.
- It was felt that this element of the discussion been the most provocative issue as the original objects state ‘a school’.

**It was proposed and RESOLVED [10-0-0] to include point 3 as stated as part of the Bruton Town Council response to the consultation.**

**Point 4:** Believes that the composition of the Trustees of both Bruton School for Girls Charity and Bruton School for Girls Trust presents transparent and undeclared actual and apparent conflicts of interest. In particular, both the Headmaster and Bursar of King's School Bruton, are employees of King's, who if Councillors, would be required to declare Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, and recuse from any considerations related to their employer. The Charity Commission's The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do states "*A conflict of interest is any situation where your personal interests could, or could appear to, prevent you from making a decision only in the charity's best interests.*" It is not credible to be asked to believe that the authors of a proposal to restrict the delivery of benefits through King's School, Bruton, have made this recommendation independent of considerations for, and loyalties to, their employer. The Charity Commission should insist upon a complete refresh of Trustees for both the Bruton School for Girls Charity and Trust, to demonstrate clear independence from both King's School, and the former Bruton School for Girls Trustees at the time of its sad demise. Somerset Community Foundation provides a switchboard for Somerset-focused Charities and Trusts, and would be more than cable of guiding Bruton School for Girls towards a more beneficial, less compromised, future.

Point 4 was discussed.

- It was considered that this point is the most controversial of this document.
- This point is best considered as part of a private response and not within the response by Bruton Town Council.
- Cllr Anderton stated that the consultation is not addressing the board of trustees, and proposed that this a discussion for a Town Council meeting at a future time.

**Point 5:** Requests that the Bruton School for Girls Trustees forward these representations to the Charity Commission, in full and unredacted, along with all other representation made from the Bruton and Pitcombe community. Bruton School for Girls was a much-loved part of the life of so many, for over a Century, so strong community feelings about the future benefits from its charitable endowments are to be recognised, and only to be expected.

**d. Point 5 was discussed:**

- The response from Bruton School for Girls Trustees is not clear that responses to the consultation will be submitted to the Charity Commission in full and unredacted. It was proposed that the Town Clerk (see point 6) should send the Bruton Town Council response directly to the Charity Commission. Cllr Anderton also requested that all responses to be sent to the Charity Commission as well as to the Bruton School for Girls Trustees.

- It was proposed that the meeting notes from public meeting that took place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 are also submitted to the Charity Commission.

**Point 6:** Asks the Bruton Town Clerk to forward this response directly to the Charity Commission, and to publish it on the Town Council's website.

**It was RESOLVED [10-0-0] to approve the actions in point 5, and in point 6, with the amendments as stated.**

**END OF APPENDIX 1**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Clerk's Report for Full Council 28 November 2023**

#### **Somerset Council**

##### **Finance Briefing**

The clerk attended a Clerk's briefing on 23<sup>rd</sup> November that discussed asset and service devolution with two officers from Somerset Council, and other City, Town and Parish Clerks. Topics discussed were:

- An overview of proposed budget cuts were presented. The largest cuts will be from the larger budget areas: Adult Services, Childrens Services and back office services.
- Urgent requests for flexibility with Town, Parish and City Councils deadline for submitting the precept request.
- The culture of communications from Somerset Council is believed to be changing, with the relationship between Somerset and Town, City and Parish Councils being viewed more as partnership working.
- Aims are to make any Service Level Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding to be as simple as possible.
- Positive reasons for Asset and Service devolution to Town, City and Parish Councils were discussed, and the ways this could be considered: Transfer of freehold, Service Level Agreement, Lease.
- Engaging 'people power', volunteers that can be involved in activities such as community litter pick, washing street furniture.
- Somerset Council are considering a lower level of chapter 8 delivery that would make some of the Highway orientated working accessible at a volunteer level.
- It was recognized that this cannot be a blanket approach and that individual conversations with individual councils are required.
- Consideration of the individual asset being transferred: if a play area, with a S106 commuted funds, would the commuted funds also be transferred?
- Consideration of the asset being transferred to the individual council with no charge for that asset (or the nominal fee of £1), depending on the asset.
- Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) is procuring legal services to support this process, which Town, City and Parish Councils (who have membership to SALC will have access to.

## **Highways**

### **Somerset Councillor visit**

Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital, Somerset Council, is visited Bruton on 21<sup>st</sup> November, to discuss Library Junction, and to look at Active Transport. Kerry Jones, Highways, attended with him.

Kerry viewed the junction at the Enterprise Centre on Frome Road, and provided two reasons for double yellow lines to be considered, to improve the safety at the uncontrolled crossing place from the Eastfield junction. This is the final item of the Highways agenda item this evening.

### **Grit bin**

The grit bin at the top of Cole Road is installed. Somerset Council have been notified that the bin is in place.

### **Abbey Ponds**

The clerk met with Sasha (Historic England) and Ross (Hauser and Wirth), and Ewan (as chair of the Abbey Ponds Working Group) on 15<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting was very positive and successful, with a few actions to be undertaken in the next few days

- Sasha has sent a Section 17 Management Agreement to be completed. I am in the process of looking at this with Ewan.
- The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that Hauser and Wirth have precise guidance of what maintenance regime can be actioned to ensure that annual maintenance can take place for the outpour pipe and immediate surrounding area.
- This agreement will have a duration of 5 years, and can be reviewed at that time.
- The maintenance frequency will be annually, but with scope to undertake additional maintenance if required.
- Hauser and Wirth will have a duty to notify the Town Council of the intention to undertake maintenance at this area (as per the prescribed guidance in the Section 17 Management Agreement).
- This Section 17 Management Agreement will form part of/be included in the Conservation Management Plan that Kings are seeking to cover the Scheduled Ancient Monument area as a whole.

The works already undertaken which fall under the Class 5 works, Schedule/Article 2(1) and (2) of The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1994:

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- Sasha has sent the Class 5 works notification, as previously confirmed, to cover flooding works.
- the additional works to clear the unstable, more modern material, is covered by the Class 5 works to alleviate the flooding and has been authorised.
- The bank is not safe at the height that it is at the moment, and Sasha has agreed that the works to reduce the height of the bank will reduce the risk of the material falling into the outpour water run and cause further blockage.
- Sasha recommended lightly raking the area to encourage vegetation growth to recover.
- The works should be with hand tools – manual digging – and not with machinery.

I understand from Ross that this work has taken place, by his team under his guidance. Ross has also notified both myself (Town Council) and Sasha (Historic England) of the background to the works that have taken place under the Class 5.

### **Riverside walk**

#### **Grounds maintenance**

Details of the winter works at Riverside Walk have been requested from Somerset Council. It is not clear whether the promised footpath and steps at the desire line created across one of the beds will now materialize, due to budget constraints.

#### **Footbridge**

The footbridge saga is still ongoing. As a result of the meeting the clerk attended on 13<sup>th</sup> October, the bridge was discussed at Somerset Council's Assets, and Rights of Way departments. There is a separate report of the outcome to this meeting, to be circulated.

### **Station Road Car Park**

#### **Tree works**

The car park will be closed on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 for a day, to allow tree works to be undertaken by SSE contractors, which will bring the tree canopy away from the powerlines. Works will include the large poplars, and some ash trees that are suffering from ash dieback.

There will be information signs for a period before hand to notify car park users, and possibly barriers to restrict car park access from Sunday evening (to be confirmed).

#### **Appearance of the Town/volunteer activity**

A team of volunteers (77rganized by One Planet Bruton) are due to weed key areas on 2<sup>nd</sup> December: Elliots Barton (due to the Christmas lights and the pathway to the grotto), and Packhorse Bridge.

Full Council 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Community Office**

**Electricity supply**

The electricity supply transfer is still ongoing!

**PAT Testing**

PAT testing is completed.

**Office lights**

The lighting in the both the Community and Information offices is now upgraded.

**Office sort out**

This took place on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Well done to Sam and Patrick, sterling work. There is still more work to be done, especially regarding document refiling and scanning those important items, but the space is great to work in, and it will be easier to hold planning meeting when required.

**Bruton Town Council**

**Internal auditor visit**

The first internal auditor visit for the 2023-24 financial year took place on 16<sup>th</sup> November, and the report is to be discussed later in the meeting.

**Outsourcing IT provision**

The clerk has contacted a local provider to discuss the Town Council IT requirements, and a quote has been received. This will be ongoing.

**Jubilee Park/pavilion/MUGA**

**Annual play area inspection**

The annual play area inspection has been booked to take place during November. The Clerk met with Cllr Fradley to conduct an inspection on 15<sup>th</sup> November, with feedback taking place at Town Committee last week.

**END OF APPENDIX 2**