



# SIMPSON AND ASHLAND PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at Simpson Village Hall

**Councillors present:** Cllr Pye - Chair (DP), Cllr Barnes – Vice Chair (PB), Cllr Ezeh (CE),  
Cllr Eatwell (RE), Cllr Tucker (DT)

**Apologies:** Katherine Harmsworth, Parish Clerk (KH)

**Others present:** 3 Members of the public (MOP)

### 55) Introductions and apologies for absence

KH sent her apologies for being unable to attend. PB agreed to take the minutes of the meeting in her absence.

### 56) Specific declarations of interest

No change to current declarations in place.

### 57) Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the council held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were received and signed as a correct record.

### 58) Public forum

- a) Representatives of the Friends of Simpson Village Hall expressed concerns about the clarification of the hire charges for future events at the hall where there is free admission for members of the public. The PC had, prior to the meeting, formally responded to the Friends of Simpson Village Hall and this response provided a basis for the discussion. The proposal is for such events to be charged at the rate for local residents i.e. £12.50/hour and for income to be raised from donations for refreshments, after the cost of ingredients has been deducted. Any shortfall between net income and the hire cost to be met from money donated at past events. The Friends questioned whether they would continue to organise events in the light of the policy.
- b) The Friends queried the continuing viability of the procedures for unlocking and locking the hall for one-off events, especially in the evenings. This prompted discussion of the PC's plans to recruit a Facilities Manager, responsible for both the Village Hall and Ashland Lakeside (see Minute 65).

### 59) To consider the cost-of-living crisis and decide how the PC can support the local community.

- a) Reported that the PC had received a one-off allocation of £4000 from MKCC as part of the Cost of Living Winter Plan to provide 'warm spaces' for residents experiencing hardship over the winter months in the context of increased energy bills and the rising cost of food and other essentials. There are no detailed stipulations for how the resources should be deployed, but the PC will be expected to account for how the funds have been spent.
  - i) The PC recognises that it is not easy to direct the money to those most in need as people may be unwilling to present themselves in that way. Publicity around what could be available is also an issue.

- ii) It will be important to liaise with other agencies who are likely to have closer contact with/knowledge of people in significant need e.g. ward Councillors, Guinness, the Church, Charles Warren Academy and local social services.
- iii) It was recognised that ways of operating to best effect are likely to develop and change over time and with experience and so will need to be kept under review.
- b) It was agreed that Ashland Lakeside will be open as a warm space on Tuesday 10 January from 10.00-12.00, provided all necessary works have been completed. Cllr Charlotte Hall and RE have volunteered to staff.
- c) It was agreed to explore ways of opening Simpson Village Hall on Tuesdays from 12.00 to 2.00, after the Coffee Club, with hot food (soup; baked potatoes) being provided free of charge. This will require a team of volunteers; Rev Nicola Vidamour to be approached for support.
  - i) Consideration could be given to the provision, at Ashland Lakeside, of opportunities for children during the February half term. This would need to be provided by MK Play Association, with supplementation from other PC budget lines. CE will contact MK Play Association to establish capacity for them to run a half-day play scheme for five days of the half-term break. It is possible that a simple breakfast could be provided for attendees.
  - ii) It was agreed that in the first instance, 50% of the allocation should be earmarked for the provision of warm spaces and food in Ashland and Simpson and the other 50% being seen as a resource for helping with energy needs and as a contingency for uses as yet unidentified.
  - iii) The Parish Clerk will need to be closely involved in the oversight of these plans, in part to ensure that the use of the allocations can be properly accounted for.

## **60) Finance report and discussion**

- a) The payments from 1<sup>st</sup> September – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were reviewed and approved.
- b) The budget for 2023-24 was reviewed and agreed. The Parish Clerk was thanked for her work in setting out options for the 2023/24 precept and the financial implications of each.
- c) The precept for 2023-24 was agreed at £57970 – a reduction of 2% on the 2022/23 figure, which translates as a 5.6% decrease (equivalent to £5.81 for a Band D property) in real terms, because of the increase in the tax base.

## **61) Planning Applications**

- a) Five Acres. PB reported a recent email exchange with Charlotte Ashby (Planning Officer). She noted a bat report had been submitted in October and that she would shortly be reviewing the application 'as to whether there are any outstanding issues to be addressed'. She noted the call in for determination at Planning Panel. She did not have any updates on the applicant's appeal. It was agreed that Duncan Chadwick (Planning Consultant) could be engaged to provide advice and input, as and when required.
- b) 22/00154/ENF 426 Simpson. PB reported that the revised plans had been approved by the Planning Panel. Construction is proceeding.
- c) 22/02407/FUL 12 The Mount. PB reported that the application related to replacement double-glazed windows. There was no reason for the PC to comment.
- d) 22/02595/HOU 43 The Mount. PB reported that the application related to additional insulation. There was no reason for the PC to comment.

## **62) Open Space**

- a) RE reported that the Clerk was attending the Open Space meetings with MKCC, which are now held bi-monthly.
- b) It was agreed to take no further action on the stony area on Hanmer Green and to invite observations from residents.

- c) It was agreed to hold the next litter pick on 25 February. Notices and Facebook/email posts will be required nearer the time.

### **63) Ashland Lakeside**

- a) RE reported on recent developments. The recent Building Inspector's visit had identified the need for smoke-activated fire alarms. At earlier stages of the project, the advice had been that these were not a requirement. The cost of installation will be in the region of £2000. This expenditure was approved.
- b) Payments and outstanding costs were reviewed and approved.
- c) The purchases of tables, chairs, a storage rack, and other items of equipment was approved.
- d) The purchase of signage and a noticeboard were approved.

### **64) Simpson Village Hall**

- a) Payments and hire income were reviewed.
- b) PB reported on options for clearing the vegetation around the sides of the hall. He will be having a further meeting, on site, with the contractor who had proposed a viable plan.
- c) DP raised a question about the state of the car park and whether it should be resurfaced. RE said that the appearance would be greatly improved by power washing. It was agreed to ask the Clerk to investigate the cost of resurfacing. RE noted that there could be issues of drainage of surface water from the soak-aways.

### **65) Facilities Manager**

- a) The Clerk was thanked for drawing up a detailed job description for the post. It was agreed to proceed with the idea to appoint a Facilities Manager and to feed back comments and suggestions to the Clerk. It is important to establish the sort of scale of payments, relative to those of the Clerk and the cleaner. Also to create a job description that would appeal to the right sort of applicant at a time when there are a lot of unfilled vacancies elsewhere.
- b) Cleaning arrangements for Ashland Lakeside were considered and there is a possibility this could be included in the role of Facilities Manager.

### **66) East West Rail**

- a) PB referred to the emailed report he had circulated following the Zoom meeting of the Local Representatives Group that he attended on 17 November. There is little progress to report on the decisions that would have the most implications for Simpson residents, in particular the plans for the level crossing on Simpson Road by Fenny Stratford station. All decisions are contingent on Government-approved statements. DP noted that Vivarail, the company that operates the Bletchley to Bedford route had gone into administration on 1 December. A replacement bus service is in place.

### **67) New Town Heritage Register**

- a) PB summarised the email that he had recently sent to Councillors with details of the four sites in Simpson that are under consideration for the Register: Warren Bank and Chandler Court, Lissel Road, Hanmer Road and Old Groveway flats. He is trying to contact Simon Peart at MKCC to establish what sort of response to the proposal would be appropriate. Later in the week, PB will be meeting the Manager of The Living Archive (and also a Simpson resident) to consider developing a heritage trail in Simpson.

