



**Windlesham Parish Council**

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**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF WINDLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL**  
 Held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024, at 6:30pm held at St Anne’s Church Centre, 43  
 Church Road, Bagshot

Bagshot Cllrs		Lightwater Cllrs		Windlesham Cllrs	
Bakar	-	Harris	P	Hardless	P
Du Cann	P	Hartshorn	A	Lewis	P
Gordon	P	Jennings-Evans	P	Marr	P
Hills	A	Malcaus Cooper	P	McGrath	PA
Willgoss	P	Turner	P	Richardson	P
White	P	Stevens	P		
		D Jennings-Evans	P		

**In attendance:** Jo Whitfield –Clerk to the Council  
 Richard Midgley - RFO  
 Kevin Thompson – SHBC Borough Councillor

P – present      A – apologies      PA – part of the meeting      - no information

Cllr Turner took the Chair

		Action
<b>C/23/146</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>  Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Hartshorn, and Hills.	
<b>C/23/147</b>	<b>Declarations of interest</b>  None	
<b>C/23/148</b>	<b>Public question time</b>  A resident from Windlesham submitted the following statement which was read aloud by Cllr Turner.  I hope that members will agree that perceptions are important.  Notice of this meeting appeared as a posting on Windlesham Community ``facebook" together with a link to the agenda where the main item of substance was to review and reconsider the decision to increase the 2024 - 2025 precept by 44%.  At the same time there appeared a posting about recruitment of a "Communications & Engagement Officer".	

	<p>By public perception there can be (seen as) a connection between these two postings - which I am sure was not intended, but is so.</p> <p>Preceding that main item 5 on the agenda there is item 4 about possible exclusion of the public and press - the possibility, or even probability, therefore of dismissal before the real start of a meeting to which they have been invited to attend - members may wish to consider the public perception of this apparent "conflict" (?) - which may have needed explanation in advance.</p> <p>It can of course be seen as justification of the referenced recruitment.</p> <p>It must be made clear that this recruitment is for an officer to present facts, in a meaningful way, concerning the Council's activities, in the public interest and is not a "political" style appointment to portray an entirely favourable image of the Council. For example, it may be of interest to explain the actual money impact of a 44% increase in the precept on the public as ratepayers.</p> <p>I hope that members will recognise that these comments are well intended as also in the public interest.</p> <p><b>Members asked the Clerk to respond thanking the resident for their comments.</b></p> <p><i>18:32 Cllr McGrath joined the meeting</i></p>	
<p><b>C/23/149</b></p>	<p><b>Exclusion of the press and public.</b></p> <p>Agreed that the following items be dealt with after the public, including the press, have been excluded under S1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960:</p> <p><b>Members agreed that all items should remain in the open part of the meeting.</b></p>	
<p><b>C/23/150</b></p>	<p><b>Motion from Cllrs Turner, Jennings-Evans, and White for Council to review and reconsider the decision to increase the 2024-2025 precept by 44%.</b></p> <p>In line with Standing Orders, the above Councillors decided to call in the decision on the budget for 2024-5 made at the November 2023 Full Council meeting. It was their belief that the proposed 44% increase in the precept needed further discussion in light of other developments, the context of the initial vote, and initial public reaction to the level of increase.</p> <p>Specifically, they felt the following needed to be considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If SCC and SHBC were to increase council tax charges by the maximum amount possible, combined with the 44% Parish Council precept increase could cause hardship to residents and may result in reputational damage to the Council.</li> <li>2. The initial public reaction to the increase had been highly negative. This had manifested on social media in Lightwater and direct personal feedback from residents.</li> </ol>	

3. Inflation is expected to be between 2 and 3% next April, so a 44% increase would be extreme whatever the merits of particular projects and initiatives that drive this level of increase.
4. Half of the proposed increase was due to potential cemetery improvements and yet there was no firm plan for actual developments. Specifically:
  - a. Council has not started the cemeteries review which will provide actual evidence of priorities and the real rather than a hypothetical level of spend.
  - b. Similarly, retendering the Greenspace contract could lead to improvements and negate the need for all or part of the additional funding.
  - c. The additional £75k which is half of the budget increase could be delayed until a) and b) are clear.
  - d. Compared to other cemeteries the 3 WPC cemeteries are in a comparable state of average to good so why do they need to be prioritised next year when there has been no public consultation on their condition and improvements?
5. Whilst the original motion for additional cemetery funding was tabled by the Windlesham Committee, the final decision to increase funding to all three cemeteries, resulting in an additional 22% increase in the precept, was only supported by 1 of the Windlesham Councillors present. This perhaps indicated that this initiative was not considered a priority.

Councillor Turner proposed and Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans seconded the above motion and Members were asked to decide:

1. If they wished to proceed with the budget approved at the November Full Council meeting, which resulted in a 44.42% increase in the precept.

Or

2. As per the above motion remove the additional £75k allocated to cemetery earmarked reserves, thereby reducing the precept increase to 22.98%

Early on in the meeting Cllr Marr raised an intention to propose an amendment to the motion.

Cllr Turner as the proposer outlined the reasons for revisiting the previous decision, and all Councillors present were asked directly if they wished to comment on the proposal at hand.

Members had a robust discussion with some Councillors noting that the headline percentage figure would be unpalatable to some, particularly in view of the fact that the Cemetery maintenance works were yet to be identified. Conversely, others pointed out that, in real terms, the increase on a Band D property amounted to a negligible sum. It was also acknowledged that the current Parish Council precept was lagging behind inflation by a significant margin.

Please note that since the meeting the Clerk has calculated the figures per council tax band, see below:

**Annual Amount to be billed 2024/25**

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
£40.21	£46.91	£53.61	£60.31	£73.71	£87.11	£100.51	£120.62

**Actual annual increase per annum**

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
£12.37	£14.43	£16.49	£18.55	£22.67	£26.79	£30.92	£37.10

Cllr Willgoss proposed, and Cllr Gordon seconded the following amendment to the motion.

Members to decide whether to:

1. Opt for a £25k budget reduction in the 2024-25 budget by eliminating the Bagshot Cemetery EMR funding, leading to a decrease in the precept increase from 44.42% to 37.28%. This choice would reduce the annual increase on a Band D property from £60.31(44.42%) to £57.32 (37.28%) saving £2.99 per annum.

Or

2. To entirely remove the additional £75k allocated to cemetery earmarked reserves, thereby reducing the precept increase to 22.98%  
This choice would reduce the annual increase on a Band D property from £60.31(44.42%) to £51.36 (22.98%) saving £8.95 per annum.

It was noted that Standing Order 1e states 'An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion and must be approved by the original proposer.' Consequently, at 20:06 Cllr Turner adjourned the meeting briefly to confer with Cllr R Jennings-Evans and Cllr White both of whom supported the call to review the original decision.

The meeting resumed at 20:08 with Cllr Turner informing Members that the amendment was not approved, as it fell short of achieving the necessary reduction in the precept increase. It was announced that a vote on the original proposal would ensue unless any further amendments were forthcoming.

Windlesham Committee Councillors expressed their apprehensions about the budget in general, noting that the Windlesham Cemetery was a high priority to their residents. They indicated that they would like to review the budget as a whole, however, as per Standing Orders 1e it was noted that an amendment to a proposal was only to remove or add words to a motion and should not negate the motion.

**Cllr Turner proposed and Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans seconded that Council vote on the removal of the additional £75k allocated to cemetery earmarked reserves from the 2024-25 budget, thereby reducing the precept increase to 22.98%.**

**A recorded vote was requested.**

	<p><b><u>In Favour</u></b>  <b>Cllr White</b>  <b>Cllr R Jennings-Evans</b>  <b>Cllr D Jennings-Evans</b>  <b>Cllr Turner</b>  <b>Cllr Hardless</b>  <b>Cllr Lewis</b>  <b>Cllr Marr</b></p> <p><b><u>Against</u></b>  <b>Cllr Du Cann</b>  <b>Cllr Gordon</b>  <b>Cllr Willgoss</b>  <b>Cllr Harris</b>  <b>Cllr Malcaus Cooper</b>  <b>Cllr Stevens</b>  <b>Cllr McGrath</b>  <b>Cllr Richardson</b></p> <p><b>The motion was defeated with 7 in favour, 8 against and no abstentions resulting in the Council affirming its original decision to set a budget of £505,201.26, resulting in a 44.42% increase on a band D property.</b></p>	
	<p><b>There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:12</b></p>	

Annex A

