

CAM PARISH COUNCIL,

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ON 5th APRIL 2017 AT 6.30PM IN THE PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE

PRESENT:

Cllrs B Whatling (Chair), M Clifton, T Grocutt, T Bouttle, J Bishop, S Angell, M Grimshaw, J Aldridge, T Carter, B Tipper, B Poskett, J Sherman, J Douglass

APOLOGIES: Cllr F Dowsing

IN ATTENDANCE: District Cllrs Denney and Tomblin, 2 members of the public, 1 member of the Press, A Durn (Clerk)

16.285 To Receive and Accept Apologies for absence.

Apologies were noted and accepted.

16.286 To Receive Declarations of Interest and any requests for dispensations

None declared

16.287 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman gave the following report:

I have this month attended the following Council meetings

Full council on the 1st Mar

A CIL meeting at Ebley on the 7th Mar

Planning and highways 8th

Recreation and Leisure on the 15th,

Play review at Woodfield's school on the 22nd.

A s106 meeting on the 27th

Police panel meeting on the 27th

An extra ordinary meeting on Wednesday 29th

The F&GP meeting on the wed 29th

I have attended several additional office meetings and discussions in respect to concerns of this Council and in the preparation for the above items

16.288 To consider changes to order of business

None received

16.289 To receive any questions, statements or submissions from members of the public in attendance

A member of the public raised his concerns on the level of precept over the last 5 years. He asked several questions to which he requested a response. His concerns and questions are attached to the Minutes. There was a lengthy discussion between councillors and the parishioner on his concerns.

16.290 To discuss the queries raised on the parish precept and agree actions

The parishioner felt that his concerns were dealt with and he would wait for a response from the Clerk to his questions.

16.291 To approve and sign Minutes of the Full Council meetings on 1st March 2017 as a true and correct record

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes. The Minutes were signed by the Chair.

16.292 To note matters arising from the Minutes and not covered by agenda items, for information only

An update was requested on the mitigation to the loss of the bat roost in High Street. The response from Stroud DC is that developers are to provide an alternative roost provision. All the trees have been cut down on the site. The current planning application has been withdrawn.

Lobby Day – GAPTC are meeting MPs in Westminster. They expect councils to individually make arrangements with their MPs.

16.293 To receive minutes of Committee meetings held in March 2017

Planning and Highways

Recreation and Leisure

Finance and General Purposes

The minutes were noted.

16.294 To receive reports on issues affecting Cam from:

a) **County Councillor**

Cllr Tipper reported on the GCC budget rise of 1.99% and 2% for adult social care.

He reported on the number of meetings he had attended locally with regard to Cam and Dursley Station, Box Road to Sandpits junction, and highways.

b) **District Councillor**

District Councillor Tipper reported on the budget set by Stroud DC. There had been a partial warning from the Audit and Governance Chairman for Stroud DC. He reported that Stroud DC are acting on the warning.

District Cllr Clifton reported that the Chapel Street external construction is near completion and the internal decoration had commenced. The shared ownership would be launch in a week with the rental in June 2017. Vacancies would be advertised in Homeseekers.

District Cllr Denney reported that there had been a satisfaction rating of 85% by the public. Concerns raised on the budget reductions. The recycling scheme has been very successful. Food recycling waste is double on previous rates. It is the highest in Gloucestershire. Javelin Park Incinerator will require 107k tonnes of waste per year at a payment of £147/tonne obligation. There has not been an update on the fossil fuels investment.

District Cllr Tomblin had no further reports to add.

c) **Parish Councillors**

Cllr Sherman raised the possibility of losing the Saturday bus service in June 2017 due to poor usage. This was being discussed at Gloucestershire County Council.

16.295 To discuss the transport assessment report for NE Cam and agree actions

A small working group had met with the transport consultant and had written to Stroud Planning Officer raising various concerns including that the data used in the modelling was out of date. The response was discussed at Council and was felt to be unsatisfactory. The District Council had asked for viable alternative design that cost less. It was RESOLVED to see the cost of a detailed transport assessment for NE Cam.

16.296 To receive an update on the finance closedown for 2016/17

The financial closedown had commenced and was the priority for the office. The deadline is the end of June 2017. An update would be reported at the next Full Council meeting.

16.297 To receive an update on the Christmas lights and agree actions

There had been difficulty in obtaining quotes. To defer to next meeting.

16.298 To receive an update on progress on the development of the NDP for Cam and agree actions

There had been 3 quotes received for the policy writing contract which had been awarded to Place Studio. They would be carrying out a health check on the evidence and work carried out by the NDP Steering Group to date. There was to be a meeting with the new Stroud DC Neighbour Plan Officer.

16.299 To note training opportunities, conferences, and information events, and confirm attendance

The schedule had previously been circulated and the proposals discussed. Any requests for training to be sent to the Clerk.

16.300 To receive an update on the Cam and Dursley Station

Gloucestershire County Council had received the grant monies awarded to Cam PC by GWR and were looking at pooling it with their budgets to create a larger number of parking spaces. They had been in discussion with the construction contractor and were waiting for a detailed programme of works. Further work is to be carried out on securing extra sites for parking. A sub-committee is to be set up for this. It was suggested that neighbouring councils should be contacted for their involvement and support.

16.301 To discuss and agree resolutions for the GAPTC AGM

It was felt that the same issues that were raised before still stand. It was agreed to defer to the next Full Council meeting.

16.302 To receive a report of the Police and Crime Plan 2017-20 and agree actions

There was a verbal report on the launch event of the Police and Crime Plan 2017-20. There was an opportunity to apply for funding for crime reduction projects from the

PCC. It was requested that the PCC attends the Parish Cluster meeting to give an update on progress on the Plan.

16.303 To resolve, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and press be excluded during Agenda Item 20 and 21 due to the confidential nature of the discussion

Agreed.

16.304 To receive a report on Woodview Road Green and agree actions

There had been a meeting with the landowner. The Parish Council is waiting for a response to queries raised on the works carried out to make safe the underground oil pipes. It was RESOLVED to chase the landowner and delegate £1000 for legal fees to the Clerk.

16.305 To agree to the recommendations of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

- a) It was RESOLVED to agree to a one off payment of outstanding staff holidays and accrued hours for 2016/17 including the extra hours required for the NDP previously agreed. This is a one off payment and would not be agreed for 2017/18.

Cllr Tipper left the meeting

- b) The quotes for the staff review are still being received. The brief will be circulated.
c) There was an update on the completion of the sports pavilion. The construction company had ceased trading. Advice is being sought and will be reported back to Council.
d) There was an update on the café lease and forthcoming review. A copy of the lease would be circulated.
e) It was RESOLVED to the procurement of a Council debit card.

16.306 To reconvene the meeting

Agreed

16.307 To note any items for information or referral only

Rackleaze – WWT are carrying out water quality tests as part of their Working Wetland project

Toad crossing season has now finished for the year

PCSO Dodd has been a PCSO for Cam for 10 years. A small presentation was held for her at the Police Panel.

16.308 Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 8.59pm.

ADDITIONAL PAPERS

I am a resident and tax payer of Cam Parish.

On seeing my Council Tax bill this year and noted the huge increases levied by Cam Parish Council in contrast to those of Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council and the Police, I had a look at the last 6 year's Council Tax increases.

The yearly increases demanded by Cam Parish seem to be utterly disproportionate. These have been:

	Gloucs CC	Stroud DC	Police	Cam Parish
2012/13	0	0	0	+5.5%
2013/14	0	0	+2%	+6.1%
2014/15	0	0	+2%	+2.3%
2015/16	0	0	0	+2.5%
2016/17	+2%	+2%	+1.2%	+9.5%
2017/18	+2%	+2.6%	+2%	+7.9% (+ 2% Social Care add-on).

Most people I know have no problem in awarding the Police Service slightly above inflationary increases and it appears that the County Council and District Council have consistently been most reasonable in managing their finances.

But from these figures Cam Parish seems to be in a sustained spending frenzy and I can see no benefit for a near 39% increase over the last 6 years at a time of record low inflation.

I therefore wrote to express my concern on 2nd March and I received a reply from the Clerk to the Parish Council on 31st March which, as I have little time here, I think may be summarised briefly in 7 points:

- 1) The increase in cash terms is insignificant.
- 2) In 2013-14 the Parish Council Grant from Stroud DC to Cam Parish was reduced and in the 2 years 2016-18 was nil.
- 3) Demand on Council Services has increased since 2013. The Parish Council took on extra staff.
- 4) The Parish Council office is in need of decorating, new furniture and updates. It needs to be smart to attract new hirers of the facility.
- 5) The Parish Council has paid for a new sports pavilion at Jubilee Fields which will be available for hire.
- 6) Some play equipment (unspecified as to where) has become unfit for purpose and has been removed pending a consultation.
- 7) Comparing the Parish to the Police, Stroud and Gloucestershire councils as I did is not relevant as they were capped at 2% increases since 2013/14.

I would like to respond to these points in turn:

- 1) The increased amount of money demanded may be insignificant to Councillors but that is not the point. If all the Councils and authorities setting our Council Tax had increased their demands on the tax payers by a compound 39% instead of the more reasonable 4 to 6%, the Council Tax demanded would be many hundreds of pounds more than it is.

2 & 3) In reaction to the reduction in its grants what has the Parish Council done to counteract that lost revenue? What has been done to increase efficiency and cut back, and in what areas? It seems the Council has deliberately taken the opposite approach and increased its highest item of expenditure by employing more people. I would like to know how many people the Council employs and what do they do? What are the essential roles that they do and why do we need more of them?

On this same subject I note that it is not considered important to publish the Minutes of Council meetings. This is obvious as the last Council Meeting Minutes on the Parish Council website are those from the 17th August 2016 meeting.

But these Minutes do reveal that some staff had not taken their annual leave allowance due to “pressure of work” and the Councillors considered it reasonable to pay them for that untaken leave. This is a most unusual practice and may serve to underline the Council’s attitude to spending other people’s money.

I can say with certainty that in the real world, the commercial world, when annual leave has not been taken for genuine business reasons (as opposed to staff convenience) it is standard practice to either lose it or to allow previous year’s untaken leave to be taken in the new leave year - as long as it is taken within a specified short period of time, often less than 3 months, otherwise it is lost.

Why did the Council not adopt that more sensible and prudent practice instead of paying what is probably a great deal of money extra? How much did this cost the Parish?

In response to its lower income the Parish Council decided to employ more people and also to pay for their holidays on top.

4) Money has been spent on making the Parish office more attractive. How much additional revenue from new hirers has the Council budgeted as a result of this refurbishment? Will that revenue cover the extra spending or again will the tax payer be expected to pay?

5) Spending has also been committed to building a new sports pavilion in the hope of generating new revenue. What is the Council's business plan for marketing and hiring out this new building? How much increased revenue has been planned in and what activities are being undertaken to achieve this? Will that additional revenue cover the extra spending or will the tax payer be expected to pay?

6) Has a business plan been created to attract new money to pay for new play equipment, perhaps sponsorship from local companies? Or will the taxpayer have to pay?

7) The Council's response that other organisations being capped at 2% increases implies this is why they have not charged more. This is I am afraid quite facile since none of them charged any increases at all for 4 years (with the exception of the Police which asked for 2% in three years and about half that in the 4th).

In summary I would ask the Parish Council to have a greater regard for more prudent fiscal management in future and not to believe that it can get away with continuing to increase taxes by hundreds of percent more than inflation.

Please ensure these comments are minuted and published and I thank you for the opportunity of expressing my dismay at Cam Parish Council's obvious lack of budgetary discipline.