

All minutes are draft until ratified by the Committee at the next meeting

Marchwood Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Marchwood Village Hall on Monday 29 April 2024 commencing at 7.00pm.

Present: Marchwood Parish Councillors, District Councillor R Young, Hampshire County Councillor David Harrison and 3 members of the public. Cllr John Case – In the Chair

Also in attendance: T Dudley, Parish Clerk, C Cockeram, Deputy Parish Clerk.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 March 2023:

The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 27 March 2023, were approved.

Introduction PC Natham Grimley

PC Grimley introduced himself to the meeting. He explained the local bobby was a new initiative that was in its early days however, it was going well.

Local problems were discussed and Natham provided his contact details should any residents want to contact him.

Annual report Chairman of the Council

The Chairman of the Parish Council presented his report:

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the 2024 Marchwood Annual Parish Meeting.

The year 2023 was challenging for the Parish Council, resulting in the difficult decision of raising the precept much higher than we wanted for 2024-25.

I know we all value our green and open spaces; after all, it is one of Marchwood's finest characteristics, making it a great place to live.

Unfortunately, protecting and enhancing our local environment and promoting participation, good management and efficiency whilst supporting our local community and maintaining the Parish for the benefit of all residents comes with an unavoidable cost. Therefore, providing some background on how the Parish Council makes decisions regarding the precept is required.

We were required to submit our 2024-25 precept (budget) to the New Forest District Council (NFDC) by 31 January 2024. This is a statutory requirement.

The budget planning process begins in October, with all committees reviewing the existing budget and planning expenditures for the forthcoming year. We cannot foresee what will happen with inflation or plan for the unexpected. We do plan prudently for what we believe our expenditure will be.

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Some parishioners may not be aware that the Council manages approximately 80 acres of open space throughout the village. The Parish Council has over a thousand trees that must be inspected and maintained yearly.

For example, when planning the budget for 2023-24, there was £10,000 in the tree budget; the actual expenditure before year-end is £19,769, with additional work being required. However, the Parish Council delayed the non-urgent work needed to alleviate further budget overspending.

Insurers require that we have an inspection regime for all our trees. We do that on a four-yearly cycle with trees categorised as red (immediate works), amber (scheduled works) and green (needs work but not urgently).

Due to the severe weather resulting in increased work and increasing costs to ensure we comply with our legal liabilities, we set aside £20,000 in the 2024-25 budget for expected expenditure.

We also provide five play parks for various ages and a Skate Park at Cork Field. These facilities are also inspected annually, and our anticipated expenditure is aligned with our forecasts.

Vehicle repairs and maintenance also overran the planned budget, and our insurance did not forecast enough of a rise when preparing the 2023-24 budget. For example, there was unexpected expenditure on repairs and maintenance to the Lloyd Pavilion.

There will always be variations in the budget, but we have measures to ensure we review and evaluate our expenditures regularly. Unfortunately, we have encountered more expenditures than anticipated. Our electricity, gas, and water charges have all exceeded inflation.

The Parish Council recently received correspondence from NFDC stating that the rubbish collection will increase from £600 to £2,450, an unexpected higher increase than we would have forecasted. A similar significant increase in tree work was also notified to us after we had agreed on our 2024-25 budget.

These increases have necessitated engaging with new service providers to ensure we maintain quality service at a more competitive price.

Since the unlawful encampment, the Parish Council has had to strengthen our security measures and apologise for the inconvenience of some of the security measures we had to enforce at short notice.

It was also bitterly disappointing that the Annual Village Fete had to be cancelled due to the unlawful intrusion of the Lloyd Recreation Ground.

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Fortunately, due to the diligent and hard work of Tina Dudley, our Clerk, and her staff, the Parish Council could evict the 'travellers' from the recreation ground. Despite claims that this was a victimless crime, it has cost the Parish Council £3,000.

As sole trustees of the Lloyd Recreation Ground, the Council maintains the Pavilion, sports facilities, and open space.

We recently undertook the scheduled valuation of the Pavilion as part of our risk management and Insurance strategy. Our insurers and risk assessors concluded that the Parish Council is substantially underinsuring the Pavilion.

We have no choice but to correct this situation.

Our current (pre-renewal) sum insured was £650,000, but the recommended reinstatement sum insured has risen to a staggering £1,594,662.

The sum assured includes the actual rebuild cost for insurance purposes, including the architect's fees and site clearance before the rebuild.

The Policy and Resources Committee continues to diligently monitor the Council's finances and procedures to ensure transparency, good housekeeping and best value for using the Council's financial resources.

I assure you that councillors do not take the decision lightly when raising the precept. Careful consideration and analysis of all expenditures are undertaken at every Policy and Resources Committee, with our expenditure and income published on the Council's website before the meeting.

Residents are welcome to attend any of our Council and Committee meetings to discuss items on the agenda and have your say.

We are currently reviewing ways to increase our income and reduce our expenditure. We recently applied for a grant to install solar panels on the Pavilion at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, which will allow us to change the lighting from Halogen to LED to reduce our energy expenditure.

Unfortunately, our bid was unsuccessful, but we will remain actively engaged in finding alternative sources of income to support such innovation. This example is one of many exciting projects that will lead to savings and increase revenue streams.

We are installing drinks and snack facilities at the Lloyd Recreation Ground to provide income and enhance the facilities available to visitors and residents.

The Marchwood Mens Shed has worked with us by building several picnic benches for parishioners to enjoy the recreational facilities at Lloyd Recreation Ground.

The Amenities Committee has worked hard to enhance the village's local nature and conservation areas.

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I wish to thank our committed team of Landscape and Groundworkers who, once again, kept our open spaces clean and well-maintained.

Crooked Hayes Corpses ancient woodland flourished this year with native bluebells and other wildflowers.

In a few weeks, work will begin on a new footpath that will be a real asset to the village. It will run alongside the military fence in Normandy Way from Cracknore Hard Lane to near the entrance to Autumn Road. This path will make walking through the village safer.

Thanks to a grant we have received, work will soon start enhancing several features on the land we own near the village centre. These include the Falklands Memorial, Millennium Memorial and the grassed area on the corner of Main Road and Oakland Drive. In the latter area, we are currently engaged with the owner to transfer ownership.

As some of you might have noticed, we have been busy developing and enhancing our Parish Website, making it more visually appealing and informative and helping parishioners keep up to date on local activities that may affect them in their daily lives.

We are raising awareness through our Community Page on the Parish Website.

I am happy to announce that the Lloyd Recreation Ground will host another Party in the Park again on Saturday, 24 August 2024. The headline act will be Miami Wave, a crowd favourite at our last Party in the Park.

On 8 June, we gathered at our Falklands Memorial to pay our respects to those killed on board the Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram, who were attacked by Argentine fighter jets on 8 June 1982.

As always, we were pleased that Capt Philip Roberts, the captain of Sir Galahad at the time, veterans and their families could attend the ceremony.

Little did we know that just a few days later, we were to learn of the passing of John 'Sid' Kempton, who sadly passed on 29 June 2023. John, or Sid as he was known to his friends, was one of the many people who worked with the Marchwood Parish Council to create a lasting memorial for those who sadly lost their lives and remember all those who served their country in the South Atlantic.

It was Sid that helped to get that immense Falkland Island Rock back to Marchwood. Our honoured guests wanted me to thank our village and the Village's Landscape Team, who tirelessly maintain the memorial to their fallen comrades. I hope they can enjoy our enhancements the next time they visit us on Saturday, 8 June 2024.

This year sees the 80th anniversary of D-Day, and the Parish Council will lay a wreath on Thursday, 6 June, on behalf of us all to give thanks and praise to the many young men and women who gave so much to ensure we have the freedoms we enjoy today.

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We will publish full details of both events on our website, noticeboards and social media. Last autumn, with the assistance of local children, their parents and grandparents saw the planting of 4,000 crocus corms in aid of Hythe & Waterside Rotary's Purple4Polio campaign to end polio now and forever.

The event helped raise several hundred pounds for this worthy cause.

One of the first projects the Marchwood Mens Shed commenced was working with the village school children to build several bird boxes to be located throughout the village. These colourful birdboxes are now home to many birds.

This is another example of how we can get involved in village life.

Although the Village Traders cannot hold their annual Christmas event, I am pleased to inform you that the Parish Council will be organising a Christmas Market & Fayre on Tuesday, 3 December, and preparations are already underway.

The Village Centre Landlord has permitted us to provide an illuminated Christmas Tree and stalls. Our colleagues who manage the Village Hall will also be involved, giving us further opportunities to enhance the event.

We are engaging with various community groups and organisations to ensure it is a wonderful and enjoyable start to the festive season.

This project will be a regular agenda item for the Amenities Committee to ensure oversight and financial control.

We intend for an annual Christmas Market & Fayre to become a regular feature in village life that will be self-sufficient and sustainable for many years.

We will publish full details on our website, noticeboards and social media.

We are raising awareness through our Community Pages, and I am pleased to introduce the Marchwood Hedgehog Watch. Sadly, the UK's favourite spiky little mammal is in severe decline. While it is challenging to monitor hedgehog numbers accurately, it is believed they could be down by over half in rural areas and a third in urban areas since 2000.

You can help hedgehogs by setting up a safe retreat or creating a hedgehog house in your garden and providing some hedgehog-friendly food and water. Ensure your garden is attractive to hedgehogs by leaving compost heaps, overgrown areas, and log piles as they are. Then, wait for these cute critters to visit you!

Better still, why not pop along to their Hedgehog Awareness Day to find out more and see the opening of a Nature Garden showcasing what we can do to help give nature a helping hand?

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The Hedgehog Awareness Day is on Saturday, 11 May, at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, from 10 am to 2 pm.

Another date for your diary is Saturday, 15 June, at the Lloyd Recreation Ground, when the Marchwood Arty-Crafty Group will host "Art in the Park".

It promises to be a fun day, allowing our talented local amateur artists to showcase their work - the Marchwood WI will supply refreshments. It might even inspire you to take up a new hobby.

The Parish Council is delighted with the enthusiasm of community groups working on projects to benefit residents.

We thank the community volunteers for the litter-picking events undertaken this year. The litter-pickers picked up a tremendous amount of litter and disposed of it, making our streets a cleaner, greener place to live and enjoy.

The Planning Committee has and will continue to monitor any comments or concerns raised by our parishioners on planning applications within the Parish. We will listen to the concerns of parishioners so that we may be their voice within the District and County Councils.

The Parish Council would like to thank the Waterside Community Fund (formerly known as the Dibden Allotment Fund) for supporting individuals and organisations in the Parish. Also, we wish to thank and congratulate the Handy Trust for the organisation's work and their staff's dedication to providing youth support throughout the year within the Parish. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and staff for their dedication, professionalism, help, support and hard work throughout these challenging times.

Matters raised by the electors of the Parish -

Residents raised concerns with regard to recent flood issues that had caused distress and damage to homes.

A resident raised issues with residing next to SFC grounds at Staplewood including noise from the gym, irrigation issues leading to ground saturation of his property and noise from ground maintenance plant equipment.

Following a detailed discussion the Chair agreed to make enquiries and raise the issues with relevant parties.

The meeting closed at 8.37pm