Bembridge Parish Council

Clerk's Report 21st May 2025

Matters arising from previous meeting:

Minute No: 35/25

All notes and comments from the discussion on the Committees schedule have hopefully been included in agenda item 10.13.

Event/Project updates:

Obviously, all thoughts of the office are currently with Debbie. To go from the high of the successful VE Day celebration events to the extreme low of finding out about Debbie's illness has been hard to take. I know everyone's thoughts and good wishes are with her.

I think it is fair to say that the VE Day events were a resounding success. Thanks mainly to Debbie's hard work. But we should also extend thanks to the care homes who took part, the Scouts and Brownies who decorated some of the crockery on display and attended the evening lamp lights of peace, the village church organisations, the businesses who donated food, Warners for the entertainment and Catherine and the ladies of the WI for helping to organise and host the lunch. Essentially there are just too many people to thank, it was a real group effort.

The container planting event was held on Sat 17th May and along with an event organised by the Scouts, means that we should have a few entries into our junior category for Bembridge in Bloom. All focus will now turn to using the many bedding plants donated by Warners around the village and promoting Bembridge in Bloom in June.

We've been contacted by South in Bloom to confirm entry and await a date for judging to take place.

On 14th may we organised the Annual Parish Meeting in the Village Hall which included a talk from the Bembridge Fort Trust on the past, present and future of Bembridge Fort.

Finally, on Saturday 31st May we will be holding the Community Groups Day in the Village Hall, if you are available to lend a hand for that event then just let the office know.

Lengthsmen updates:

The Lengthsmen have completed the new accessibility path at the back of the Village Hall. In addition to their normal maintenance work, they also were a vital help during the VE Day events.

In addition, they have also helped with Bembridge in Bloom by renovated a couple of old hanging baskets and fixing new brackets outside the Parish Office.

Items on the Agenda:

Agenda item 1: Election of Chair and Vice Chair

At the Annual Council Meeting the first order of business is to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the 2025/26 Council year.
Cllr P Kenny will begin the meeting as Chair and move to item 1. Following a vote and a successful election of a Chair, the new Chair (unless that is Cllr P Kenny) will take over the Chair from Cllr P Kenny and continue through the agenda from that point.

Agenda item 8: General Power of Competence

As previously explained, being elected at uncontested elections DOES count as 'elected'. Therefore as 10 of you were elected at the last ordinary elections the Bembridge Parish Council meets the criteria of 2/3rds of the Council elected. I also hold the CiLCA qualification.

The Bembridge Parish Council should therefore now officially declare that we meet the criteria and wish to use the General Power. We will then hold that power until the meeting after the next ordinary elections, when the Council will be required to again assess whether it meets the criteria and confirm whether or not it wishes to use the power.

Agenda item 9: Policies

It was suggested to me when studying for CiLCA that it is not always best practice to include a long list of all the Council policies for adoption at the first meeting. It can lead to a lack of scrutiny. So instead the plan is to spread the policies throughout the year.

However, at this first meeting it is important that the Council adopts its Standing Orders, (a basic rule book for how the Council should operate), and its Code of Conduct (how Councillors should act whilst carrying out their duties).

Agenda item 10: Committees

I have based the suggested Committees and schedule of meetings on the discussion that the Council had at its last meeting.
The Full Council need to officially set up each Committee, set and agree the Terms of Reference and appoint the members.
Ideally, we will have 7 members on each Committee.
The schedule of meetings is NOT SET IN STONE. It is included so that the Council can agree a basis for a calendar of meetings for the year, but also, I've included possible times and locations for meetings so that each Councillor has an idea of what they may be committing to when deciding which Committees to volunteer to be on.
One other point to make is that if volunteering for the Planning Committee be aware that some applications can include many supplementary planning papers (for large applications it can run into hundreds of papers), so it would be very beneficial if you had access to the internet in order to view, and possibly print off, papers from the IoW Planning portal.

Agenda item 12: Co-option

There are two vacancies on the Bembridge Parish council following the recent uncontested elections.

The Council should agree its Co-Option Policy and officially start the process of co-option.

This will mean that the two vacancies in each ward will be advertised online and around the village from Thursday 22nd May to 11th June.
If we receive more than 2 applications, then the Co-option Panel will interview each candidate at a date between the 12th of June and the Full Council meeting on Wednesday 18th June. At the Full Council meeting the Co-option Panel will state which two candidates it

recommends should be co-opted. The Full Council will then vote to co-opt two new Councillors.

The Council should therefore also appoint members to the Co-option Panel.

Agenda item 13: Budget 2025/26

The 2025/26 Budget has already been agreed at the Full Council meeting of 22nd January 2025. However, following the close of the 2024/25 budget the Finance and Governance Committee were able to restate the Reserves brought forward to 25/26 as follows:

<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u>	
Asset Maintenance Fund	£30,000
Tree Works Fund	£1,500
Community Fund	£1,500
Events Fund	£1,500
Lease Costs Fund	£1,500
Steyne Park Regeneration Fund	£35,000
Solar Panel Fund	£2,000
EV Charging Infrastructure Fund	£2,000
BNDP Fund	£3,000
LCWIP Fund	£1,000
<u>Capital Reserves:</u>	
The Point Toilets Capital Fund	£10,000
Parish Office Capital Fund	£20,000
Parish Assets Capital Fund	£27,833
General Reserve	£118,705

Explanation of changes:

Tree works - following on from the Tree Survey we have long been aware of the works that are required, but first we have needed to gain permission for works on trees with preservation orders. We now have this and are in the process of contracting out the work. It was agreed that we should carry forward savings in the 24/25 'maintenance of ROW/Tree works' budget and add an extra earmarked £1,500 that can be in addition to our tree works budget for 2025/26.

Events fund – various events such as VE Day Celebrations have been planned throughout 2024/25 but will not see the majority of expenditure until 2025/26. It was agreed that we should have an earmarked reserve of £1,500 to be available for the Environment & Neighbourhood Committee in addition to their budget for 2025/26.

Community fund – the committee agreed to a £700 sponsorship of the Street Fair in 2024/25, but this will not be paid until 2025/26. When this is added to the increases in sponsorship of the football teams, also agreed in 2024/25, and the annual sponsorship for the community bus, then our 'Donations/Grants/Sponsorship' line for 2025/26 does not leave a great deal for any other small grants. It was agreed that the Council create an extra earmarked 'Community Fund' of £1,500 that can be used by the Finance and Governance Committee to assess any further small grant applications in 2025/26.

Leasing funds – we are aware that our van lease comes to an end in Sept 2025, we have now received confirmation of the new lease costs which will be only slightly over the budgeted lease costs in 2025/26, however this leaves us with no cover for any additional costs upon returning the old vehicle. It was agreed to put aside another £1,500 to ensure that we are covered if any costs arise.

In addition it was agreed to add the following to our Earmarked Reserves:

Asset Maintenance Fund – It was agreed that a fund of £25,000 available for repairs and maintenance of Parish Council assets would be a sensible amount to aim to hold each year. However, we have already committed to re-pointing work at the Village Hall and emergency floor repairs, in addition to works at Mitten Road i.e the Bowls and Scout fields. It was agreed to add approx. £18,000 to the Asset Maintenance Fund bringing it to £30,000. This will allow us to cover the above-mentioned committed costs whilst hopefully remaining at around the £25,000 level for any future costs throughout the year.

Steyne Park Regeneration Fund – Finally it was agreed to add £25,000 to the Steyne Park Reg Fund. This will mean that we will begin 2025/26 with £35,000 in the fund with a further £25,000 being added from the 2025/26 precept, giving us a total fund by the end of 2025/26 of £60,000.

All of these changes are possible due to the careful management of the 2024/25 budget and are achievable whilst also meeting our stated financial objective from our business plan of covering at least 5x monthly average revenue expenditure.

The Full Council will need to receive and accept these changes.

Thank you

Mark Rochell

Clerk/RFO to Bembridge Parish Council

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Opening hours: Monday to Friday 09.30 – 12:30