

**MINUTES OF A PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD IN THE PARISH HALL ON Thursday
21st July 2022 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Le Connétable, Le Recteur, Don Connolly of Alex Picot, Sue Morin and 29 parishioners

APOLOGIES: Centeniers Plunkett, Ward, Le Luyer and Bisson all attending the Centeniers Quarterly meeting. Liz Breen, Maxine Fergusson, Kirsten Morel, Elaine Millar

The Connétable welcomed everyone and introduced Don Connolly of Alex Picot to the Assembly.

He then read the convening notice:

An Assembly of Principals and Electors of the Parish will be held in the Parish Hall at 7.30pm on Thursday 21st July 2022, to conduct the following business: -

- 1) Receive and if deemed advisable approve the Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on Wednesday 15th December 2021.
- 2) Receive and if deemed advisable adopt the audited accounts of the Connétable for the financial year ended 30 April 2022. The said accounts having been examined and unanimously approved by the Committee named for that purpose.
- 3) Approve the transfer of £200K from the General Account, with £100K going to each of the Roads Resurfacing and Building Reserve accounts.
- 4) Vote a sum of money for the upkeep of the by-roads of the Parish for the financial year ending 30 April 2023.
- 5) Approve the estimates of the funds required by the Parish for the financial year ending 30 April 2023.
- 6) Approve a rate of an amount that will produce for the Parish, income that is at least sufficient to satisfy the requirements as set out in the approved estimates and that the said rate be levied.
- 7) Name a committee to examine the accounts of the Connétable for the year ending 30 April 2023.
- 8) Appoint auditors to prepare the Connétable accounts for the Parish for the year ending 30 April 2023.
- 9) To accept, by way of gift, an area of land to the west of field 525 from St Johns 525 Ltd and to agree that the Connétable and Procurers should enter into a long-term lease for this land with the Government of Jersey for use by St Johns School.

Copies of the accounts will be available at the Parish Hall from Tuesday 12th July or on www.stjohn.je

The Connétable then confirmed that the notice had been displayed in the Church Box for the required period and had been duly signed by Reverend Beverley Sproats.

1. The minutes of the Parish Assembly held on the 15th December 2021, having been circulated, were proposed by Gary Grimshaw seconded by Stephen Masters and approved by the Assembly.
2. Don Connolly of Alex Picot went through the Accounts and gave details and explanations:

The Rate remained the same in 2021. The slight increase of income from the rates was from an increase in rateable quarters. The surcharge amount collected was lower than in previous years largely due to publicity through social media, reminding Parishioners of the final due date.

Rents & Hire of Hall – slightly higher due to Hycross Rent being moved from Sundry Income

Bank Interest - has been well managed and increased accordingly

Roads – Income has been steady. The increase in Computer Expenses relates to the purchase of an Island wide supply of Driving Licence Cards pro-rata across all Parishes.

Honorary Police – Income has been steady. Tetra (Police Radio) costs have increased, Island wide. As we now have a full complement of Officers this has incurred an increase in training and uniform costs. St John currently lead the way with regards to police driver training. Speed detection training is being undertaken by numerous Officers. Expenses are up by £8K but Hon Pol remain £1.5K under budget.

Parish Hall – Additional line added for some refurbishment which has been undertaken in the last year. This includes redecoration in the main hall, police office, rates office and foyer and a new hot water cylinder. The Parish Hall Insurance policies were extensively reviewed and adjusted accordingly.

Church/Rectory – Income and expenditure remained similar.

Administration – Greenwood Housing Association pay the Parish a percentage of the rent received to cover the cost of administering the association. Computer expenses have increased. Salaries have gone back to normal following an adjustment last year to cover the cost of two Secretaries for a two month period. Visite Royale costs were incurred with the balance offset against a sum received from the Bailiffs Office. This is a six yearly event.

Refuse – All OK

Youth Project – At last year's Assembly it was agreed to increase the contribution to the Youth Project in return for an increase in hours provided. To date, the hours haven't been increased so we are still paying the lower amount. This will be resolved in the coming months.

Bank charges – these have increased with the introduction of card machines, City Pay (Online system). There were some set up fee's incurred and we are charged a percentage of transactions taken as a fee.

Website Development – This is complete and the new stjohn.je website is available for all.

Surplus – There were transfers made into the Reserve Accounts

Donations – Last years Assembly agreed to increase the amount of Charitable donations from £9k to £11k

Don Connolly then gave details of assets and how they are divided to cover the financial year. Once the rate is set and the demands are sent out, we are generally approximately 16 weeks into the financial year. We retain enough to cover the period from May to August.

With a surplus of £123K it was suggested that £40k was transferred to the Roads Resurfacing and £10K to the General Roads Account.

The Assembly were asked for any questions:

Joe Foott asked for confirmation that the Refuse Contract used 28.7% of the total expenditure. This was confirmed by DC and AJ.

Gregor Allan asked about the debtors' prepayments – this relates to the Greenwood Housing Association Contribution which wasn't paid over last year. It also includes some invoices, Tresor and Honorarium payments all of which relate to timing.

Le Connétable mentioned the decrease in income from dog licences. 47% were paid for online. There were numerous reminders sent out to try and encourage Parishioners to avoid the additional charge from 1 February. This seems to have worked.

Tracey Le Brocq asked about the increase in bank charges. The introduction of the card machine increased the bank charges compared the previous years however we had been informed by our bankers that the cost of issuing and banking a cheque would be increasing to £2.50 per item from 70p per item. When a comparison was made the installing of a card machine was the best and most efficient way to go for all, giving Parishioners many more options to pay. It was noted that the budget for bank charges next year has been increased to £7k.

There being no further questions Le Connétable asked for a proposer and seconder of the Accounts. Philip Rondel proposed, and Tracey Le Brocq seconded. They were approved by the Assembly.

3. Le Connétable ask the Assembly to approve the transfer for £200K from the General Reserve to Roads Resurfacing in the amount of £100K and Building Reserve in the amount of £100K. This transaction was proposed by Stephen Masters and seconded by Kevin Armstrong. It was approved by the Assembly.
4. Le Connétable thanked the Roads Committee and Roads Inspectors for the time they had put in so far this year. Four Contractors have been asked to tender for work in and around the Parish. Three responses have been received on time. Approximately £30K will be spent from the Roads Resurfacing account. It was agreed to transfer a sum of £10.5K to the Roads Accounts for the general upkeep for the year. This was proposed by Gary Grimshaw and seconded by David Rouille. It was approved by the Assembly.

5. The Assembly were asked to review the proposed budgets for the coming year.

Honorary Police - budget has been reduced by £5k from last year as we now have a full complement of Officers, and all driver training is complete.

Refuse - There has been a large increase by the current Refuse Contractor for the coming year. We are having to budget for an increase of £49K from last year. Le Connétable and Procurers have met with Gembusters to discuss the increase, reasons and alternative options. An increase in running costs has prompted the rise with legislation, fuel costs and premises being the main cause. Following negotiations, it was agreed that we would pay the increased amount for ten of the twelve months of this year, with May and June remaining at last year's amount. It was agreed that if the Parish had insisted on sticking to the contract the Contractor would have had no option but to end the agreement. The current contract ends in 2025.

Le Connétable gave details of different options that may be available in the future including fortnightly collections, ending kerbside recycling or the Parish setting up it's own operation. Currently the cost per household per collection is £1.36 – this is regarded as reasonable. The initial cost of setting up a new operation to include premises, vehicles, staff and equipment is not feasible at the moment but will certainly be looked at before the contract ends in 2025.

Gardening Contracts - All OK. The Parish took part in 'No mow May' and although the idea and reasoning was well thought out it has left a problem in June and July with the workload being too great. This will be addressed next year.

Emergency Planning – A Community Support Group is in the process of being set up with interested members being invited to a workshop in St Clements who have a very active Community Support in place. These funds will also go towards event planning and training.

Liberation Expenses – Costs incurred for the Street Party and Liberation Celebrations will be used from this year's budget.

Parish Magazine – This will assist with advertising on behalf of the Parish for whatever might be required during the year. For example, honorary police recruitment or advertising of events.

Twinning – Amount has been budgeted for events being held with Les Tilleuls in Normandy. They are visiting on the 24th & 25th September.

Le Connétable asked the Assembly for any questions relating to the budgets.

Joe Foott asked how long the Parish can sustain the continued increases in refuse/recycling costs? Since it was introduced in 2005 the cost has increased significantly and takes 28.7%, a third of our annual expenditure. AJ said that although we are not legally obliged to, it is a service which the Parish offers its Parishioners. It was agreed that Parishioners need to be aware of the cost of recycling. Tracey Le Brocq asked if the Contractors would be referred to the Competition Regulator. AJ confirmed that, as this problem has arisen with numerous other Parishes, where an outside contractor is used, that the Committee des Connétable was going to discuss with regards to resolving the problem Island wide. AJ confirmed that we are working hard to try and

get the best service, going forward, but for now we need to take it as we need a good reliable service.

Nick Crocker – Churchwarden noted that bank interest is increasing but still at a rate which is lower than inflation. Will the Parish be accelerating its Capital Expenditure? AJ confirmed that the Parish are keen to go ahead with the plans for the church roof but are still awaiting prices from the preferred contractor. He also confirmed that the roads and the parish field (371) would also be invested in.

The church and the parish hall clocks are still not working despite numerous efforts. We are now awaiting a specialist company to come over from the UK, but unfortunately this is unlikely to be until September.

Tracey Le Brocq asked about the School House expenses, and why this is the responsibility of the parish? AJ confirmed that the parish owns School House and has a tenant in place. He has tried to find agreements with regards to the façade of the parish school building, but has not been able to do so, although he is aware that the parish owns this part of the school.

The rents on parish properties have not been increased in recent years, mainly due COVID, but this is in hand and under review.

Tracey Le Brocq asked about the Charitable donations and how it is decided how they are allocated? AJ confirmed that an amount of £11k was agreed last year – an increase of £2K. All the recipients are registered charities, who provide us with a copy of their audited accounts, apart from St Johns Netball Club. The Connétable and Procureurs added the RNLI and JLA to the list this year and increased a number of others. We have received feedback from some of the charities as to how they have been able to assist our Parishioners.

In summary it was confirmed that our total expenditure is budgeted to increase by 18.3%. Since the rate was last increased in 2007 RPI has gone up by 47.9%. An increase in the rate is proposed of 5%.

AJ asked the Assembly for a proposer for the budgets as presented. Philip Rondel proposed the budgets and Tracey Le Brocq seconded. The Assembly approved.

6. Le Connétable asked the Assembly to agree an increase in the Parish rate from 1p per quarter to 1.05p per quarter. This was proposed by Stephen Hewlett, seconded by Richard Dupre and agreed by the Assembly.
7. The Connétable thanked the Committee Paroissiale for the work they had done with this years accounts. This Committee was made up of representatives from the Roads, Rates, Church and Honorary Police along with three independents. The Assembly agreed that the same Committee could go forward for next year. The three independents, Philip Rondel, Richard Dupre and Ian Touzel agreed that they were willing to stand again. This was proposed by Stephen Masters and seconded by Ron Le Herissier and approved by the Assembly
8. Le Connétable thanked Don Connolly from Alex Picot for the work he has done for the Parish so far this year. He asked for a proposer for the next financial year to continue with Alex Picot. This was proposed by Richard Dupre and seconded by Peter Pallot and approved by the Assembly.

9. Le Connétable gave the Assembly details of the proposal for the School Playing field. The Parish has always had ambition to provide a playing field for the school. Education will be offered a 40 year lease at a ‘peppercorn’ rent – maybe £100.00 per year, on the land. The Government will then provide the playing field and be responsible for any costs incurred. Should the Parish be in a situation where it must cover some costs the rent will be increased accordingly.

Nicholas Crocker asked for clarification that there will be no capital expenditure to the Parish, which Le Connétable confirmed.

Tracey Le Brocq asked if £100.00 was sufficient as it was being leased to the Government and should this not be more. Le Connétable advised that we are not looking for revenue from the agreement we want to provide the school with a playing field. All maintenance and costs will be met by Education but should any costs be incurred it would be brought back to an Assembly to agree. The owner of the field wanted it gifted to the Parish which we have honoured.

Stephen Masters said that the costs of maintaining these areas was very high and he thinks that the Parish are doing a great thing by helping the school. An artificial surface can be used for 12 months of the year.

Joe Foott asked if there would be limits put on the usage of the playing fields with regards to flood lights etc. Le Connétable confirmed that any usage would have to be approved by Planning and would suggest that time limits are placed on certain activities. There being no further questions Le Connétable asked for a proposer for the scheme. This was proposed by Stephen Hewlett and seconded by Stephen Masters. It was approved by the Assembly.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8.35pm. It was followed by a short Q & A with Le Connétable.

Philip Rondel asked if we could expect to see our new Deputies attending Parish Assemblies in the future, as is expected. The Connétable welcomed Hilary Jeane who had attended the Parish Assembly and confirmed that he had received apologies for two of the others. There are plans in place to hold regular ‘Meet the Deputies’ in all three Parish Halls in our Constituency and a venue in St Helier.

Hilary’s new role has meant that we now have a new editor for the Parish Magazine. There will be a half page article from each of the new representatives in the next edition of ‘L’Etoile du Nord.

John Renouf asked if there is likely to be Cycle Racks installed nearer to the shops in the Precinct as when the bikes are left on the pavement when cycling groups meet it is dangerous and hazardous. Le Connétable confirmed that the Parish is still trying to obtain the area of land to the west of the Precinct from IHE. If, and when, this happens racks will be erected. The precinct area is privately owned and, at present, the owner will not agree to the racks. There are changes happening in the vicinity with both the Spice Shop and Haute Cuisine closing. The Road Safety Group is having regular meetings and is working towards finding a solution for the cyclists.

Le Connétable.....