ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held in the Jubilee Hall, Ashampstead on Monday 8th January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors R Fisken (Chair), A Dick (Vice Chair), R Butler, and G Light

In Attendance: Paul Thompson (outgoing Clerk), Jean Lindsell (incoming Clerk) and District Councillor Laura Coyle

1. **Introduction of new Clerk**
   Cllr Fisken welcomed Jean Lindsell the new Clerk to the Council with effect from 1st January 2024.

2. **Apologies:** District Councillor Coyle late arrival

3. **Declarations of interest:** None declared

4. **Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 6 November 2023**
   The Minutes were approved and duly signed by the Chair.

5. **Matters arising not covered in the Agenda:** None Raised

6. **District Councillor's Report –** deferred until arrival of Cllr Coyle

Cllr Coyle joined the meeting at 7.30pm.

Cllr Coyle advised the Secretary of State had blocked the proposal to withdraw the Local Plan but this would not impact Ashampstead.
Cllr Coyle reminded members of the Council that the various budget consultations closed on 11th January in particular the reduction of litter and dog waste bins and suggested there could be savings if parish councils joined together to negotiate new contracts which she would be happy to assist with.
Cllr Coyle confirmed she was escalating resolution to the pothole on Chapel Lane as this had still been under investigation since November.
Cllr Fisken requested better notification regarding road closures.
Clerk to forward road closures due to flooding information to all Councillors.

Cllr Coyle left the meeting 7.48pm

7. **Police Matters**
   Cllr Dick advised of the theft of 2 quad bikes where the barn doors had been forced on the roadside at Pyt House.
   Cllr Dick further advised he was researching prices for Wi-Fi/SIM enabled CCTV and SmartWater kits which could be purchased in bulk to attract economies of scale.

8. **Footpaths and Byways**
   Cllr Light advised nothing to report.

9. **Roads**
   Cllr Butler raised the continuing issue of flooding along Dog Lane.
   Clerk to report to WBC.

10. **Planning Applications**
    23/01790 - Long View, Burnt Hill: Enclose both existing porch canopy and car port and erect summer house.
    Approved by WBC
    23/01892/LBC - The Forge, Ashampstead Common: Air to air heat pump on the wall of annexe.
    Approved by WBC

11. Open Spaces Review

Fencing at the Greeen - Cllr Light advised he had received two further quotations both more competitive than the existing quote.
All members of the Council agreed to defer these works until April rather than potentially negatively impacting on the current budget and the costs were included in the draft 2024/25 budget.
Cllr Dick reminded the Council regarding underground services in the area where the fence would be installed in particular broadband but acknowledged the fencing contractor would be obliged to scan the area prior to commencing any works.
The Clerk (PT) advised SSE did not appear to have completed works as equipment was still in place at the gateway to Miles Field and when previously carrying out works had parked on the Green.
Clerk (JL) to follow up with SSE.

Playground - Cllr Light advised the play equipment inspection had been completed and the report had raised a number of issues all of which were low risk and would be addressed by ART.

12. Community Infrastructure Levy Utilisation

Proposed playground item - Cllr Light advised the ship was on order and manufacturing time was 8-12 weeks. Cllr Light added he was awaiting an update from Home Front regarding timescales and confirmed the climbing frame would be removed at the same time as installation of the ship and was included in the costs.
The Clerk (PT) confirmed the deposit paid had fully utilised all remaining CIL funds.

13. Emergency Planning Strategy

The Clerk (PT) advised Trudi Butcher had produced a strategy some considerable time ago and required review.
Cllr Dick advised he would be happy to carry out the review/update.

14. Parish Online

Cllr Dick suggested membership be continued as he considered this was a very valuable tool.
All members of the Council agreed to continue with the Council's membership.

15. Computer Matters

New Laptop – The Clerk (JL) suggested as the cost of laptops fluctuated so much that she advise the Council when a suitable laptop was found at the best price.
All members of the Council agreed.

Email Addresses – The Clerk (JL) suggested Council should consider having email addresses dedicated to conducting Council business with a domain name of .gov.uk or .org.uk rather than using personal addresses as this was strongly recommended by JPAG and would avoid any potential FOI and/or GDPR issues in the future
All members of the Council agreed.
Cllr Butler to progress this matter with the Council's website provider.

16. Finance

Financial Report – the Clerk (PT) presented the year to date report and advised the Council should be within budget at year end.

Payment Authorisations – The payments schedule was approved and signed by the Chair.

Donation Requests – It was agreed a donation of £50 be made to West Berkshire Countryside and £375 to West Berkshire Libraries.

2024/25 Budget and Precept – to approve the proposed 2024/25 Budget, Precept request and level of General Reserves.
The Clerk (JL) requested clarification regarding the exclusion of Donations (S137 Grants) and Contingency in the required expenditure calculation. The Clerk (PT) advised these were not considered as required as in the

event of a budget shortfall the Council was not obliged to make these funds available. The Clerk (JL) suggested Council might wish to consider increasing the Clerk's salary provision as for the last two years the LGA pay award had been approximately 7%. The Council felt the budgeted 3% increase was sufficient and if required Contingency funds were available.
The 2024/25 Budget was approved by all members of the Council and it was resolved to set the Precept request at £9000.
It was resolved 2024/25 General Reserves would be set at £7000.

Online Banking - All members of the Council resolved to move to online banking with dual authorisation for all payments. The Clerk (JL) to create payments and authorise but final release of payment only be made once authorised by a Councillor. It was further agreed two Councillors to have authorisation authority but not payment create authority and all other Councillors to have view only access to the account.
Cllr Dick and the Clerk (JL) to check online authority levels of with Lloyds to confirm the process the Council wishes to adopt.
Bank Mandate Variation to include removal of previous Councillors, change of Council address and telephone number.

17. Date of next meeting – 4th March 2024

18. Any other business (only for discussion) – none raised

19. The meeting closed at 9.03pm.

20. Parishioners' Question Time – no parishioners present.

Signed:	**Position:**	**Date:** **04/03/24**