



MINUTES OF AN ASSEMBLY OF PRINCIPALS, OFFICERS AND ELECTORS

An Assembly of Principals, Officers and Electors of the Parish of St Martin was duly convened and held in the Public Hall on Thursday 18th July 2024 at 7.00pm.

The Connétable Karen Shenton Stone welcomed all present and reminded the Assembly that they could sign the Attendance Book at the end of the meeting if they so wished. It was noted that there were 30 attendees.

Apologies were received from Mick Jehan and Amanda Sutton. The Convening Notice was read by the Parish Secretary.

Item 1

Receive and if deemed advisable, approve the Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 4th March 2024.

The Connétable reminded those assembled that the Minutes had been available from the Public Hall and copies are on the seats. After due consideration, Mr William Sutton proposed the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2024 be approved and Reverend Peter Stone seconded the proposal.

A show of hands was in favour of the proposal, none were against.

Item 2

Receive and if deemed advisable, adopt the audited accounts of the Connétable for the financial year ended 30 April 2024. The said accounts having been previously verified by a firm of Chartered Accountants, and examined and approved by the Committee appointed for that purpose.

The Connétable made a short speech to the Assembly covering the following points:

- The last 12 months had been as busy and challenging as ever for the Public Hall. There was a huge variety of tasks to be undertaken including rates collection, policing, property management, dog licences, firearms licences, project management, fund raising, potholes, speeding, branchage, noise complaints, car parking and refuse to name just a few!
- Storm Ciaran had had a significant impact on the Parish with St Martin being in the path of the tornado. A considerable amount of trees and hedgerows had been decimated and buildings damaged with roofs being ripped off. Despite the major devastation the clear up costs had only amounted to £15,607 and these had been covered by the Reserve Fund. The Connétable expressed her sincere gratitude to everyone who had helped with the clear up and in particular Chef de Police, Mr Gordon Jones, who had co-ordinated the clear up and Vingtenier, Mr Sam Falle, who had opened up the Public Hall for emergency accommodation.
- This year the Parish had undertaken several projects:
 - The Public Hall exterior had been repaired and these works had proved far more extensive than originally envisaged. However, this had been completed at the beginning of 2024 together with a new irrigation system for the hanging baskets.

The Public Hall had recently been awarded 2nd place by the RJA & HS for best Parish Hall floral display.

- Maison Scolaithe had undergone a major refurbishment including repairs to the roof, external redecoration, new kitchen and flooring. It was hoped this would be rented out in the near future.
- The Village Playground had been completed to much acclaim and was proving very popular. The total cost of £133,541 had been largely covered by donors with the Parish only incurring costs of £2,200. The Connétable expressed her sincere gratitude to the donors for their significant support. At the moment funds were being raised for the installation of a Viking Swing to appeal to older children. The Connétable expressed sincere gratitude to Mrs Emily Jennings for her help and advice with the design and installation of the playground.
- The Village Tea Room had been refurbished and outside benches purchased to facilitate the new tenancy.
- The Village Green continued to be a vital and much loved asset. A new tractor and mower had been purchased to help with ongoing maintenance.

The Connétable highlighted that there were still many projects in the pipeline including the Wetland Area, the Rectory Barn, the Dukes Wood Footpath and the new refuse collection point in Gorey. These would be highlighted in future editions of the Parish magazine.

The Connétable advised that there had been some changes in the staffing of the Public Hall. She welcomed Mr Charles Alluto as the new Parish Secretary and Ms Emily Vautier as Accounts Manager. She advised that Mrs Janine Milner had decided to go part-time and was very fortunately staying on as Assistant Parish Secretary. She gave special thanks to the rest of the Public Hall team including Caroline Troy (Assistant Parish Secretary) Mr Paul Sheehan (Parish Foreman), Mr Alan Le Corre (Assistant Parish Foreman), Mrs Jacqui Phipps (Honorary Police Secretary) and Mrs Sharon Williams (Parking Control Officer). She also extended her gratitude to the two Procureurs, Mr Lester Richardson and Mr William Sutton for their help and support, the Rector Pete Stone for helping facilitate a good working relationship with the Parish, the Roads Inspectors for ensuring the Parish had some of the best maintained roads in the Island, and the Honorary Police for their considerable voluntary work and due diligence on a 24/7 basis. Thanks were also given to Mr Don Connolly and Mr Sam Luce at Alex Picot. Finally the Connétable thanked all of the Parishioners for their support, comments and feedback. As ever she felt the Rates Assembly was an incredibly important demonstration of true democracy in action.

The Connétable then introduced Mr Don Connolly of Alex Picot to the Assembly and he proceeded to run through the accounts ended 30 April 2024 for the benefit of the attendees. In particular, the following points were highlighted:

Procedures:

Following the appointment of Ms Emily Vautier ACCA, as the Parish Accounts Manager, Alex Picot had been less involved in the overall preparation of the accounts and had solely focused on their audit role.

Income:

The rates income had increased last year by £61,046 due to the rates having been raised from 1.28 to 1.38. This had been after a number of years in which there had been no increases by the Parish in recognition of the impact of Covid and the cost of living crisis.

Deposit interest had increased significantly since 2022 and amounted to £21,204 for the financial year. Together with a range of sundry income generated from dog licences, public hall hire and administration fees for the housing trusts, the total income for the year amounted to £884,575.

Expenditure:

It was noted that the Comité des Connétables costs had risen to £26,849 and this was largely due to digital transition projects such as the online portal for dog licences. Likewise the Parish magazine costs had increased to £6,400 in line with the other Parishes. Salaries had risen to £217,308 reflecting new appointments, and were above the Estimated figure for the year, as there had been a small error when calculating the Estimate last year in relation to pension and social security costs.

Professional and legal fees were high and this was in part due to the increased costs suffered as a result of data protection and subject access requirements, project development costs and the acquisition of Field 720.

Tresor costs had increased by 10K to reflect additional repair work and the preparation of the quinquennial inspection and report.

Roads Committee expenditure remained high but was slightly under budget. The main resurfacing projects for the year included Rue des Buttes, Rue du Rué and Rue des Raïses. There had also been an uplift in road cleaning costs some of which related to clearance after Storm Ciaran.

Properties maintenance was over budget largely due to the additional repair works required to the exterior of the Public Hall including rendering and guttering. Likewise the Village Green and Car Park expenditure had increased as a result of new benches, security cameras and fencing for the new wetland area. In terms of the new playground the Parish had only incurred costs of £2,200 due to successful fund raising generating over £131,000.

Honorary Police expenditure was just under budget and it was noted that there had been increased costs since 2023 which largely related to recruitment costs and various equipment requirements.

Reserve Funds:

It was noted that Reserve Funds were a valuable means of avoiding spikes in expenditure and enabled the Parish to forward plan. This included such projects as the Cemetery extension whereby £15,000 had been set aside to help offset future construction costs.

Special Votes:

In relation to Special Votes it was noted that expenses for the Youth Centre Worker were higher than expected but this was solely due to the States invoicing system and there being a delay which resulted in 5 quarters being invoiced in a 12 month period. This had now been resolved.

Balance In Hand:

It was noted that the expenditure for the year amounted to £962,027 against an estimate of £933,950. The resulting deficit had been taken out of the general account balance. Mr Connolly emphasised the importance of the Parish having sufficient balance in hand to cover its day to day costs until it was in receipt of the income from the rates. Equally the value of the Reserve Fund had been demonstrated with the event of Storm Ciaran. The Fund had provided the Parish with £15,607 to offset these exceptional costs.

La Vielle Ecole Project:

It was noted that the rental income generated by the site was being utilised to pay back the loan including interest. For the last twelve months it was noted that interest amounted to £127,146. In addition £66,397 had been spent on the refurbishment of Maison Scholaithe.

Questions were then received from the Assembly:

Village Green and Car Park Reserve Fund:

Deputy Steve Luce enquired which criteria needed to be filled to justify using funds from the Village Green and Car Park Reserve Fund. William Sutton responded that the Reserve Fund had been established for exceptional expenditure such as a potential extension to the car park as opposed to day to day maintenance.

Mr Alan Phillips enquired whether the Education Department should help with the costs for any extension given that the car park was being utilised by both teachers and parents alike. It was also noted that part of the school's playing field could be used for parking and Mr Peter Germain advised that that this had been suggested when the new school was being constructed. Mr Michael O'Brien was of the view that the Parish should be charging the school for using the car park as he remained concerned that it prevented other users from accessing the village green facilities including the café.

The Connétable responded that she would write to the Education Minister to express the views of the Assembly.

Diversity and Inclusion Reserve Fund:

Deputy Luce enquired as to the purpose of the Diversity and Inclusion Reserve Fund.

The Connétable responded that the fund had been established to improve accessibility to the Public Hall and this had materialised during the 2022 elections with the provision of a ramp at the rear entrance. It was envisaged that further improvements would be required for the 2026 election and that the reserve fund would help offset any such costs incurred.

There being no further questions, Mr Peter Germain proposed the accounts be adopted and Mr Colin De La Haye seconded the proposal. A unanimous show of hands showed in favour of the proposal.

Item 3

Place at the disposal of the Roads Committee an amount required for the upkeep of the by-roads during the financial year ending 30 April 2025.

The Connétable stated that the proposed sum for the Roads Account for the forthcoming year was set at £154,000. This reflected the increases in the price of tarmac which had recently gone up by at least 10%. The Roads Committee also benefitted from driving licence and fine income giving them total budgeted expenditure in the region of £185,000.

There being no comments or questions, this amount was proposed by Connétable Karen Stone and seconded by Mr Gerald Le Cocq. A show of hands resulted in a unanimous approval.

Item 4

Consider the estimates for the presumed requirements for the financial year ending 30 April 2025 and tax the rate accordingly.

Procureur William Sutton highlighted the following points on the forthcoming yearly Parish expenditure:

- The estimated income of £109,239 reflected an increase in rental income to £62,089, interest rate income of £15,000 and an increase in administration charges for the housing trust to £12,000 per annum.

- Administration costs had increased overall due to a range of factors including the new rental agreement for the office printer, the new till system, a nominal increase in bank charges and an increase in sundry charges to cover the bin store at Gorey Pier.
- Comité des Connetables budget is pre-set by the office of the Comité and includes all island Parishes IT programme maintenance and staffing of the office prorated.
- Professional & legal fees had reduced as it was hoped less input would be required by the Data Protection Officer and Parish lawyer. However, there were still significant sums relating to professional fees for the Rectory Barn project including a bat survey.
- Salaries had increased to reflect the new staffing arrangements in the Public Hall as well as ensuring all associated costs such as pensions and social security were fully covered.
- Refuse & Recycling costs were in line with the 3 year agreement.
- Maintenance of Properties was significant lower for the next 12 months. The current figures included relevant insurance costs, heating, electric and cleaning for the Public Hall, the sum of £8,500 for essential internal refurbishment works for the Public Hall, and the sum of £12,000 for other properties including new garage doors for the La Retraite houses. A small sum of £2,000 had been set aside for the inspections and certification of the playground equipment.
- Reserve funds had been reduced to a total figure of £29,000. It was noted that the Church Projects Reserve Fund had been increased to £10,000 to reflect the findings of the Quinquennial Report and a new Reserve Fund had been established for the interior of the Public Hall. This recognised that the Public Hall was in need of some refurbishment and reconfiguration to reflect current standards.
- The estimated expenditure for the year amounted to £980,072 which was an £18,000 increase compared to the previous year.

Questions were then received from the Assembly:

Village Green & Car Park Reserve Fund:

Deputy Luce enquired whether sufficient funds were being set aside to facilitate an extension to the car park. Mr William Sutton responded that it was difficult to achieve the right balance between ensuring that the reserve funds were adequate whilst the rates were not unduly increased. The Connétable was hopeful that the Education Department would contribute towards any such extension and agreed that it was crucial to try and ensure any rate increases were fully justifiable and affordable. Mr Peter Germain added that it was important sufficient funds were set aside for car park maintenance as resurfacing would be required every couple of years.

Tresor:

Mr Danny Wherry enquired why the Tresor budget was still £31,000 when the previous year it had included £10,000 towards the Quinquennial Survey. He also suggested that the survey costs could have been taken from the Church Project Reserve Fund. Mr Lester Richardson highlighted that there was an awful lot of work to do in relation to the Church and hence the current estimate for Tresor. Mr Wherry responded that he was fully supportive of allocating the necessary funds but was simply querying the accounting process.

Cemetery Extension Fund:

Mr Colin Renouf enquired why no funds had been added to the Cemetery Extension Fund. Mr William Sutton explained that given the change in location it was noted that a planning application would take some time to complete and that once consent had been obtained the Parish would have a further 3 years before needing to commence any works. As a result the Parish had plenty of time to find the necessary funds. This was confirmed by the Reverend Peter Stone who advised that it had been estimated that the current graveyard had capacity for a further 22 years.

There being no further questions on estimates for expenditure Mr William Sutton referred the Assembly to the setting of the Rate. It was noted that a range of figures had been provided from maintaining the current rate of 1.38p which would result in an annual deficit of £74,715 to a new rate of 1.51p which would enable the Parish to break even. Whilst the 1.51p increase was equivalent to a 9.4% increase it was noted that when this was combined with the Island Wide Rate the overall increase amounted to 7.05%. For an average house on the Maufant Estate it was estimated that the 1.51p rate would result in an overall increase of £26.

Questions were then received from the Assembly:

Deputy Steve Luce expressed concern that expenditure was on an upward trajectory but this was not being matched by income. The Connétable responded that whilst rates had been kept low over the years this had resulted in the Parish's buildings not being adequately well maintained. As a result parishioners were now left dealing with a significant repair backlog which necessitated increased expenditure. Deputy Luce responded that it was crucial that there were adequate reserves in place and that it would not be prudent to continue undermining the balance sheet as otherwise the Parish could run out of funds.

Mr William Sutton emphasised that this was one of the challenges of the Parish rates system whereby you could not budget for a surplus and so reserves tended to be on the low side. As a result there was little contingency for exceptional expenditure such as the repair of the Public Hall or events such as Storm Ciaran. Deputy Luce agreed that this was the nub of the problem.

It was also acknowledged that once the loan had been paid back for Vielle Ecole the Parish would be in a much better financial position. Mr Chris Garbutt enquired what level of rates would be applicable if they had been automatically increased by the rate of inflation over the years. Mr Connolly estimated that the rate would likely be in the region of 1.69 to 1.70.

The Parish Rate of 1.51p was proposed by Mr Chris Garbutt and seconded by Peter Germain. A show of hands resulted in a unanimous approval.

Item 5

Elect a committee to examine the Connétable's accounts for the year ending 30 April 2024

The Connétable thanked the Committee for all the work and support they give to the Parish and stated she was delighted that such a large number are on the Committee.

The names of the current Connétable's Accounts Committee were then read out:

Ex-Officio members:

The Connétable, Karen Shenton Stone

The Procureurs, William Sutton and Lester Richardson

The Rector (Reverend Peter Stone)

Church Wardens, Thelma Emberson and Jackie Edwards

Centeniers, Gordon Jones, Alan Phillips, David Birmingham and Teresa Roland

Parish Secretary, Charles Alluto

Other Members:

Mr Terry Jehan

Mr Denis Lawrence

Mr John Le Masurier Germain

Mr Chris McFadyen
Mr Danny Wherry
Mr Paul Gaudin
Mr Robin Perchard

All members were voted en bloc to remain in office, Mr Peter Germain proposed and Mr Tony Robinson seconded. By a show of hands, all were voted in for a further year.

Item 6

Appoint a firm of Chartered Accountants to audit the Connétable's accounts for the year ending 30 April 2025.

The Connétable asked Mr Don Connolly if Alex Picot would be prepared to continue the role of auditors to the Parish for the forthcoming year and after confirming the firm would be pleased to, Deputy Steve Luce proposed to re-elect Alex Picot Chartered Accountants and Mr Colin De La Haye seconded the proposal. All were in favour.

Item 7

Elect an Officer du Connétable for the Vingtaine Fief du Roi for a three-year term of office.

The Connétable stated that the current term of Officer du Connétable of Vingtaine Fief du Roi is due to expire and as a result an election is now required for the next three-year term of this office.

The Connétable stated that Ms Rozalia Nicholas, the current Officer du Connétable, has indicated her intention to stand for a further 3 years.

The Connétable requested a proposer for this nomination.

Mr Samuel Falle proposed Ms Rozalia Nicholas and Mr Gordon Jones seconded the proposal.

The Connétable asked if there were any other nominations and, there being none, declared Ms Nicholas duly elected as an Officer du Connétable for the Vingtaine Fief du Roi.

The Connétable congratulated Rozalia on her election and warned her to present herself at the Royal Court on Friday 26th July at 10am to take her Oath of Office.

Item 8

Elect a Vingtenier for the Vingtaine due Rozel for a three-year term of office.

The Connétable stated that the current term of Vingtenier of Vingtaine de Rozel is currently vacant and as a result an election is now required for the next three-year term of this office.

The Connétable stated that Mr Chris Garbutt, a current Officer du Connétable, whose terms of office is due to expire, had indicated his intention to stand for Vingtenier.

The Connétable requested a proposer for this nomination.

Mr Alan Phillips proposed Mr Chris Garbutt and Ms Teresa Roland seconded the proposal.

The Connétable asked if there were any other nominations and, there being none, declared Mr Garbutt duly elected as a Vingtenier for the Vingtaine Fief du Roi.

The Connétable congratulated Chris on his election and warned him to present himself at the Royal Court on Friday 26th July at 10am to take his Oath of Office.

The Connétable warmly thanked both Rozalia and Chris for their service and continuing support for the Honorary system.

The Connétable closed the Assembly at 20.30



Karen Shenton Stone
Connétable

Date 8th August 2024