

MINUTES OF A PARISH ASSEMBLY

Thursday 11 July 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present

Kevin Lewis – Connétable (Chairperson)
Richard Le Quesne – Procureur du Bien Public
Martin Roberts – Procureur du Bien Public
Marco Vieira – Executive Officer

36 Parishioners in attendance

In attendance

Don Connolly – Alex Picot Auditors

1. Meeting opening

The Connétable opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

2. Apologies received

It was noted that apologies for their absence had been received from: Roads Inspector Duncan Maguire, Deputy Kovacs, Rev Evans, Rates Officer Julian Clyde-Smith and Roads Inspector Katrina Wyatt.

3. Convening Notice

The Convening Notice was read by the Executive Officer.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

Following a proposition by Deputy Ferey, seconded by Michael Officer and approved by a majority of those present, the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 June 2024, were adopted and signed.

5. To receive and, if approved, adopt the Audited Accounts for the financial year ended 30th April 2024

Connétable Lewis presented an overview of the accounts for the financial year ended on 30th April 2024. Don Connolly, a partner at Alex Picot & Co, then gave an explanation of the role of the auditors in checking the accounts. He emphasised that, although these accounts do not conform to the UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP), he considers that they do show a true and fair view of the Parish's financial position.

The Connétable invited questions regarding the accounts.

The MCO Fund

A query was asked about the use of the funds held within the MCO Fund, particularly concerning the potential missed opportunities for investment in affordable housing. The question highlighted the possibility of establishing a shared equity scheme to provide housing for parishioners, instead of retaining the cash.

The Executive Officer explained that a definitive decision on the use of the MCO Fund had not yet been made because of ambiguities in the guidelines and policies established by previous assembly acts. He also alluded to the ongoing uncertainty in the building industry and high interest rates which is impacting people from securing a mortgage to buy a property. In St Saviour alone, it was reported that over 200 homes were up for sale, with some properties being on the market for over a year.

He added that, as a temporary measure, the funds were being placed on high-interest deposit products so that we can maximize returns. He noted that the funds are currently earning between 4.9% and 5.2% p.a.

Graeme Witts expressed disappointment regarding the lack of clarity in the policy governing the establishment of the MCO fund. He highlighted concerns that this ambiguity had hindered the development of plans to provide affordable housing within the parish, an issue that had also been raised in the previous year.

Connétable Lewis acknowledged the need for clearer policy guidelines, however also mentioned that the current building industry and high interest rates making it difficult for islanders to get on the market prevented him from pursuing such a project to provide homes. He also mentioned that not all was lost and that the cash held was being investment appropriately at the time the rates being very high.

He proposed a meeting with former Procurers and current officials for the purpose of better defining the objectives of the MCO Fund.

Graeme Witts welcomed the invitation to collaborate on this initiative, along with Peter Maurant, both agreeing to participate in the forthcoming meeting to help clarify the fund's policy framework.

Peter Maurant asked: Has the Parish sought professional advice on managing the approximately two million pounds cash held in the MCO fund?

Don Connolly explained that it is not in the Parish's practice to invest funds through investment companies, emphasising the importance of not gambling with parishioners' money. This was the general opinion of the Connétable and Procureurs.

Executive officer also commented that the Parish had in the past explored with two firms about cash management options, however, noted concerns from Don Connolly, had prevented parish to proceed with these options.

Following this discussion, Procureur Le Quesne proposed the creation of an informal group, to include the former Procurers du Bien Publique (Graeme Witts and Peter Maurant), to develop a clear policy for managing the MCO fund. He suggested that the group should report back to the Assembly by the end of September 2024.

On a proposition by Procureur Le Quesne, seconded by Peter Maurant, it was agreed, with no votes against, to establish the informal group.

Donations to charities

Deputy Doublet asked: Why do the accounts show disparities in funding allocations among charities, with some receiving no funding at all, and is there guidance available on the parish website for funding applications?

The Executive Officer went on to explain that in the past the parish had actively solicited grant applications from charities. However, following a review by the Connétable and the Procureurs it had been decided to shift the responsibility to charities to apply for funding, saving parish resources that were previously used to chase applications. He noted that the small grant amounts, typically between £400-£600, might not be sufficiently impactful, possibly discouraging applications.

Changes on the process had been clearly communicated with all existing organisations. It was mentioned that the parish will be moving its application process to fully digital available online from 1 January 2025 once the governance framework was in place.

La Cloche magazine

Geof Morris asked: What accounts for the £10,000 increase in funding for La Cloche magazine?

The Executive Officer explained that the editorial team for La Cloche, which had previously been comprised of up to ten volunteers, is reduced to three. This decrease has placed a greater burden on the remaining volunteers and the publisher, who has had to take on additional editorial responsibilities, resulting in increased costs. He mentioned that there are some funds available in the magazine's account

to partially offset these expenses for the current year, but these would not suffice for all four quarters.

The question of who retains the advertisement revenues was also raised, and it was confirmed that these revenues go to the publisher. The Connétable agreed to re-evaluate this arrangement with the publisher with the aim to reduce the costs of producing the magazine.

Legal & professional fees

Mary O’Keeffe asked why has there been a 33% increase in legal and professional fees?

The Executive Officer explained the make-up of this expense category and what changes had occurred in the last financial year.

Human Resources

Mary O’Keeffe asked is HR function outsourced? The Executive Officer replied: ‘Yes’.

Pensions paid

Deputy Ozouf asked the auditor or the parish to comment on the pension payments of £165,000, up from £146,000, and on the Parish’s future liability for pensions.

The Executive Officer explained that the increase was linked to RPI increase and had been budget for. Don Connolly, Auditor, explained that, following a decision by the Constable and the Procureurs in the early 2000s, it is not the Parish’s policy to recognise the future pensions liability within the parish accounts, and, because these pension payments are funded from current revenue, an actuarial valuation of the future liability is not required.

Question by Deputy Ozouf: What is the purpose of these accounts and why do they not conform with certain financial standards such as UK GAPP?

Answer: Don Connolly stated that actuarial calculations are not required under this accounting policy set out within the accounts are merely prepared in accordance with the Rates Law and not UK GAPP standards, where such valuations and recognition of long-term liability is shown within the balance sheet.

Storm Cieran events

Peter Mourant congratulated the Parish on its efforts in clearing up after the storm and asked if the Parish had discussed getting funding from DFI.

The Executive Officer said that this was discussed extensively by the constables and the government however, with the parishes being independent authorities separate from the government, therefore no funding would be made available to cover major storm events. Such costs arising should be picked up by the Parish. It was noted that Bailiff launched a fund for islanders who suffered hardship as a result of Storm Ciarán.

Tresor Fund

Deputy Doublet asked why the payment into the Tresor Fund had increased.

The Executive Officer explained that this increase was mainly to cover the cost of repairing storm damage and increased property expenses. He pointed out that the parishes are bound by ancient laws to covers all the costs relating to upkeep and maintenance of the church, rectory and church grounds.

Deputy Doublet further asked if the church accounts are available online? The Executive Officer said that they would be made available on the Parish’s website.

There being no further questions, on a proposition by Mary O’Keeffe, seconded by Deputy Ferey, the accounts for the financial year ended 30 April 2024 were approved with 18 votes in favour and no votes against.

Grands Vaux Youth Project

Before proceeding to Item 6 of the notice, Connétable Lewis addressed the Assembly, stating that before

moving on to next item on the agenda he would like to introduce Sophie Martin, Senior Youth Worker at the Grands Vaux Youth Project and Jackie Almeida, Team Leader from Jersey Youth Service. They will explain a little bit about what they offer for young people in the St Saviour community.

Sophie and Jackie thanked the Parish for their financial support and explained how these funds have assisted the Project. They directed the Assembly to view the information boards at the back of the hall, which displayed the activities and achievements of the children.

Connétable Lewis then thanked Sophie and Jackie for attending the Assembly. It was proposed that increase of funding to take into account inflation be considered as it was noted that the grant fees had not risen for several year. Connétable agreed to consider for next years estimates.

6. In accordance with the terms of Article 21(2) of the Rates (Jersey) Law 2005, receive and, if approved, adopt the Estimates for the financial year ending 30 April 2025

Connétable Lewis gave a brief overview of the Estimates for the financial year ending on 30th April 2025.

The Executive Officer then explained the Estimates in more detail by referring to Schedule 1 and the following points were highlighted:

Projected Net Expenditure Increase:

The projected net expenditure increase is £258,230, allocated across several key areas:

- **Salaries & Contributions:** Anticipated increases of 4-7% across all cost centres to maintain competitive and skilled staffing, resulting in a rise of approximately £115,000 across all service centres.
- **Highways Infrastructure:** Significant investments in resurfacing Sunshine Avenue, rejuvenating the Val Aume footpath, and essential drainage improvements at the Depot and Rectory Lane. This equates to an additional expenditure of approximately £60,000 compared to the previous year.
- **Property Infrastructure:** Upgrades include replacing the fencing at St Saviour's recreational ground to enhance security, future-proofing infrastructure, and replacing mains drains at the parish Depot. This results in an increase of approximately £65,000 from the previous year.
- **Community Support:** Ongoing financial backing for local charities and groups, alongside organizing the significant Liberation 80 event to foster community spirit. This reflects an increase of approximately £18,000 from the previous year.

These estimates aim to ensure the continued effective management of parish resources and the enhancement of community services and infrastructure.

The Connétable thanked the Executive Officer for presenting the estimates and then opened the floor for questions.

Refuse and Recycling - Weighing equipment

Colin Ireson asked does the weighing process equate to two lifts where the truck drives onto weights, and is £4,000 to £5,000 allowed for this in the budget so we can explore this?

Answer: We are going to explore all options before proceeding with the purchase of equipment.

Michael Officer asked is there more than one weighing bridge at the Recycling Centre at La Collette on the island that we can use?

Answer: Yes, but this was managed by private contractors and there is likely to be a charged, because it falls outside the scope of core services (recycling and glass and refuse collections). General waste data is available and soon will be online along with the glass too.

Peter Mourant asked who is the Parish's recycling waste provider, and do all Parishes use them?

Answer: Abbey Waste is the provider, the sole contractor for managing the recycling materials (Cardboard, plastics and light metals).

Honorary Police

Question from the Chef de Police: Thank you to the Connétable and Procureurs for their support. He went on to say that central Government should contribute to the police radio licence and at present this charge is split between all parishes and as there are three deputies present at the Assembly perhaps they would like to support this suggestion in the States.

Connétable Lewis said he would raise this at the next Comité des Connétables meeting.

Colin Ireson asked if this amount is adequate funding?

Answer: Chef de Police stated that the current funding is adequate as it provides for seventeen officers. He noted that while an increase in officers would require additional funds, he is satisfied with the current amount.

Charitable & Community Support

Graeme Witts asked how much is given to Grands Vaux Youth Project?

Answer: £21,000

Graeme Witts proposed making a small increase of £4,000 to make this payment up to £25,000.

Before this proposition was made, there was a general discussion about what the extra £4,000 would be spent on. It was noted that the amount payable to the project had been the same for three years, despite inflation and rising costs. It was asked if this amount would suffice. Jackie from Youth Services said that with this support from the Parish, they can provide much more and are very grateful for these funds.

Peter Mourant asked if the Parish fund St Martin's Youth Project?

Answer from the Connétable: No, St Martin supports this.

Colin Ireson queried that in charitable grants, £8,000 was paid to the St Saviour Battle of Flowers Association last year, but there is nothing in this year's accounts. Why is this?

Answer: The Connétable explained that the association did not provide the Parish with a set of audited accounts, which was the main reason. However, he advised that audited accounts have been received this year, and therefore, the association will receive the grant.

A further suggestion was made that the Parish should return to providing a detailed breakdown of all charitable organisations, as was done previously. The Executive Officer agreed that this would be implemented for next year.

The Assembly was reminded that they were in the middle of a proposition to increase the grant to the Grands Vaux Youth Project.

PROPOSITION: On a proposition made by Graeme Witts, seconded by Peter Mourant, it was proposed to increase the sum payable to the Grands Vaux Youth Project by £4,000, making the total grant payable £25,000. The proposition passed with 14 votes in favour and 3 against.

Connétable Lewis thanked the Executive Officer for providing his report and asked if there were any questions in regard to the Estimates.

There were no further questions.

PROPOSITION: On a proposition by Edward Trevor, seconded by Chef de Police Steven Laffoley-Edwards and approved by a majority of those present, the Estimates for the financial year ending 30 April 2025 were approved.

8 - In accordance with the terms of Article 21(3) of the Rates (Jersey) Law 2005, approve a Parish Rate for the Financial year ending 30 April 2025.

The Connétable informed the Assembly that it was thought necessary to increase the rate for this year to 1.55 pence and this proposal had been supported by the Accounts Committee. The Connétable then asked if there are any amendments to the proposition.

There were no amendments.

On a proposition by Steve Wyatt, seconded by Doreen Le Roy the rate was set at **1.55** with 20 votes in favour and 2 vote against.

The Connétable thanked the Accounts Committee for their help and guidance with this year's accounts and estimates.

9 - To elect an Accounts Committee to examine the Audited Annual Accounts for the financial year ending 30 April 2025 and Estimates for the financial year ending 2026.

The Connétable read out the list of those currently on the Committee.

The members of the Accounts Committee for 2024-2025 will be:

- The Connétable
- The two Procureurs du Bien Public
- The Rector
- The Chef de Police or, in his/her absence, a representative from the Centeniers
- The Senior Deputy or, in his/her absence, a representative from the Deputies
- The Chairman of the Rate Assessment Committee or, in his/her absence, a representative from that Committee
- A representative of the Churchwardens
- A representative of the Roads Committee
- A representative from the Parish Assembly Stuart Mottershaw
- A representative from the Parish Assembly Aynslie Le Brun

Edward Trevor: Should Rates Assessors be on the accounts committee, and should the chairman be independent?

Answer: Chef de Police stated that having a Rates Assessor on the committee provides valuable insight and is just one voice among many on the committee.

Connétable Lewis did not think to be an issue as the assessment is a part of an annual process which would not conflict with accounts committee duties.

No further questions.

PROPOSITION: On a proposition by Leslie Bechelet, seconded by Stuart Mottershaw, and approved by a majority of those present, it was agreed to appoint the Members of the Accounts Committee for a further year.

The Connétable thanked the Committee and appreciated their support and commitment.

10 - To appoint Alex Picot & Co. Chartered Accountants, as auditors of the Annual Accounts for the financial year ending 30 April 2025

PROPOSITION: On a proposition by Procureur Roberts, seconded by Lesley Norton and approved by a majority of those present, it was agreed to retain the services of Alex Picot and Co for a further year.

Close of Business

There being no further comments or questions, the Connétable thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed 19:50pm.


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Connétable Kevin Lewis
President of the Assembly of Electors

