



FRESHWATER PARISH COUNCIL
Parish Office 01983 752000

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FRESHWATER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 6th AUGUST 2024 AT 8.25 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
MEMORIAL HALL, FRESHWATER**

PRESENT: Councillors: E Cox (Chair), T Armstrong, A Bamford, C Bray, D Hicklin, B Hobbs, D James, G Kennett, F Turan and W Whyte.

Members of the public: 1 and Cllr Spink

Clerk: H Rowell

1. APOLOGIES:

Councillors: C Jarman, B Hinton MBE and N Thomas

**2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE FRESHWATER PARISH COUNCIL
MEETINGS HELD ON THE 2nd JULY 2024.**

The minutes of the meetings held on the 2nd July (having been circulated) were agreed (FT/TA).

**3. TO INVITE COUNCILLORS TO DECLARE AN INTEREST IN MATTERS ON
THE AGENDA.**

None.

**4. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS ON THE AGENDA FROM MEMBERS OF THE
PUBLIC (UP TO 15 MINUTES).**

None.

**5. TO ACCEPT WRITTEN REPORTS FROM FRESHWATER WARD
COUNCILLORS.**

Written reports have been received from Cllr Spink who apologised for its lateness (see Appendix 1)

6. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Clerk and I continue to have regular Monday morning meetings, with other staff members popping in to add to the detail of our discussions. These meetings are proving invaluable in helping to ensure that we are working as a team in the best interest of the Parish Council.

8 July - I attended the Parish Tour organised by the Chair of the Land Management Committee, Cllr Bray. Also in attendance were Cllrs Armstrong, Bamford, Hobbs, Jarman, Kennett, Turan and Whyte and the Clerk.

11 July - I attended the IWALC Cabinet meeting along with the Chair of IWALC Cllr Bamford and Cllr Turan. These meetings are remote meetings, and they give an opportunity for any Councillor whose Council is a member of IWALC to ask questions directly to the IW Council Cabinet members. I have always found these meetings useful, the topics discussed are wide ranging and it saves having to email cabinet members or officers and wait around for a reply.

11 July - I met with Councillors Armstrong and Turan for a planning session. I hope it was useful to both Councillors. The session was a basic introduction, how I look at a planning application and how to navigate the IW Council planning portal. Both Councillors asked a lot of questions and I was pleased to see their enthusiasm and commitment to this part of being a member of FPC.

15 July - I attended the Personnel Committee meeting along with the Chair Cllr James, Cllr Bamford and the Clerk. Cllr James has kindly invited me to attend all Personnel Committee meetings.

19 July - All members of the Christmas working group attended the inaugural meeting which was very productive. We are looking forward to this year's festivities and working with the Deputy Clerk.

23 July - I was invited as Chair of the Parish Council to attend a closed event hosted by the Solent CO2 Pipeline Project. I considered this meeting to be very important so I changed my normal working hours to attend. The event was held over four hours but it was not well attended. I went to the event with County Councillor Paul Fuller, cabinet member for planning policy, coastal protection and Flooding. If the pipeline is to be built across the Island it will make landfall in Cllr Fuller's ward, Cowes West and Gurnard. I spent about 90 minutes at the event, speaking to a number of the project staff, asked lots of questions and came away feeling lots more questions needed to be asked and a lot more answers needed to be clarified.

I have been exchanging emails with members of the West Wight Councils Group and it is hoped that a meeting will be arranged to discuss the future of the Group and the proposed CO2 pipeline.

The Clerk and I have submitted our first article to the local magazine for the August edition, I was surprised how quickly we reached our word limit.

Mel Gardiner has responsibility for managing the Parish website and social media account on behalf of the Parish Council. If any Councillor wishes to have an item added to either of these sites please contact Mel by email with your requests at

Melanie.Gardiner@freshwater-parish.org.uk

I was asked at the full council meeting in July to find out how many commercial properties are currently situated within the Parish I wrote to and received the following information from Dawn Lang who is the IW Council's strategic manager with responsibility for Housing enabling and delivery.

Empty Property numbers in Freshwater Parish 01.07.2024

Empty Residential Property

As required by government, the Local Authority monitor empty residential property and report these figures to government annually. Currently, for Freshwater Parish area, the total number of empty dwellings is 49 out of an active Council Tax address base of 3,433 properties. This equates to 1.4% of housing stock. It is considered normal for up to 2% to be empty at anyone time to allow people to move house.

Long-term empty more than 6mths = 38

Empty less than 6 months empty = 11

In line with the Government definition long-term empty homes are empty for six months or more. The majority of the 38 long term empty homes will be reoccupied within 12 months, currently 8 of those 38 have been empty more than 1 year and only 1 has been empty more than 2 years.

When a property is empty more than 12 months an Empty Property Premium of 100% is applied to the Council Tax bill. After 2 years empty the Empty Property Premium is increased to 200%.

Unoccupied Residential Property Not Counted as Empty

Council Tax figures for empty properties do not include unoccupied property exempt from Council Tax. There are currently:

32 Class F exemption properties where person is deceased and in probate.

10 Class E exemption properties where person is living elsewhere for care, education or work (armed forces)

Class F - exemption is applied if a property was left unoccupied because the last council taxpayer died. This means they may not have to pay Council Tax on their empty property from the date of their death until six months after probate or letters of administration have been granted, unless the property was rented.

Class E- If the owner or tenant of an empty property have moved somewhere else for education or to give or receive care, they may be able to get an exemption.

Commercial Property

There are currently 357 nondomestic rated properties in the parish of Freshwater and 10 of these are empty.

Council action on Empty Properties

To find out more about what we are doing about empty properties on the Island, download the Empty Properties Strategy (PDF, 352KB) <https://www.iow.gov.uk/housing-and-adult-social-care/housing-services/empty-properties/empty-property-information-and-support>

7. **CLERK'S REPORT (CIRCULATED TO COUNCILLORS).**

Meeting with Wight Clean

I had a meeting with the cleaning company to discuss the contract which included site visits at both sets of Public Conveniences (Moa Place and Gate Lane). Some snagging issues were raised in respect of Gate Lane which I have contacted the builders about. They told me that the old block took 20 minutes to clean whereas the new block takes 40-60 minutes. The made a proposal having done a pilot project in Seaview that to save money the toilets could be cleaned just once a day instead of twice.

Richard Quigley MP

I have written to our new MP who is keen to attend a Parish Council Meeting, so I have given him the dates for the rest of the year and he will let me know his availability.

Youth Shelter

I have not confirmation from the School that they would like it, so I have asked the Facilities Officer to provide a quote for removal.

Annual Consultation

I have spoken to Debbie in the Memorial Hall about the Annual Consultation in January and the only day and date when we can have the large hall and the small hall is Saturday 25th January 2025 from 11am. So have booked it from 11am until 7pm.

Register of Interests

I have spoken to the Monitoring Officer at the Isle of Wight Council about the displaying of Cllrs home addresses on the website (which only applies if they live in the Parish). "The

current law (section 32 of the Localism Act 2011) specifically provides that, where disclosure of the details could lead to the member or co-opted member (with voting rights) or a person connected with such a person being subject to violence or intimidation, such an interest is to be excluded from the public register of interests, with merely an entry stating that the member or co-opted member has a “sensitive interest” in the matter - [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk). So, until the law changes, a case will need to be made out for a councillor’s address to be regarded as a ‘sensitive interest’ but such requests will be looked at sympathetically if there are legitimate concerns as to possible violence or intimidation.”

Memorial Hall Courtyard Works Update

The drainage works will be completed by Reno Drain.

8. CORRESPONDENCE.

Correspondence has been received from residents who have been affected by our trees hanging over their gardens, and cutting back brambles on Jubilee Field that are infringing on resident’s properties. Another resident contacted us about a dead tree at Marsh Close. Two quotes have been received from S G Gardening Tree Services for the various works that need completing. It was agreed to get some further quotes, If the quotes were not forthcoming within 7 days it was agreed to go ahead with the quotes, if no quotes were forthcoming that were cheaper, then the Clerk would have delegated authority to go ahead with the quotes received.

9. TO AGREE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT - LIST CIRCULATED TO COUNCILLORS FOR INFORMATION.

Accounts were agreed and accepted.

10. TO AGREE COMMUNITY AWARDS /THANK YOUS PROPOSAL – CLLR COX

This item was deferred to the next full Parish Council Meeting.

11. IWALC REPORT – CLLR BAMFORD

Cllr Bamford has been re-elected as Chair of IWALC and Cllr Steve Cooper (Ventnor TC) is the Vice Chair. Training is being determined for the forthcoming year.

12. ANTI-POVERTY MEETING REPORT – CLLR BAMFORD

The meeting was useful and if anyone is interested they can respond directly to the person in the Isle of Wight Council who is leading this work for two years with a remit to eliminate poverty.

13. TO APPROVE THE LONE-WORKING POLICY (CIRCULATED TO CLLRS)

Approved and agreed (DJ/AB).

14. TO APPROVE THE RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

Approved and agreed (DJ/TA).

15. TO ACCEPT THE CHRISTMAS WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REPORT – CLLR COX

Membership Cllrs Armstrong, Cox, Turan, Officer Emma Carter

The first meeting of the working group was on Friday 19th July 2024. All members of the group were all in attendance and Parish Officer Mel Gardiner.

Cllr Emma Cox was elected to be the Chair of the group.

Members of the group reviewed the draft TOR which will be circulated to Councillors prior to the next full council meeting.

As this is a new group and there was no involvement of councillors with the Christmas arrangements in 2023, it was felt that the group should duplicate what has been organised in previous years, with some slight changes. Members felt that it was important to stay within the budget and not request additional funds for Christmas 2024.

Members of the group reviewed the costs from Christmas 2023.

Members were in agreement to continue with the 3 Christmas trees in the Parish as in previous years, the cost for the trees this year will not be available until August/September. The cost of the trees in 2023 was £754.17 excluding VAT. Members intend to look for alternative options to real trees purchased on an annual basis, for more environmentally friendly options which they hope can be demonstrated to have savings to the Council in future years. Cllr Armstrong will investigate replacing the MOA Place annual tree. Cllr Cox will investigate whether an alternative option could be considered for the Christmas tree at the library.

It was agreed Emma Carter would research how to dispose of the Christmas trees in January 2025 and what the costs would be, 2023 cost for disposal was £100.

The Parish Council has 33 small artificial trees and many light sets, the trees and lights will be inspected in November to identify any that need replacing. The costs from the trees in 2023 in replacement lights and batteries was £149.34 excluding VAT. Other sundries which may not be tree related cost a total of £21.48 excluding VAT.

The Group will recommend to the full council that the Council does not apply to the IW Council this year for the free parking in Avenue Road. It was felt that there was insufficient evidence to show it was of benefit to the community. This would be a predicted save of £198.40. Members were however keen to investigate the possibility of funding Friday morning free parking during December 2025 for the duration of the Market in the Memorial Hall.

Mel Gardiner has agreed to manage this year's Christmas window competition. In previous years the Council has provided hampers to the winning window display. This year due to officer work time pressure and members preference it is planned to offer One4All shopping vouchers as prizes.

Cllr Turan raised the question of whether we would be able to have a topper for the telephone box made by local knitters. It was felt that as Cllr James is bringing the future of the telephone box to full council, that the idea should be deferred to a later date.

The group agreed to meet on the following dates

6 September 2023 at 9.15 am and
20 September 2023 at 9.15 am.

The group has agreed to investigate whether All Saints Church is holding its Christmas Tree festival this year and if it is whether they would like the Council to agree to participate. If the Council is invited to participate the Group members would prepare a recommendation for the tree at a full council meeting for approval. The Group members would assume responsibility for the installation and the removal of the tree from the church once the event was concluded.

The group agreed to encourage all councillors to put suggestions for Christmas 2025 to them before the next meeting on 6 September 2024.

The Working Group submits the following recommendations for the approval of the full council.

- We propose that the Council continues with 3 live trees and 33 small artificial trees to light the Parish during the Christmas period. Additional lighting as usually positioned to be continued.
- We propose that the Council does not approach the IW Council to pay for free parking in the village this December.
- We propose the Council accepts our TOR and ratifies it at this meeting.
- We propose that the Christmas Shop Window competition is run for this Christmas and the prizes will be One4all gifts vouchers.
- We propose that the Council agrees to the Working Group participating in the All Saints Church Christmas Tree festival if it is run this year in principle, subject to full council agreement on the suggested decoration of the tree.

The Terms of Reference for the group were accepted and agreed.

16. LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE – SPINFISH CULVERTS – CLLR BRAY

The camera has gone down the pipes to check conditions. It was proposed that we ask for three quotes for replacing the concrete pipe which is failing. In addition, a gully to help manage the water flow, and the extra land drain that takes the water from the field into the stream. Thanks was given to Cllr Bray for her hard work on resolving this problem.

17. TO AGREE THE LIFT REPAIRS (QUOTE ATTACHED FOR CLLRS)

The lift is in need of repair. It would seem that the lift might need replacing soon. It was agreed to get a local electrician to safety check the lift, and seek further quotes for repairs and replacement from a lift specialist.

18. TO AGREE PROPOSED FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS

- Water leak in Moa Place Car park – has been reported to Southern Water
- Blocked ditch in Parkers Hill – follow up with Rights of Way
- Pavements in Freshwater – concerns about safety – contact Island Roads.
- Memorial Hall working Group.

19. TO ACCEPT THE ASSET REPORT

The report was accepted (DJ/EC). It was agreed to research rebuild costs of assets for insurance purposes.

That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

20. CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR

Kelly Sloan-Murphy was co-opted onto the Council as a Parish Councillor.

21. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT – CLLR JAMES

Staffing review updated quotation has been accepted. Consideration was given to staffing cover when the Clerk is unavailable and appropriate recompense. This will form part of the Staffing Review. Appraisals will commence shortly. The Sickness Policy is with the Personnel Committee to review for the next meeting.

Cllr Armstong thanked both the Chair and Planning Chair for this evening's meetings.

The meeting closed at 9.57pm.