



Minutes of the Meeting of the Downley Parish Council held on Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Councillors M Lazenby (Chairman presiding), S Biggs, P Brooks, A Lenard, C Lenton, A Mann, W Monroe-West, and W Steneskog (Acting Clerk)

Officers: None

1) Apologies for absence (8762/12/23)

Apologies were received from G Tandy (Clerk) Councillors K Chandarana and T Snaith and Buckinghamshire Councillor P Turner.

2) Declarations of interest and Dispensations(8763/12/23)

None

3) Minutes (8764/12/23)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

4) Public participation session (8765/12/23)

A member of the public spoke with regard to item 11) on the agenda, solar panels at the Community Centre asking if Councillors were aware of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and its impact on the provision of solar panels. He explained that 35-40% of polysilicon panels are manufactured in the Xinjiang region of China where the use of forced labour is rife. Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and its subsequent amendments, contractors, sub-contractors and their supply chain must not use any products or labour from slavery forced labour.

The Local Government Association recommend that any organisation buying such items needs to receive certification from their contractors that polysilicon panels have not been sourced from the Xinjiang region. The Member of the public also made clear that we should check with our insurers that they will accept batteries being installed within the building.

The Clerk was directed to investigate these issues

5) To receive and note the reports of Buckinghamshire Councillors (8766/12/23)

Cllr Turner's written report had been circulated to Council prior to the meeting

6) Planning Committee (8767/12/23)

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 14th November 2023 were received and noted. Councillor Brooks left the meeting at 19:40.

7) Councillor Reports (8768/12/23)

Cllr Monroe-West advised that she had seen information from the Transport and Roads group of Buckinghamshire Council that there were changes in the process of applying for funds, such as our proposed road crossing. Less funds were available now and that soft solutions should be considered before applying for further funds. She would investigate further.

Cllr Biggs reported on the success of the Christmas event held by the parent's association of Downley School.

Cllr Mann reported that she had attended a Buckinghamshire Council planning course, that had covered changes to legislation with the government seeking to streamline process' to address the housing crises. She highlighted the fact that the Highways Department appear to be divorced from the planning process and that in this situation infrastructure cannot be truly integrated.

8) Heritage Project (8769/12/23)

Cllr Biggs provided a progress report on the Heritage Project that seeks to display historic photographs at the relevant sites within the village. Many of the property owners have responded favourably to the idea.

He explained that grant funding existed through the National Lottery Fund with the minimum fund being available from £3,000. Costs for the project would include copyright of the images used, making and mounting of the plaques. It was agreed that costs should be quantified to allow council to consider whether grant funding would be appropriate.

9) Periodic payments (8770/12/23)

Council conducted an annual review of the various periodic payments that it is party to.

10) Christmas tree (8771/12/23)

Cllr Biggs addressed Council with a proposal that a Christmas tree be planted as Jubilee Green as a permanent fixture. Traditionally the Downley Day Committee have purchased a tree for the Green each Christmas and at their recent AGM it was suggested that planting a tree would be a more cost-effective solution. Having sought the advice of our gardening contractor, a Nordmann Fir was suggested, growing approximately 8 – 10 inches per annum. It was envisaged that a small tree of 3-4 foot be planted and pruned once a year. At this height, the tree would cost only £7.00. Councillors were concerned that a permanent Christmas tree might change the appearance of the green to its detriment and were invited to view the site prior to making any decision. On this basis it was agreed that this agenda item be carried over to a future meeting.

11) Solar Panels for the Community Centre (8772/12/23)

The Downley Old School Community Association had requested permission of the Council to have solar panels installed on the South facing roof of the Oak Room to benefit from green energy. DOSCA would cover the cost of this project as they would ultimately benefit from reduced electricity bills. The matter had been discussed during the public participation session of the meeting. A member of the public had raised concerns that the contractors should certify that the polysilicon panels required were sourced from outside of the Xinjiang region of China. This being necessary due to worries of slavery forced labour being used within Xinjiang. It was also suggested that the Council should make sure that their insurers accepted batteries and inverters

being installed within the building as part of the project. The Clerk was directed to look into these issues with the Council withholding permission for the works until these had been addressed.

12) Bank Reconciliations (8773/12/23)

The reconciliation of bank statements were noted as follows with Savings as at 10th October 2023, Lloyds Current as at 25th November 2023 and Unity Trust Current as at 30th November 2023.

13) Invoices (8774/12/23)

Payments made since the last meeting on 14th November 2023 were noted and approved. The schedule of invoices received through November and still outstanding was considered and authorised.

14) Clerks Progress Report (8775/11/23)

Noted

15) To note the date and place of the next meeting (8776/12/23)

Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7:30 p.m. at the Downley Community Centre

16) Closure of the meeting (8777/12/23)

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:16.

Chairman

Date