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Councillors Email:

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Cllr. Caroline d'Ayala (Vice-Chair) - dayala@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. John Kershaw - kershaw@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Edwin Kilby - kilby@reedparishcouncil.co.uk
Cllr. Barbara Blower - blower@reedparishcouncil.co.uk

Minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2022 at 7.30pm held at Reed Village Hall.

Present Cllrs: K Langley (Chair), C d'Ayala (Vice Chair), J Kershaw, E Kilby and B Blower.

In attendance the Clerk Catharine Toms, County Cllr. F Hill and Dist. Cllr. G Morris.

This meeting would be recorded for the purpose of the minutes and on this occasion would be experimenting with a Zoom facility to allow members of the public to listen although with no ability to view or contribute to the meeting.

1.1.22 **Attendance.** As listed above.

2.1.22 **To receive apologies for absence.** Dist. Cllr. A Hunter. Apology accepted.

3.1.22 **To receive Members Declarations of Interest and to note dispensation granted.** Cllr. d'Ayala (item 14.1.22). Cllr. Kilby, for the remainder of his period of office, dispensation granted allowing him full participation at meetings in issues arising concerning The Cabinet public house including, but not limited to, planning matters.

4.1.22 **To approve the Minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council held on 3rd November 2021 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them as a true record.** It was proposed, seconded and all voted in favour to approve. Resolved. Approved minutes to be posted on the website.

Action: Clerk/Webmaster

5.1.22 **To agree budget for 2022/23 and associated Precept application to NHDC** – Further to detailed scrutiny of income and expenditure reports it had become clear that the Parish Council was finding it increasingly difficult to manage financially within the budget constraints of the current level of Precept at £5,150 and was continuing to erode reserves in order to meet the responsibilities of the Council. A draft budget for 2022/23 had been compiled which included putting some money aside for future renewal of play equipment, expenditure on maintenance of the two historic ponds, purchase of a community noticeboard and provision for

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possible election costs. Whilst it was regretted that an increase in Precept needed to be requested whilst the Country was still, two years on, in the midst of a Pandemic, it was recognised that some degree of increase was absolutely necessary. Having considered various options, it was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously by all to opt for an increase in Precept of £3,185.16 making the total Precept request £8,335.16. This would equate to a Band D property being charged £50.01 per annum for the Parish Council element of their Council Tax bill. This was an increase of £19.43 per annum (or 37p per week). Resolved. Clerk to submit request to North Herts District Council (NHDC). **Action: Clerk**

Although the increase in Precept would help cover some costs going forward, the Parish Council recognised and greatly appreciated the generosity of Parishioners who freely gave their time to help maintain the village by, for example, cutting trees and grass, helping to clear ponds and restoration of the village sign. It just proved what a good community existed in Reed. The Clerk to forward to all Councillors for their records, the final approved budget. **Action: Clerk**

It was agreed to compile a letter to all residents informing them about the decision to increase the Precept and the reasoning behind this. To be delivered to all households in advance of the arrival of the Council Tax bill for 2022/23. **Action: KL/Clerk**

Standing Orders were suspended to allow County Cllr. Hill to mention that small grants were still available from both Locality and Area Committee and that applications needed to be submitted as soon as possible for grant funding in the current financial year. It was acknowledged by the Parish Council that having more funds available through an increase in Precept would help with successful grant applications, as many grant awards were dependent on other funding being available to contribute towards a project.

6.1.22 **To invite Members of the Public to address the meeting.** No members of the public were present.

7.1.22 **To receive Chairman's Report.** (See Appendix A). Following writing to MP Sir Oliver Heald on the matter of surprise that water companies were not statutory consultees in the planning process. A reply had been received from Sir Oliver forwarding a response he had received from the Minister stating that although Utility companies were not statutory consultees, it was good practice is that there was proactive engagement by the Planning Authority with the Utility companies. The Planning Authority had some obligation to ensure that the Utility companies infrastructure investment plans took into consideration local development needs. The Clerk to forward letter to County Cllr. Hill. **Action: Clerk**

Forward letter from Minister and write to HAPTC to raise awareness of this issue to other Parish Councils. **Action: KL/EK**

Standing Orders were suspended.

8.1.22 **To receive report from District Councillor** – Cllr. Morris reported that the Inspector's report was still awaited following the last consultation on the NHDC Local Plan. In addition, the electoral cycle was changing. From 2024, local elections in North Herts would be conducted every four years in line with general elections, instead of the current regime of electing 'by thirds'.

9.1.22 **To receive report from County Councillor** – Cllr. Hill reported that the Speed Indicator Device (SID) warranty had been renewed for another 5 years and Herts County Council (HCC) were still looking at having

sockets in various places in order that it could be moved around. The school sign was now in place on the A10. Blacksmith's Lane drainage work was complete. Some siding out of the pavements had been completed on the west side from Buckland to Reed. It was acknowledged by the Parish Council that HCC had done a really good job, however, there was still work needed opposite the Silver Ball Café, by the bus stop (some work already carried out by residents) and from The Joint heading north. Cllr. Hill would schedule in these works. It was also reported that the Covid situation was still being monitored daily by HCC, The Herts Lynx on demand bus service had extended its hours over the festive period and it had been well used and greatly received. HCC were now in the process of agreeing their budget for 2022/23. Cllr. Hill was thanked for her report.

Standing Orders were resumed.

10.1.22 **To review action points from the meeting on 3rd November** – reviewed.

Action Points from this meeting (see Appendix B).

11.1.22 **To receive report from the Clerk on current financial position**

- A list of monies received and payments to be authorised had been previously circulated to all Cllrs. Accounts showed a bank balance of £19,143.17 of which, £10,133.35 was Push Energy Community Contribution (ring-fenced for special projects), £2,867.49 was Bonfire Night reserves, £815.75 was P3 grant balance, S106 Sustainable Transport Reserve was £1,079.62, leaving general reserves at £4,246.96.

The Clerk to contact the bank to set up online banking facility. **Action: Clerk**

12.1.22 **To agree accounts for payment.** Payments to be authorised at the meeting were Clerk's salary and PAYE. Proposed, seconded and approved by all. Resolved.

13.1.22 **To receive update on project to preserve ponds and agree any action required** – Cllr. Blower reported that some work had been carried out by volunteers on the Cart Pond. Nothing could be done on Pitties Pond as the water was currently too deep. She was going to informally approach someone who worked as an Environmentalist and see if they would make a visit and give some advice on the ponds. **Action: BB**

14.1.22 **Save The Cabinet – to receive update** – Cllr. Kilby reported that Environmental Health (EH) has issued a Prohibition Notice as a result of discovering that staff were living illegally in an outbuilding. This had been appealed and the result of this would soon be known. If the Appeal was dismissed then the Prohibition Notice would stand. It appeared that the barn was still being used although uncertain if usage was still residential. The offending kitchen flue had now been re-directed into a former smoking shelter. In Sept. EH had conducted a food hygiene inspection and the place had been awarded 1* out of 5*. This rating was due to be reassessed as ownership had now changed. A Freedom of Information request had been submitted to find out details of the new owner. No new planning applications had been submitted. There was one outstanding application, the others having been withdrawn. The situation remained irregular. There had been talk of a NHDC press release once the result of the Appeal was made public. Standing Orders were suspended to allow Dist. Cllr. Morris to speak. He suggested that a meeting was set up for Reed PC with Sir Oliver Heald MP and senior members of NHDC, including the CEO, Anthony Roache, to discuss matters relating to The Cabinet. Cllr. Kilby to produce a briefing note ahead of the meeting. **Action: EK**

Standing Orders were resumed.

15.1.22 **Wisbridge Reservoir Project – to receive update** – No update to report.

16.1.22 **To receive bi-monthly Parish Council play area inspection report and Annual NHDC inspection report agree any repairs required** – Cllr. Kershaw had indicated that there was no change from the previous inspections to report and thanks were given to those who had helped to clear the collapsed adventure trail. It was noted that the loose stepping-stones were now firm again. A team would apply preservative to some items, including the picnic table. **Action: JK**

17.1.22 **To discuss renewed concern raised by Parishioner regarding usage of footpaths used by cyclists and agree action required** – an ongoing complaint was being received from a Parishioner regarding the public footpath between Reed and Buckland (Reed 20). After discussion it was agreed to request that the complainant kept a diary detailing occasions of usage by cyclists, as it was an act of trespass against the landowner. **Action: CD.**

If evidence indicated that cyclists were causing a significant nuisance then the Parish Council would consider spending some S106 money on installation of 'No Cyclists' signage at either end of the footpath. The situation to be reviewed at the March meeting.

It was mentioned that the path (Reed 7) leading out from the back of the Churchyard was very muddy and hazardous where it dipped down at the far side of the field. The Clerk to report this to HCC Rights of Way Officer and request some surface repair. **Action: Clerk**

18.1.22 **To review and agree proposed Contractor Service Agreement for grass cutting on the Green** – Draft Service agreement had been circulated prior to the meeting. There was now the need to get this finalised. **Action: CD/Clerk**

19.1.22 **Push Energy Fund Projects** – no update to report.

20.1.22 **Adoption of the NHDC Local Plan** – Concern was raised that whilst the emerging NHDC Local Plan had not yet been finalised, with the report from the Inspector still awaited and therefore adoption by Full Council delayed, there was still a possibility that it would not get voted through. Should that happen, it would leave Reed very vulnerable to predatory planning applications being approved.

21.1.22 **To receive matters for report or referral to next agenda. (Information only)** Village sign maintenance, Ponds protection project, Play equipment project and grant funding, Community noticeboard / Push Energy fund expenditure, Highways verges, grass cutting in play area. NHDC Local Plan. Queen's Jubilee celebrations. Clerk to contact village organisations to see what their plans/ideas might be for the Jubilee. **Action: Clerk**

22.1.22 **To note correspondence received. (Information only)** – Letter received from someone interested in purchasing a couple of plots on land off The Joint/A10 to build a day nursery. A response would be put together to warn that the Parish Council would not be supportive of a planning application due to problematic access and the fact that the site was not one of those included within the emerging Local Plan. **Action: KL**

23.1.22 **To agree date of next meeting.** Weds 2nd March 2022. Agreed. The Clerk to book the Village Hall. **Action: Clerk**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.54pm.