**SALT & ENSON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Meeting Held Wednesday 5th March 2025**

**at Salt Village Hall, Salt at 7.30 pm**

The meeting began at 7.30 p.m.

**Public Open Forum** – One member of the public attended.

No issues were raised by this person.

**Jonathan Price Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) County Councillor for Stafford North took the opportunity to address the meeting.**

* He advised he was seeking election as our new prospective local County Councillor, because the present incumbent, County Councillor Jon Francis, is to stand down because of ill health.
* He further briefed the meeting in detail on the Governments Devolution of Local Government proposals.

Staffordshire County Council has published Cabinet papers that outline proposals for how councils across Staffordshire might be organised in the future. This is in response to the Government’s plans, which have been set out in their English Devolution White Paper.

It is proposed to create a new Mayoral Strategic Authority to cover the whole county, including Stoke-on-Trent. Then, following this, a new Staffordshire unitary council would be created to provide services in areas currently run jointly by the County Council and Staffordshire’s District and Borough councils.

It is hoped this would unlock extra powers and funding from Westminster to boost our local economy further, and set the new unitary council up for success by building on a strong foundation. Councils which are financially stable and able to invest in their communities would ensure that people who depend on vital services like social care continue to get what they need without unnecessary disruption.

The proposals are far reaching, complex and far from agreed at this juncture, but it is clear with the removal of the tier of Borough Councils there will be a significant impact on the work of Parish Councils.

Outline proposals are due to be submitted to government by 21 March.

County Councillor Price was thanked for the detailed update.

1. **Attendees and Apologies**

Attendees: Chair - Barbara Clancy

Councillors R Walls, J Starr, C Beardmore , JD Scott , N Tonks, I Wimshurst

Jonathan Price Cabinet Member For Education (and SEND)County Councillor for Stafford North

Stafford Borough Councillor Marnie Phillips

Clerk DW Croxford

Apologies – Stafford Borough Councillor Karine Aspin

The meeting was quorate.

1. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests relating to items on the agenda**

None declared.

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1. **Minutes of the meetings held on 8th January 2025**

These were agreed as a true and correct record by all present.

**4. Matters arising from those minutes**

None arisen, albeit is noted that a decision from Stafford Borough Council Planning Office is yet to be made on the application 24/38837/LDC Brick Kiln Lane. An extension of time to 31 January 2025 was previously granted.

**5 .Planning**

No applications received at date of publication of Agenda

**6. Reports**

* Report from County Councillor John Francis – no report received.
* Report from Borough Councillor Frances Beatty / Karine Aspin – no reports received.
* Report from Village Hall Management Committee – Councillor Clancy advised that a quotation for repairs to parts of the roof and ceiling areas of the village hall had been received from a local builder in the total sum of £2,388. In response to a request to the Parish Council for financial support towards this work, the meeting recommended the VHMC return to the May Parish Council meeting with a second quotation, for comparison, when the matter would be considered again.

**7. To receive Financial Statement and Clerks report**

i) To approve financial payments, receipts and transfers.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Paid prior to the meeting** | |  |  |  |  |
| **Paid To** | **Details** | **Amt** | **VAT** | **Total to pay** | |
| Stafford Borough Council | Civic Amenity Skip Visits (3) 2025 | £407.50 | £81.50 | 489.00 |  |
| Rose Harrison | Plants for villager planter | £20.00 |  | 20.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  | 0.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  | 0.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  | 0.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** | |  |  | 509.00 |  |
| **To be Paid** | |  |  |  |  |
| Salt VHMC - PC Room hire | Nov, 24, Jan 25, March 25 - 9 hrs @ £10 ph | £90.00 |  | 90.00 |  |
| Clerk D Croxford | GROSS Salary 1 Jan - 31 Mar 2025 | £901.68 |  | 901.68 |  |
| HMRC | Paye re above |  |  | 0.00 |  |
| Clerk D Croxford | Expenses 1 Mar - 31 Mar 2025 | £88.20 |  | 88.20 |  |
| GD Bryan Builder | Installation of new noticeboard | £170.00 |  | 170.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  | 0.00 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 1,249.88 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **TOTAL** |  |  | 1,758.88 |  |

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These were approved by all present.

ii) The clerk had circulated the **financial statement** and **bank reconciliation** reports and both were approved by all present.

iii) To consider **donations to village organisations**

Following the January Parish Council meeting when it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to make the following Donations:

£400 to Salt Friendship Club

£200 to Mid Trent Churches (Compass Magazine)

*Clerk is now able to make the payments following receipt of VAT refund. Last Minutes refer.*

iv) To consider **Earmarked Reserves for 2024/2025**

Clerk advised the current position is as follows. Funds are held in the separate reserve Bank account.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RESERVES February 2025** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Purpose of Reserve |  | Amount Held at 31/03/2024 | | |  |
| General Funds Reserve |  | £8,100 |  |  |  |
| Cost of Elections Fund |  | £5,500 |  |  |  |
| Computer/Printer (over 5 years) |  | £580 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | |
|  |  |  |  |  | |
| Probable Donation to St James Church Salt |  | £1,000 | Added 3/24 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | |
|  |  | £15,180 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

It was considered prudent to increase the Cost of Elections Fund by £500

and the Computer/Printer fund by £40.

*Clerk to transfer £540 from the current account to the reserve account.*

v) To consider **changing Bankers to NatWest.**

NatWest have now confirmed that they are unable to offer the Parish Council free Banking should the Parish Council transfer from Lloyds Bank. Further it is noted that NatWest is closing its branch premises in Stafford.

Noting there are no practical free banking offerings in the Parish Council sector now from any High Street Bank, it was agreed the Salt and Enson Parish Council would remain banking with Lloyds. The cost of bank charges going forwards is estimated to be approx £100 to £130 per annum.

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**vi) To consider purchase of new Lap Top for Clerk**

The current lap top was purchased for £234 in September 2015. It is thus almost ten years old, slow and has had a few reliability issues.

It was agreed the purchase of a new lap top at a max cost of c £500 (ex VAT) would be supported if the Clerk deemed it necessary. There are funds held in Reserve for this.

**8. To discuss Highways issues and note any requiring reporting**

* Issues following the meeting with the Highways Officer to Salt village on Wednesday 26th February 2025 at 11 a.m.

A productive meeting took place at Skeath Farm with the Clerk, Parish Councillors Scott and Beardmore, Community Highways Officer Paula Lees, and three local landowners whose land is adjacent to Salt Lane and Salt Road.

The downhill runoff from Babs Covert across, onto, and down the surface of **Salt Lane** has largely been contained, and controlled, as a result of Highways clearing the ditch alongside the lane to the junction with Salt Road and by additionally installing an underground pipe from where the water exits Babs Covert, directing it under, and across, Salt Lane into the freshly excavated ditch.

Attention turned to **Salt Road** where two underground pipes (an original and later larger diameter one) are not coping with the brook running down into Salt Village, and the general run off from the fields to the south of Salt Road. The diameter of the pipes is insufficient, and often clogged with detritus. Water overflows here over and down Salt Road.

Exacerbating the flooding issues here are the ditches running along the edge, and to the north of, Salt Road which need excavating so the run off, and brook, have unimpeded flow across paddocks towards Trentfield Lane.

The question of safety and responsibilities for private landowners to do this work was discussed and was agreed work cannot safely be undertaken by the private landowners without the full involvement of Highways. Specifically by Highways establishing there are no underground utilities in situ, and by closing Salt Road whilst the work is undertaken.

Paula agreed to present a case to Highways for a single, larger diameter pipe to cross under Salt Road replacing the two smaller ones, and during installation ensure Salt Road is closed from the junction of Salt Lane to the perimeter of village housing, eastwards along the lane. Prior to this work being undertaken Highways would need to complete their normal comprehensive due diligence to confirm there are no underground utilities in the vicinity.

As work progresses with this under the road closure, local landowners could safely under the closure restrictions, and safe in the knowledge there were no identified utilities in situ, concurrently excavate and clear the ditches along Salt Road so that a much improved drainage solution of pipe and ditches would be achieved together.

The brook, and run off, would then continue unimpeded across paddocks to exit into the ditch along **Trentfield Lane**, and finally north easterly across the lane beyond Clover Croft House / Salt Hall Farm towards the Trent. The condition and performance of the ditch and pipe work along Trentfield Lane was considered acceptable at this juncture.

Paula was thanked for her engagement and commitment by the Councillors and Clerk, as were the three landowners present.

Paula agreed to progress matters as quickly as resource and budgets allow and to keep the Parish Council advised as to progress via the Clerk.

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**9. To review correspondence received and consider items of business for the next meeting.**

* **Civic Amenity Skip date scheduled 22 March** 10.30-12.30. March at Village Hall Car Park.
* **Mowing and Strimming 2025**. The existing, long standing and local contractor has submitted the proposed programme and costs for 2025 season. The Contractor also provided up to date insurance certificates for Employers Liability and Public Liability. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept the programme as follows at the price of £500 + VAT. (10 cuts of Village Green @ £7.50 / 10 strims of Casey bench @ £7.50 / 14 cuts of verge adjacent Hunters Court @ £25 = £500 +VAT). *Clerk to advise contractor of Council’s acceptance and make payment after 1st April 2025.*
* All other items of note had been circulated to all prior to the meeting.

**10. To inform attendees of dates of future meetings**

Dates of future meetings at Salt Village Hall during **2025** as follows: Wednesdays at 7.30pm.

**EXCEPT 7 May (Annuals) 7.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m**.

2 July, 3 Sept, 5 Nov

**11. Meeting closed at 20.30 hrs**

Signed .......................................... .........................................

Chair Cncllr B Clancy Clerk DWCroxford

Date...................................

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