

**Minutes of a meeting of Sunninghill & Ascot Parish Council**  
**Held in the King Edward VII Meeting Room, Ascot Racecourse, SL5 7JX**  
**On Tuesday 10 January 2023 at 7.00pm**

Members present: B Hilton (Acting Chairman), L Davison West, P Deason, R Ellison, J Gripton, C Herring, C Lester, C Richardson, C Roberts, B Story, S Verma and R Wood.

In attendance: Genevieve Gosling and David Sanders, members of the public; Helen Goodwin, Clerk to the Parish Council.

**8364 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Sharpe. Cllr P Carter was absent.

**8365 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The chairman asked to receive any Declarations of Interest in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct. None were received.

**8366 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December were approved as a correct record and signed as such.

**8367 FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The acting chairman advised the council that:

- This morning councillors Deason, Hilton and Sharpe, along with the clerk, met with Martin Denny, manager of the Old Court arts centre in Windsor, to discuss the plans for the community centre proposed as part of planning application 22/01971. Martin's opinion was that it would be unviable as currently proposed due to the ceiling height in the theatre area, the fact that there are apartments above the theatre which would mean noise issues, and the small space given to the café.
- This afternoon four councillors and the clerk met with Andrew Durrant and Jesal Dhokia of Place Services at RBWM regarding the application for the development of Ascot and the community building itself. Andrew and Jesal noted the points made and the concerns expressed by the parish councillors and the clerk and advised that they would be meeting with London Square and with the planners at some point in the next three weeks, following which they will meet with us again.

**8368 PUBLIC ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was not adjourned.

**8369 PRESENTATION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 December were presented by Cllr R Wood. He highlighted application 22/03225, approval to change office space above the High Street into flats; the committee objected strongly. Cllr Wood also noted that Rex bakery is open and trading, despite the fact that they haven't yet had planning permission for the conversion into a bakery. The borough is aware.

**8370 BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2023/24**

Cllr Wood set out the background and reminded the council that, at the December meeting, all planned expenditure for 2023/24 was sanctioned with no cuts, but that it had been agreed that £30,000, the budgeted amount for a new toddler facility, be taken out of the budget for the Victory Field refurbishment as this facility qualifies for CIL funding.

Cllr Wood showed the current inflation forecasts for the next five years. He explained that over the last few years reserves have been gradually eaten into due to large capital expense. It is necessary, therefore, to make sure that over time enough capital is built up to cover capital costs. This amounts to approximately £250,000 for replacing equipment, equal to £50,000 pa over five years. He set out a rolling five-year programme to put £50,000 back into reserves each year, to be funded by increasing the precept each year by 12.5% plus inflation, which would put the council back into a much stronger position than currently. In 2023/24 this would mean a precept increase of 21.6%.

The proposals were put to the council:

- To transfer 93,000 out of earmarked reserves (South Ascot) to free reserves;
- To increase the 2023/24 precept to £260,360.19, which equates to £38.87 per band D property.

These proposals were agreed unanimously by the council by show of hands.

Cllr P Deason commented that the plans for Victory Field, as well as the cow pond at Tom Green's Field, are not fully developed and he requested that the plans come back to the full council for final agreement, showing the definitive objective and cost, before any work is commissioned.

### **8371 PLANNING APPLICATION 22/01971**

Cllr P Deason and Cllr R Wood had prepared a paper in response to the amended planning application, which has already been made available for councillors to review, and Cllr Deason summarised the concerns regarding the application, commenting that there has been very little change in terms of numbers of dwellings from the original.

He explained the reasons that he and Cllr Wood are very concerned about the proposed development, which include:

- The development is very much aimed at racegoers and visitors rather than residents;
- there is overdevelopment in terms of residential dwellings and that the four-bed houses are only 4m wide and 17m deep, which is very small;
- the apartments have only marginally more space than the national minimum standard;
- some of the parking is 50m from the houses;
- the bins are often stored at the end of narrow alleyways 30m from the houses.

Cllrs Deason and Wood are of the opinion that there are many things at fault and, if it goes ahead as planned, it will be a disaster for Ascot and a complete whitewash of the community vision.

In terms of the community building, Cllr Deason spoke about the meeting with Martin Denny at the Old Court in Windsor, which is the type of facility we were hoping for but which is a much bigger facility than that currently proposed for Ascot. The proposed development offers 168 sq m for the council office and meeting room, and 323 sq m for the arts space. There is also only a very small area planned for the village square, thus watering down the facilities we would have control over.

There is no information at this stage about the lease or a business plan and it is not known who will own and/or manage the facility. There are also concerns about what is being envisaged inside the building in terms of the auditorium and café area. Martin Denny explained that, as it is currently proposed, the building isn't fit for purpose as the theatre ceiling is too low and the café is too small. The parish office entrance is via a narrow alleyway and up in a lift to the first floor – not ideal for the staff or councillors visiting, particularly in the winter for evening meetings. The large meeting room is only accessible through the parish office which means it wouldn't be possible to let it out to other users.

The above points were all put to Andrew Durrant at the Teams meeting earlier today; he will be meeting with the RBWM planners and will then come back to the parish council.

The parish council felt that the planning application should be rejected out of hand. The Proposal as set out in the backing paper, to give authority to Cllrs Deason and Wood to submit the response as put to the council, was agreed unanimously by show of hands.

Cllr J Gripton asked if he could add a letter which he has composed and would like to send to RBWM from the council; it was agreed that he should supply the letter to the clerk who will circulate it to the full council for their agreement to send it to the borough along with the responses as prepared.

### **8372 ELECTIONS**

The clerk gave a presentation setting out the procedures for the forthcoming local elections and explaining that nomination papers would need to be submitted to the Elections Officer at RBWM by 04 April. The publication of Statement of Persons Nominated will be on 05 April and councillors officially step down/take their seats on 08 May.

### **8373 SOLICITOR FEES**

The clerk explained the requirement for the proposal to fund further solicitor fees in respect of the Village Green application for land at Coombe Lane. There have been a number of objections and Cllrs Hilton, Sharpe and Story, along with council officer Maryann Morgan, studied the objections and have commented on them. It is their opinion that there is a strong case for continuing to pursue the Village Green application.

In view of the fact that the Sunninghill Trust has now served notice on the parish council with respect to the playing field at South Ascot, the council will need to instruct a solicitor to advise on how to respond and may require further advice in the future on this.

The proposals were to:

1. Continue with the Village Green Application by agreeing to fund the legal costs amounting to between £3000 and £3500;
2. Fund a site visit by the solicitor for the Village Green Application at a cost of £2500;
3. Engage Birketts solicitors to deal with legal work required for the South Ascot Recreation Ground Lease.

All these proposals were agreed unanimously by show of hands.

### **8374 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**

Plans for the forthcoming Annual Assembly were discussed and it was agreed to keep to the same format as last year in terms of visiting speakers, with the exception of the Green Corridor Project which is not relevant this year, and the RBWM Community Warden as we no longer have a Warden dedicated to Ascot. Cllr C Richardson asked to be given the opportunity to speak about the Cycling & Walking Working Group.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

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Cllr B Hilton, Vice-Chairman