

CLERK'S REPORT

Full Council Meeting – 9th January 2024

Biodiversity – the Council has a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must consider what policies, objectives, and action it can take, consistent with the exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s.40 & Environment Act 2021, s.102

Number

Item

1. **Apologies for absence & housekeeping***

At the time of writing, Cllr. Taylor has sent apologies.

**In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 all attendees of the meeting are hereby notified that the meeting could be recorded as an aide memoire for the Clerk when compiling the minutes. The recordings are held securely and are deleted after the resolution that the minutes are a true and correct record. Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council, or one of its committees or sub-committees, will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film, or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present. Persons who record the parish Council's meetings are reminded that the "Public Forum" period may not be part of the formal meeting and that they should take legal advice themselves as to their rights to make any recording during that period.*

2. **Disclosure of Interests**

(As defined under the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Localism Act 2011](#), Chapter 7 ss.26 – 37 in relation to matters on the agenda).

At the time of drafting this report, no disclosures of interests have been received from any Member. If a Member becomes aware of an interest in any agenda item, they must notify the meeting (either at the beginning of the meeting, or before the agenda item is discussed).

Members have a positive duty to consider the agenda and notify the meeting if they, or their partner, have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), or other interest in any matter listed. If a Member, or their partner, has a DPI, or any other interest, they are prohibited from participating in the discussion and/or voting. However, a Member can apply in writing to the Proper Officer (Clerk) for dispensation to participate and/or vote in the matter. It is a criminal offence for any Member to withhold disclosure of a DPI without reasonable excuse and/or participate in debate and/or voting (in the absence of dispensation from the Proper Officer).

3. **Minutes**

Approval of the draft minutes of the full Council Meeting held on 13th December 2023. The draft minutes are published on the [website](#) and were circulated to Members via email.

Approved minutes shall be signed by the meeting Chair via Secured Signing – a secure and legally recognised digital signing software package - in accordance with Standing Order 12(g). The signed minutes will be published on the website.

4. **Public Forum**

In accordance with [Standing Orders](#) (SO) 3(e) the public are permitted to make representations, answer questions, and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. However, public participation shall not exceed 10 minutes, unless otherwise directed by the Chairman (SO 3(f)). A speaker is limited to 5 minutes (SO 3(g)). The Council is not required to respond and/or debate a matter/question raised during public participation and the Chair can direct a response to be provided (oral/written) by either a Councillor or the Clerk (SO 3(h)). Only one person shall speak at a time and if more than one person wants to speak, the Chair shall direct the order (SO 3(k)). A record of the public participation session shall be included in the minutes (SO 3(t)).

The business of the meeting will resume immediately following the public forum.

5. **To receive reports from [County and District Councillors](#)**

Reports provided in advance of the meeting are published alongside the agenda on the Parish Council's [website](#) and circulated to Members, via email, for advance consideration.

6. **Neighbourhood Plan**

Councillors are asked to note the [Design Code Content Sheet](#) provided by AECOM.

7. **Committee minutes & reports**

Councillors are asked to note the minutes and resolutions therein: -

- [Planning & Open Spaces Committee, 12th December 2023](#)
- [HR Committee, 12th December 2023](#)

8. **Policies**

The Council is recommended to adopt the Planning [Pre-Application Discussion policy](#), which was drafted by Planning Consultant Steve Tilbury and complements the training Members of the Planning & Open Spaces Committee recently attended.

9. **Cyber & banking security**

Further to Council resolution C/23/185, 13.12.2023 Cyber Insurance with Coalition is now in place effective from 19th December 2023.

Due to the recent inception of 2-person authorisation for bank payments, the insurance cover has been updated to include the Transfer Fund Fraud cover.

The Council requires a solution for the required Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for emails – in conjunction with its website/email provider TEEC. Once established, the insurance policy can be further updated to include this cover. It is recommended that Cllr. Robinson and the new Clerk continue to liaise with TEEC to investigate their proposals; in conjunction with a wider website / email / Council devise requirement audit (website review previously raised by Cllr. Taylor).

Cllr. Robinson is currently looking into developing a Cyber Policy for the Council, having attended a meeting with Coalition and the insurance broker Gallagher and understanding the various risks, most notably caused by human use/error. Adopting a Cyber Policy should be deferred to a future meeting once a draft policy has been prepared.

Cllr. Taylor to feed back to the Council on the alternative Cyber Risk Training proposed by the insurance company.

10. **Plaistow Pond**

Cllr. Jordan met a contractor on site, 19th December and a quote to remediate the damaged wall is pending. A verbal update will be provided in the meeting.

The floatation aid has been delivered and requires installation; the Council is recommended to prioritise this work and appoint someone.

A quote from the Kirdford based pond, lake and water landscape contractor, Millponds - who originally built the pond jetty in 2004 and refurbished it in 2013 – remains pending. The delay is due to Millponds awaiting information from their suppliers regarding the price of timber. Some of the structure is submerged in water and has a c.10-year lifespan; therefore, this is likely to need to be replaced. If the quote has not arrived in time for the meeting, this matter should be deferred to the next meeting.

11. **Financial Matters**

1. Financial Reports for December 2023 – January 2024

[Payments Analysis](#) - Expenditure between 14th December 2023 – 5th January 2024.

Due to the imminent departure of the current Clerk and the slight interval before the new Clerk is in post, all payments have been made in advance and the Council is invited to ratify these payments. Similarly, a change to the bank mandate to add the new Clerk as a signatory and allow full access to banking could take time; therefore, to avoid any late payment fees or issues arising, all invoices have been paid.

All payments are self-explanatory. To note, in particular: -

- Transfer to Unity Bank Instant Access Savings Account in accordance with Council resolution C/23/189(5), 13.12.2023
- Secure laptops decommission in accordance with Council resolution C/23/186, 13.12.2023
- Printing (Doxdirect) of annual minutes between 2019 – 2023 in accordance with Council resolution C/23/126(e), 13.09.2023
- Emergency kit for the village halls in accordance with Council resolution C/23/189(3), 13.12.2023
- Mid-year operational playpark inspection, zipwire and roundabout service and inspection with new company Vita Play in accordance with Council resolution C/23/145(3), 11.10.2023
- The December salary includes the contractual pay increase, backdated to 1st April 2023.

Receipts Analysis

Includes income between 14th December 2023 – 5th January 2024.

- Interest payment from Unity Trust Bank.

The Council is recommended to appoint two Members, who are not bank signatories, to counter sign these reports. Suggested Cllrs. Price and Brown to sign.

2. End of quarter 3

Members are recommended to consider the [minutes of the Finance Working Group](#) dated 3rd January 2024, which is published on the Council website, alongside the Budget Forecast Comparison spreadsheet at Quarter 3. Please note the movements since quarter 2, highlighted blue in Column N. The Finance Committee holds a meeting immediately before full Council at 7:15pm, 9th January. A verbal updated from this meeting will be provided by the Chair of the Finance Committee.

3. Ifold Bike Rack

The Finance Working Group recommends that this project go ahead in quarter 4 of the financial year (January – March 2024) due to the improved end of year budget forecast (Line 112, Column L of the Budget Forecast Comparison spreadsheet). At the time of preparing this report, it is anticipated that the Finance Committee will resolve to adopt this recommendation.

Therefore, the Full Council is advised to set a budget and ask Lead Councillor, Sarah Denyer to finalise the materials and requirements and liaise with Mr. Knight, Ifold Stores.

4. Grant applications

As an *aide memoir*, the Council is reminded to note that the Finance Committee will consider grant applications at its April meeting, in accordance with its [Grant Policy](#).

To date, applications have been received from Winterton Hall, Chiddingfold Surgery and the PCC Kirdford (churchyard).

The Clerk has prompted local groups to apply.

12. **2024/25 Draft budget & Precept**

A draft budget has been prepared by the RFO and Finance Working Group for the Council's consideration. Members are recommended to consider the [minutes of the Finance Working Group](#) dated 3rd January 2024, which is published on the Council website, and provides details of budget considerations (item 9, pg. 2).

Please refer to the Draft Budget Spreadsheet. This will be sent to Councillors in advance of the meeting via email.

Column F (up to row 115) is the predicted end of year position for this current financial year (as at 31st March 2024). This is based on the end of quarter 3 and some best guesses as to how the budget will fare in the final quarter of the year.

All the costs in the budget (columns H, L, N & P) are based on either known costs for 24/25 (quotes / confirmed budgets which the Council has already resolved to include) or worst case scenario costs e.g., uplift of up to 10% for services and other standard costs to take into account what fiscal movements might be in play throughout 24/25 e.g., fuel/materials etc.

- Row 96 shows the predicted annual expenditure.
- Row 113 shows the predicted annual income (mainly the Precept) but there is CIL payable in April.
- Row 115 shows either the annual overspend or underspend.
- Row 150 shows the Council's (own) reserves as at 31st March 2025.
- Row 154 shows the Council's overall reserves – including the outstanding loan amount.

The Plaistow playpark loan will be paid off as of September 2026. By this time, **the Council needs to have its own reserves at a minimum level indicated at row 156.**

The draft budget shows possible scenarios, including keeping the Precept unchanged at £118,000 (Column H), or uplifting it by varying amounts.

To note:

- CDC cannot increase their precept demand over 3% without going to referendum.

- There remain no council tax referendum principles for town and parish councils, but the government will review the decisions taken by these authorities when considering referendum principles in future years.
- [Council tax referendum principles](#)

The Finance Working Group / Committee recommends a Precept increase of 1.69% or an additional £2,000 – from £118,000 to £120,000.

By way of comparison, an increase of 2.96% (just under CDC's 3%) would be a Precept of £121.500 (an extra £3,500).

It is recommended that Members consider the explanation page provided with the recent Priorities and Funding survey: https://www.plaistowandifold-pc.gov.uk/priorities_and_funding

The information illustrates the types of costs the Council faces – land management, finger post restoration, traffic consultant fees etc.

The Finance Committee acts purely in an advisory capacity for both the budget and Precept setting.

A loan to fund the Ifold play area was considered by the Working Group, but the recommendation is not to budget expressly for taking a loan, and decide upon its requirement nearer the time when expenditure is imminent and the Council has received quotes and understands the full cost of the project.

Although the budget remains in draft until April, once the Precept is agreed this is the set income for 2024/25. Therefore, although the Council can amend the budget, essentially it will only be moving amounts between line items.

Please note, the minimum reserve level changes for each budget scenario (line 156), as it reflects the calculation for the Council's Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE) for each scenario. General reserves should be between three (3) and twelve (12) months of a Council's NRE depending on its size i.e., a council with a precept of £200k+ should be at 3 months NRE and a much smaller council should be closer to 12 months. Plaistow and Ifold should be at a reserve level of between 4 – 6 months NRE.

The NRE is the Precept less any loan repayment and/or amounts included within the Precept for Capital projects and transfers to Earmarked (ring-fenced) Reserves.

Rows 164 – 167 shows the impact upon council tax bands (Band D is the legal test). Column G shows the amount they currently pay.

To note, even if the Council keeps its Precept unchanged at the current level of £118,000 the amount of council tax payable would increase, as the 24/25 tax base has changed i.e., the number of people who moved away / died / applied council tax reductions / exempt properties / demolished properties etc.

The increase to council tax is a total annual amount.

13. **Highway Matters**

Flood damage to the bridge along Foxbridge Lane has been reported to WSCC Highways, following a Facebook post from concerned residents.

Outstanding is a TRO application for a change in speed limit to 20mph within Plaistow's newly established School Safety Zone. It is recommended that the incoming Clerk progress this application.

14. **Clerk's update & items for inclusion on a future agenda**

1. Tennis court

An update from the Land Agent on behalf of the Trustees (Batchellor Monkhouse, Pulborough) is awaited. Recommended to chase for an update. Further quotes for the repair work pending. The Chair has the details of all tennis court companies contacted to quote; however, these may need chasing up.

2. Ifold Playpark

By way of an *aide memoir*, full details of this project can be found on the website here:

https://www.plaistowandifold-pc.gov.uk/ifold_playarea

The lease remains with the Solicitor. The incoming Clerk and Chair have the details and will chase for an update report.

3. Lady Hope Playpark service and operation inspection

Undertaken on 18th December by Vita Play. Annual full safety inspection required no later than 15th July 2024.

4. Pavilion fire risk assessment

Lead Cllr, Sarah Denyer. The incoming Clerk and Cllr. Denyer have the updated Fire Regulations to consider against the Cricket Pavilion and the need for a fire safety inspection. Matter to be deferred to a future agenda, once the matter has been further considered.

5. Parish Bus Shelters

Update received from the WSCC Team building the shelters:

So far I have purchased most of the timber required for both structures minus the cladding, which are now made and in storage at the farm. I have purchased

the materials for the foundations of the Ifold shelter which is now laid. I used more material on this than I had anticipated so I will currently not have enough for the Plaistow shelter foundation. All of the fittings are purchased such as studding, anchor compound, roofing membrane, DPC, bolts, screws, washers etc. I need to still buy the following;

- *Cladding for both shelters*
- *Another 2 bulk bags of ballast and reinforcing mesh for the Plaistow foundations*
- *Some further 4x2 for the roofing of both shelters and for the seats in both*
- *Paving slabs for the Plaistow shelter*
- *Roof tiles for both shelters (I need to have a look at the stored tiles at some point so that I can see what type to buy)*
- *Roof batten for both shelters*
- *A few more bricks for the Plaistow shelter*

The total cost so far is £4,129.20.

I will be ordering the cladding (feather edge) today (04.01.2024) so I will have a cost on that soon. The rest of the materials I will order bit by bit over the next few weeks. I would guess, and this is not a quote by a long shot as materials prices seem to fluctuate quite a bit at the moment, that we will be spending about another 3 or 4K to complete the works. This is quite a bit under the 7K each that the materials seemed to amount to when I first looked so that's at least some good news!!

I'm sorry that it's a bit vague, as I have said, we are not a business and I only buy materials as I need them as I tend to find they get used for other purposes where we store them if I buy too much at once!!

I can confirm that we start again on site this Monday coming, the 8th Jan.

I can also confirm that our task list has us on Plaistow and Ifold shelter construction only, until we are done!

6. Fingerpost signs

Tim Ralph of Ralph Restoration has confirmed that he has both the hardwood and the acrylic letters to produce the new finger, so will make a start straight away. He has confirmed that he will get both signs completed before the end of 2023/2024. (By the Church in Plaistow and opposite the Shillinglee Road junction on Dunsfold Road).

The 2024/25 budget includes the restoration of two further posts, as resolved by the Council at its November 2023 meeting; therefore, the Council should check which posts require refurbishment and check on the quoted prices (presented to the Council at the November meeting).

7. Priorities and funding survey – diarise first meeting

The Working Group are Cllrs. Price, Taylor, Denyer and Jordan (C/23/190, 13.12.2023).

The Working Group should diarise its first meeting to begin the task of analysing the following data: -

- Results of the 2023 Priorities and Funding Survey
- 2023 Asset Audit
- Traffic calming public meeting, January 2023
- Relevant data from the 2021 Whole Parish Survey

The Working Group and incoming Clerk have received this data via a Dropbox link.

8. Little Springfield Farm

A Planning meeting has been scheduled for 18th January to consider this application (as well as others).

[23/01968/FUL | Demolition of existing B2 and B8 floorspace. Erection of 3,100m2 flexible use floorspace falling within the following use classes: E\(g\) Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity; E\(g\)\(i\) Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions; E\(g\)\(ii\) Research and development of products or processes; E\(g\)\(iii\) Industrial processes; B2 \(restricted to only take place inside buildings\); and, B8 Storage or Distribution and change of use of existing building to office building and B8 building to fuel store. | Little Springfield Farm Plaistow Road Ifold Loxwood Billingshurst West Sussex RH14 0TS](#)

Planning advice has been sought from Consultant Steve Tilbury, which has been circulated to the Planning Committee.

9. Newsletter

The Newsletter Working Group are: Cllrs. Price, Taylor and Denyer. The spring newsletter should come out in April to advise on the Precept, Neighbourhood Plan, Local Plan, and other Council projects/events. In accordance with resolution C/23/170(2), 08.11.2023 the Council will budget for one newsletter per annum to be mailed to all households on the electoral register; and for newsletter articles to be posted on the website and Facebook. Therefore, the Council may wish to consider the Spring newsletter as its 'hard copy' edition.

The Working Group are encouraged to consider the results of the Priorities and Funding survey regarding the number of newsletters per annum – the most popular result was quarterly (4x per year); as well as the results regarding Parish Council engagement with the Community. This is a multifaceted issue – to increase community engagement and the profile of the Council within the

community. It maybe that quarterly newsletters are too many (especially, if articles are to be more frequently published on the website and Facebook – other top scoring results - as well as other community engagement activities).

The [Annual Assembly](#) (Annual Parish Meeting) is held between 1st March and 1st June (LGA 1972, Sch 12, para 14) – this is often a good opportunity to hold a social community event. It is recommended that the Council note the minutes of its November meeting ([here](#)) and particularly the presentation from Angela Palmerton and Mrs West regarding the Ifold conservation area. The Council resolved to approve in principle hosting a community biodiversity talk and make enquires with organisations such as Woodland Trust / Butterfly Conservation and CDC’s Biodiversity Officer. The priority is the speaker attends free of charge. Therefore, this could be an option to consider for the Annual Assembly.

A well-publicised spring newsletter can promote the Annual Assembly and invite people to attend.

Depending on when it is published, it can also support advertising the Spring [Litter Pick](#) (Lead Councillor, Rick Robinson), which takes place March/April. The Council has considered the establishment of a Community Action Day and forming a Working Group ([September 2023 minutes](#), C/23/133, pg. 10). *“The Council DISCUSSED a COMMUNITY ACTION DAY to offer wider community support during the bi-annual litter pick events e.g., clean road signs, street furniture and tend the Ifold conservation area. A COMMUNITY ACTION DAY WORKING GROUP will be established to advise and organise future events, which can be advertised in future newsletters.”*

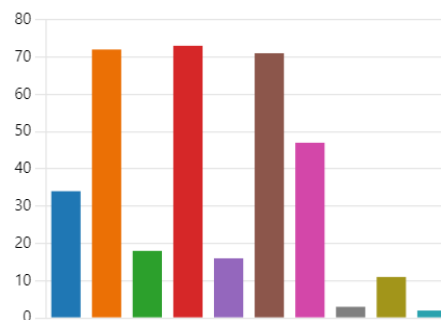
It is therefore recommended that the formation of this Working Group be added to a future agenda and were an event to be arranged in conjunction with the Spring Litter Pick, it can likewise be publicised in the newsletter.

13. How would you like to be regularly told about the work of the Parish Council? Including about the Neighbourhood Plan and seeking your views and comments.

Please choose up to three (3) from the list below.

[More Details](#)

● Twice yearly newsletter	34
● Quarterly newsletter (4x per year)	72
● Monthly newsletter (12x per year)	18
● Website	73
● Noticeboards	16
● Email	71
● Facebook	47
● X (formally Twitter) / Instagram ...	3
● Information social events in villa...	11
● Other	2

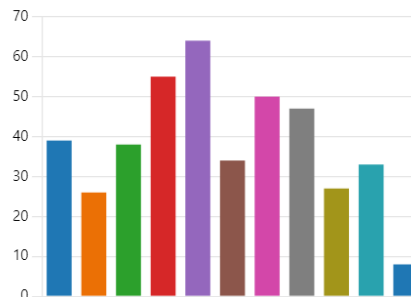


11. **How can the Parish Council help to improve community knowledge and understanding of its role and engage more effectively with you?**

Please select up to four (4) options from the list

[More Details](#)

- Organise and hold Councillors s... 39
- Establish/support a Youth Coun... 26
- Greater use of social media (Inst... 38
- Greater use of online surveys an... 55
- Monthly article published in the... 64
- Greater use of posters in public ... 34
- Organise community engageme... 50
- Appointed Councillors to act as ... 47
- Greater use / support of public ... 27
- Greater use of local groups to di... 33
- Other 8



10. **Winterton Hall & Youth Club CIO**

Robert Horn has left AiRS, however his successor will continue to support the creation of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the Winterton Hall and Plaistow Youth Club. The incoming Clerk has experience with CIOs and AiRS and is apprised of the matter. Both the Winterton Hall and Youth Club Committees are progressing this matter and will liaise with the Parish Council when necessary, particularly when the Council needs to act in its current capacity as the Hall's Custodian Trustee. The 2024/25 budget continues to include financial support for this matter, as the Council has resolved to fund the fees to create a CIO.

15. **Correspondence**

None to note.

16. **Date of next meetings**

It is recommended that the Council vacate its February 2024 meeting, to allow the incoming Clerk to establish herself and progress some of the outstanding matters. The meeting date is also Valentines Day!

The March meeting is scheduled for 13th March.

However, it would be advisable for Working Groups (Newsletter / Business Plan / Community Action Day to meet in February, so that matters established for Council's consideration in March.

- Planning & Open Spaces Committee, 18th January 2024, Kelsey Hall, Ifold - 7:30pm

- Planning & Open Spaces Committee, 31st January 2024, Kelsey Hall, Ifold - 7:30pm
- Planning & Open Spaces Committee, 13th February 2024, Winterton Hall, Plaistow - 7:30pm
- Full Parish Council, 14th February 2024, Winterton Hall, Plaistow - 7:30pm

17. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Due to the confidential nature of staffing matters, the Council is advised to resolve to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting during the consideration of item 18, in accordance with s.1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

18. **Recruitment update**

Mrs Jane Bromley has been appointed as Clerk and RFO of Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council. Mrs Bromley is also the Clerk of Loxwood Parish Council and will remain so, splitting her time between the two Parishes. Mrs Bromley will work 30 hours per week for Plaistow and Ifold.