

**Draft Minutes of Sutton Cheney Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 9th March 2023 at Whitemoors Antiques Tea Room, Mill Lane
Shenton, CV13 6BZ**

Parish Councillors Present: Andrew Copson (Chair), Peter Dyde (Vice Chair), Val Pritchard,
Simon Rees-Jones & Linda Mayne

In Attendance: 2 Members of the Public, Parish Clerk, Borough Councillor Jonathan Collet &
County Councillor Bertie Harrison-Rushton

26/23 1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation

27/23 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Ambrose Long and John Plant due to holiday. Parish Council
accepted these reasons for absence.

28/23 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY

No declarations of interests Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary were made.

29/23 4. PREVIOUS MINUTES

No corrections and no objections – Unanimous vote to agree minutes.

30/23 5. BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILOR REPORTS

Borough Councillor Jonathan Collet Reports (BCJC):

The main two big issues have not moved on:

1) Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council passed the budget at the last full council
meeting. Which will then go to scrutiny next week. BCJC explained that the budget
is not sustainable due to massive funds being released from contingency. This is
likely due to it being an election year, but this means that whoever is in charge next
year will likely have to cut several public services/funding. There are also some
concerns in regards to Cineworld, and the new Crematorium which would be a
revenue stream for HBBc as currently, most cremations are taking place in
Nuneaton, but due to ongoing flooding issues, work has stopped on the project.

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- 2) The local plan has been delayed until 2026, which will then means that the plan will run until 2031.
- 3) Ongoing issues with Shenton Motors – BCJC has sent several emails and copied in Charles Wollaston and several others into the email trial regarding the ongoing frustration with the retrospective planning application for a car valeting business. Several of the Councillors raised concerns in regard to the damage to the environment and lack of operating within the law.

ACTION – Clerk to email HBBC to confirm objection to this application.

AC raised his concerns with the information received via email about the lack of a council tax increase considering the likely deficit HBBC is facing.

JC explained that this is part of the problem and that a 6% increase all the way through would have gone a long way to help the financial situation but that was not done. Generally difficult decisions are not being made this year, likely due to it being an election year.

AC – Asked for Questions to BCJC

SRI – Asked how much contingency was released

JC – Three million pounds.

BCJC mentioned the PCIF grants and informed the council that only one of the applications has been granted.

AC explained that three applications had been submitted:

- 1) The slate plaques for the planters
- 2) The enhanced planting scheme in Sutton Cheney
- 3) The memorial bench and entranceway sign in Dadlington.

BCJC explained that the full committee would be meeting next Thursday but on the recommendation of Councillor Martin Cartwright the grants for the slate plaques on the planters and the memorial bench/gate entrance signs to Dadlington had been rejected. The application for the planting scheme in Sutton Cheney had been granted but at a lower amount than requested.

VP Stated that she was very unhappy with this decision as Councillor Cartwright suggested these projects himself. VP stated that she would be contacting Councillor Cartwright to express her dissatisfaction with the outcome of this grant process.

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AC Asked BCJC if he would be able to raise our concerns in the meeting.

BCJC explained that he would raise the Councils concerns but that he would need valid reasons for the objections.

ACTION – Clerk to email Councillor Collet with reasons behind applications.

BCJC explained that there is a scoring system, if the application scores under 50 they are rejected, but the scoring matrix is not available for anyone to see so it is not possible to see why a project was not granted.

ACTION – Clerk to express that the scoring matrix should be public knowledge in the appeals process.

AC Thanked our BCJC and introduced our County Councillor Bertie Harrison-Ruston (CCBHR)

AC Thanks the CCBHR for attending as we are aware of his busy schedule. AC also thanked CCBHR for releasing funds for various signage throughout the Parish last year and this year.

CCBHR raised the following points:

1) The rise in council tax – The 5% increase is really to preserve front-line services. Inflation has really damaged the budget and this is reflected in the increase.

2) Loss of bus services – The 159 has been removed from this area, which has a direct impact on the Parish, and as part of the review process, the Council are now reviewing all subsidies through a non-discriminatory policy throughout the Parishes. The number 6 bus that runs through Stoke Golding has a small subsidy and is also being considered. A few residents have been in touch to raise their concerns.

3) CCBHR Explained that he had spoken to Louise in regard to the Highways Fund and explained that it was half funded by the Parish and half by the fund. CCBHR apologized for the delays within the project but the administration side has taken far longer than expected. The funds were however now ready as soon as the Parish Council confirmed the work was done. It was also confirmed that the Highways Fund was not being renewed next year. CCBHR Confirmed that he is still trying to get funding for traffic calming measures within the Parish but this is proving difficult due to budget restrictions. Although he will continue to put pressure on to hopefully gain some funding at some point.

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ACTION – Clerk to implement the Parish Council installation of signs and request Highways Fund money for payment.

AC – informed the CCBHR that during previous meetings that Council agreed what calming measures would be requested within the Parish and the Clerk will be reviewing these documents and compiling them into one document for further reference.

ACTION – Clerk to compile traffic calming measures requested by the Parish Council and send them to County Council for reference.

4) informed the Parish Council of the Coronation Champions awards. Anyone can nominate a volunteer until the 2nd April 2023 and there will be 500 champions will be announced. So please nominate anyone who you think deserves a nomination.

The main point to take away is the budget. We are the most efficient Council but also the most underfunded which raised the point of what could be achieved if we were funded correctly.

AC-Questions for our CCBHR

SRJ – The number 6 bus- We did have the number 66 bus that served Daddington but that finished and now we are completely reliant on the number 6 bus. We as a Parish have a vested interest in keeping this service going. Is there anything that we can do to help prevent this service from being taken away?

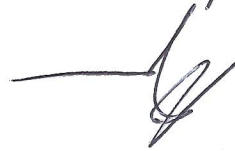
CCBHR – Riding the bus is the most effective way of saving it. It is a commercial service and if it is not being used then it is difficult to justify keeping it.

SRJ – Explained that he has tried to use the bus but that often it does not turn up.

CCBHR- The route is subsidized in a very small part by the Council and as it is a commercial ran service it is very difficult to dictate what will happen with this service.

SRJ – Raised concerns in regard to the new planning application for Roseway in Stoke Golding. Part of that application was that the development is on a good bus route. The general feeling is that these planning applications are granted and then the assisting services are either taken away or never delivered. The County Council have a responsibility to maintain rural bus services.

LM – Explained that one of the planning developers is actively using public transport access as a selling point to potential buyers.

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AC- Requested that the CCBHR raised the Roseway Development as a potential reason public transport in the area must be continued or advanced but not diminished

ACTION – Clerk to email CCBHR with concerns re the complete lack of public transport within the parish and the possible removal altogether of even the closest bus to the parish.

VP – Raised that the bus service is used by all ages and that many students need to use the bus service to get to school and college. If the buses were trimmed and used at vital times it would be better than removing them altogether.

CCBHR explain that while the budget is very tight, in some instances the budget has to be to prioritised for vulnerable children and adult and that does mean taking money from elsewhere.

LM – This is a rural parish and there are pockets where places are effective more than others. Is this a general cut within all rural parishes?

CCBHR – This is a general cut, as with rural parishes there are fewer people to ride the buses. As a commercially operated service with a small subsidy, we have little control over the decisions to cut.

AC Explained that the planning process seems to be disjointed between HBBC and LCC and often comments from Highways etc do not reflect the actual situation on the ground and seem untethered from reality. Is this something that BHR can look into?

CCBHR – I can take the comments away regards the number 6 bus and the new Roseway development.

LM – Suggested that there could be other routes to look at. There used to be a system called Fox Cubs that serviced the community on an ad hoc basis. Which worked really well. Is there something like that we could do?

CCBHR – explained that due to budget restraints he thinks it would be highly unlikely that they would fund a project such as this. There is a Fox Connect scheme but there has been some funding won by specific areas to fund these projects which is why they are able to run them.

AC – Conveyed the council's thanks to the team that dealt with the flooding in Sutton Cheney. They took time to speak to residents and really listened to what was needed and completed the work. This project has been ongoing for several years. The Parish felt very well supported by the team.

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6. CLERKS REPORT

31/23

The clerks report is attached to the minutes.

Agreed by council to look at current banking mandate and use Lynda Mane and Simon Rees-Jones as signatories as they were on the original mandate to allow the Council to add the Clerk onto the banking mandate.

7. FINANCE

32/23

7.a Financial statement for March 2023 spending £1080.10— Moved to closed session to discuss wage-related issues, as requested by PD

7. b Note the closing balance of £14,093.16 — adopted unanimously

7. c Discuss and consider payment for LCC payment for the 5-year lighting scheme.

The Clerk explained that there is an outstanding balance of £5242.40 for the Council's 5-year street lighting project. There has been a bill received for £1870.82 but since this has been received the previous Clerk has given VP an updated invoice which had been delivered since the February 2023 meeting.

VP — Explained that there has never been enough money in the budget, due to the lack of precept increase over previous years. The previous Clerk had withheld payment to LCC until the new financial year when the new precept payment is received. This makes the payment late but it is the only way it can be done as there is not enough money in the budget. The invoices are for 22/23 and should be paid in this financial year. At some point, a payment has been missed which is why we are behind. Next year should be the final year of the plan but we still have two payments to pay.

LM — Asked if the payment was budgeted for?

VP — Explained that it is budgeted for but it is for payment in arrears. We paid last April for the previous year so we are still a year behind. So this bill should be being paid now but there is no budget for it.

LM — Asked if there was anywhere we could take it from.

VP — Explained that the bank is very tight and that the hope was to get them through before the end of the financial year.

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LM – Asked if the closing balance is £14,093.16 then shouldn't there be enough in the budget to pay it.

VP – Explained that due to a lack of increase in the previous precept the Council needs to take approximately £7500 into the new financial year as the next financial years precept payments are not enough to cover all of the bills. The precept is approximately £20,000 and the bills are approximately £27,000, which is why some of this financial years budget needs to be carried over.

LM – Raised concerns that we should as a council be paying the bills in the financial year we are currently in, and what does this mean when we have our yearly audit?

AC – Agreed that the council should be concerned in regards to the Council's financial situation.

LM – Suggested that the full bill be paid.

VP- Explained that there is no money to pay the full bill during this financial year.

LM – Explained that the Council had already received the PCIF money for this project and this should be available to pay the bill. The concern is that these funds are not available.

AC – Agreed that as a Council we all agree that this money should have been budgeted for, but the fact that it has not been means that we need to find a solution to the problem now.

VP – Explained that we have not had the money to pay the bills and this is why we are in this situation now.

LM – Disagreed with this comment and re-confirmed that the Council have had this money and it should be available to pay this bill.

AC – Confirmed that when several more recent Councillors joined the Council there has never been a budget column with these funds ringfenced for this project to be paid within the year.

VP – Explained that in previous years there has never been any budget put aside for contingency which means that when these large bills come in we have no backup plan for paying them. Part of this issue is not increasing the precept for several years.

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LM – Explained that there are three payments on the invoice:

- 1) The maintenance cost of the lights
- 2) The upgrade of the lighting
- 3) The ongoing energy cost

All of these payments are to LCC.

AC – Summarized that this is the situation that the council are in, and there are amounts owing that need to be paid. These amounts have not been properly budgeted. Do we ask LCC if we can pay this in the new financial year. We could ask LCC if we can withhold payment until the new financial year?

PD – Explained that the financial committee have been dealing with these problems and that this is a new one. PD Suggested that the Clerk contact LCC and ask if we can make a small payment, perhaps 50% and then agree on a repayment plan moving forward.

Clerk – explained that as RFO these issues have to be ironed out. It is the RFO's responsibility to make sure the Council is operating in a legal way and within their own standing orders and financial regulations. All Councillors are volunteers but the Clerk is the person who holds legal responsibility for financial matters and making payments in arrears cannot continue.

Clerk – Suggested going back to LCC as PD has suggested previously to see what payment options can be available to the Council.

VP – Suggested that the Council wait and pay the full amount when the new financial year starts.

AC – Asked the Clerk to review the situation, inform LCC that we are aware of our obligations and responsibilities and see what solution we can look at moving forward.

On this basis, the item was deferred to April 2023 meeting

ACTION – Clerk to get a resolution to this situation for April 2023 meeting agenda.

33/23 9. COUNCIL MATTERS

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8.a – Consider the grounds maintenance contract for Geoff Cantwell.
Council reviewed the document and made one suggestion to change that the grass cuttings in St James Churchyard should be collected and not left.

ACTION – Clerk to make amendment and issue to Geoff Cantwell.

Voted on proposed contract – unanimous support
8.b - Request from John Whitehead to bring forward the first grass cut at St James Church to accommodate a visit from the Bishop on 18th March 2023. Obviously, weather permitted.

Voted on grass cutting for 14th March 2023 – unanimous support
SRJ – Requested that the cut for the Dadlington Green be made the week before the 6th May 2023 as there is a Coronation celebration taking place.

ACTION – Clerk to email Geoff Cantwell to book this in.

8.c- Community Speed watch. PD raised that he would like to request that the speed watch project be revisited and look at getting some volunteers to help with the scheme.

Voted on starting this project – unanimous support. Several Councillors said they were happy to help ask around for volunteers.

34/23 9. ELECTIONS

Clerk asked if everyone had received their election packs and understood all of the information within it?
All Councillors agreed they did.

VP – Asked if the packs had to be hand delivered individually?

SRJ – Explained that everyone needed to call HBBC to book an appointment slot to hand in their papers.

34/23 10. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Chairmans Signature:

Date: