

# THE PARISH OF CONSTANTINE

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Minutes of a Parish Meeting of the Parish of Constantine held on Thursday October 13, 2022 at 7.30pm in The School Hall, Constantine. The Chairman of Constantine Parish Council, Cllr P.C.Carter presiding, Mr C.Chapman (Parish Clerk) in attendance.

**Present:** There were fifty-five adult members of the public present and three young people under the age of sixteen.

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting, the purpose of which was To seek the approval of Council Tax Payers to proceed with a request to the Secretary of State to apply for a loan.

## **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr A.Carter, Cllr Mrs E.Batley Birch, Cllr Mrs Scott, Mrs Carter and Mrs Clowes sent their apologies for absence.

## **2 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON MAY 19, 2022**

Having been previously circulated and agreed for accuracy at the Ordinary Parish Council meeting on June 16, 2021, Cllr Painter proposed, Cllr Andrew seconded and it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday May 19, 2022 are a true record and they were signed as such by the Chairman.

## **3 TO SEEK THE APPROVAL OF COUNCIL TAX PAYERS TO PROCEED WITH A REQUEST TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO APPLY FOR A LOAN.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting which had been called, as is required by protocol, to seek Council Tax payers' approval to apply for permission to access a loan should it be decided to try to purchase the Church Hall, the public convenience, the walled car-park, the 'new' car-park and the 'green under the trees'.

The Clerk explained the demands of the protocol which requires the Parish Council to seek permission from the Secretary of State simply to seek a loan. He also stated that, whatever may be decided at this meeting or elsewhere, there is no guarantee that the Diocesan Committee (which acts for the Church) will sell the Hall and the adjacent land to the community.

The following views were expressed in a lively and at times, ill-tempered and acrimonious meeting.

Mr Alan Pearce explained Constantine church's reasons and decisions to give up their rental of the Church Hall which paved the way for the Diocesan Finance Committee (Truro) to offer the building for sale with a view that it should go on the 'Open market'. Mr Pearce expressed his view from knowledge of the building that he considered it unsafe and a liability that should not be supported by public funds. Other members of the Constantine church community, attending the meeting shared his view.

A lady and gentleman supporting the WI expressed the view that the WI Hall had benefited financially from the closure of the Church Hall (as a community space for hire) and were concerned that the potential acquisition of the Church Hall by and for the parish as a community asset would undermine their position and the parish should not engage in increasing the precept to acquire it. They were not persuaded by the Parish Council's assurances that the converted and refurnished Church Hall would avoid competition with their existing hires or that there is sufficient demand to satisfy and protect the future viability of both venues.

A group of three people with knowledge and experience in the building trade, expressed the view that the Parish Council's plan had under-estimated the conversion costs and a larger Public Works Loans Board Loan would be required.

*Chairman's initials.....*

A gentleman expressed his concerns that insufficient detail of the Parish Council's Plans had been released into the public domain prior to the meeting and sought further assurances to justify expenditure through holding a full and open consultation and presentation meeting over a period of days, followed by a simple, but effective referendum of the whole Parish. He was not persuaded differently by the consultations that had already taken place and the point made from the Chair that such a full Consultation would not meet the procedural schedule required under the 'Right to Bid' process.

A gentleman repeatedly made the same point that "he did not want to pay an increased Parish Percept" until the topic of replacing and re-siting the Public Conveniences had been resolved (they are currently in the area known as the walled car park). The gentleman expressed his view that the re-sited Public Conveniences should be added to an enhanced and enlarged Sports Pavilion at the cost to the public purse rather than spend money on the Church Hall.

A gentleman spoke aggressively impugning the integrity of the Chair and another gentlemen verbally attacked the Parish Clerk's competence over the advice received and given in good faith to the Parish Council in procedural matters relating to the Public Works Loans Board Loan. Further confrontational statements were made suggesting both that Parish Councillors are unelected and that the Council as a whole is incompetent.

*At this point the three young people and their accompanying adults left the room*

There were several enquiries from the Floor at this juncture, seeking clarification on points of procedure and order which were answered by the Chair and the Parish Clerk

Mr Julian Mills, speaking as a resident and a qualified Architect of 'Studio Gather' said he had conducted a feasibility study into converting the Church Hall into a Community Use Amenity Building on a 'pro bono' basis (free of charge) which can be shared. He said the Church Hall as a Community Asset was a viable project. He further added that he was willing to offer more of his time (on a pro bono basis) to help with a presentation to the Parish.

Mr. Peter Dangerfield, speaking as a resident and also a qualified Architect, pointed out that the opportunity to purchase the Church Hall, Car Park and Green Space was a unique opportunity; if the Parish ignored this opportunity then the chance to acquire them would have gone forever.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Peter Dangerfield spoke again, expressing his doubts based on his experience with Planning Authorities, that Planning Permission would be given to re-site the car park from its current location to the green space below the 'Green Space under Trees' space which is in a Conservation Area.

Mrs Sandra Boreham stated that the proposed converted Church Hall and the retention of the adjacent community assets are justified by support given by Parishioners through Transition Constantine's research and questions about the future of the Church Hall.

A lady wanted to know if the car park and green space could be bought separately to the Church Hall. The Parish Clerk said this had been investigated earlier and the Estate Agent's, Savills, had not replied on this point but they had supplied the Parish Council with a copy of their Church Hall sales brochure. It was pointed out from the Chair that the Church Hall Sales Brochure appears to make it quite clear that bids for the car park and green space without the including a bid for the Church Hall building did not meet the Sales criterion.

Mr Richard Thomas expressed the view that the Parish Council needs to carry out a Building Survey and Property valuation so that it knew what it was buying and whether it represented good value to the Parish. Several others, including some members of the Church Community agreed with him. The Chair undertook to do this before making any offer on the building and pointed out that procedural motions to seek approval for a Public Works Loans Board Loan are needed to be in place first under the timing schedules and that Approval for a Loan did not imply a commitment to buy.

Three people separately expressed their opinion that the meeting should proceed to voting on the procedural items as had been explained by the Chair and the Clerk earlier. However their views were shouted down by the small number of individuals who appeared to be intent on disrupting the meeting and preventing any expression of opinion which differed from their own.

At this point the Chair decided to close the meeting to prevent the expressions of acrimony getting out of hand.

Agreed for accuracy at the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on October 20, 2022

*Chairman's initials.....*

Chairman

Formally adopted at the Annual Parish Meeting on May 18, 2023

Chairman