

PAROISSE DE ST. PIERRE

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The Fifth Day of May Two Thousand and Twenty One

An Assembly of Principals and Electors of the Parish of St. Peter will be held in the Parish Hall on Wednesday 05 May, at 7.00pm to: -

- 1. Receive, and if deemed advisable, approve the Act of the Parish Assembly held on Wednesday 24 February 2021**
- 2. Agree that the Parish enter into an agreement with Jersey Electricity plc to undertake the replacement of 61 lighting columns and lanterns and 10 lanterns on existing columns for the sum of £263,750.00.**
- 3. Within the same agreement, the Parish enter into a 15-year loan agreement at 5.5% (to be repaid over a 15-year period)**
- 4. Consider and agree to a payment of a one-off bonus to 7 key Parish staff who have worked throughout the COVID pandemic.**

1 On the proposition of **Joao Camara**, seconded by **Robert Surcouf**, the minutes of the previous parish assembly held on Wednesday 24 February 2021, which had been previously handed out, were approved.

2 & 3.

The Constable advised the assembly of the background for the reasons for the request, unfortunately the streetlights that have been in place over the last 40 years are now in need of repair, over the last two years there are several concrete columns that have needed repairs, the metal in the middle expands and cracks the concrete.

JEC have advised its an Island wide problem and we are aware that one parish have already completed their repairs pre COVID.

We drew attention to this issue at last years assembly and agreed to just do emergency works so nothing occurred last year towards the main replacement.

JEC have agreed to keep to the same costings as the previous years quotes and have deducted the two columns that have already been done.

Some parishes have been quoted million's others have less. This is not a matter that we just want to replace them, it is a matter of Health & Safety, if we put this off then we would have to do emergency works anyway.

The Constable asked if any questions:

Have the Paish put this out to tender? No, JEC are the only people that do Street Lighting. The price seems very expensive, is this a competitive quote from the JEC?

The Procureur, Robert Surcouf explained that costs involved are works to take the old ones down and dispose as well as replace and was worried if we left it.

If we deferred the replacement, it could probably be more expensive.

The interest of 5.5% is competitive for the type of asset.

This is not an income earning asset and has no resale value.

This gives us a chance to do it without one big cost and the JEC are honouring the rate.

The flip side of not doing it- if something happened and one came down and fell on someone, then the liability claim would go into millions... Do we need all the lights? there is a safety aspect, we cannot remove a light that was already there, we need to do all 61 and then cannot be criticised for not doing anything.

It was mentioned from a parishioner, it would be useful to look back at the past. For example, Ville du Bocage was built in 1973-74 so 50 years have passed, and they already had a good life span. Can we phase this over the next few years with priority?

The Constable said we have been on warning for a while now so we had to replace some, now we need to replace the rest, if not our Insurers could say a problem for Liability cover.

Q. Concerned as a burden for the parish over the next 15 years. Could we not use the Contingency fund?

Constable advised that the reserves (which cannot be more than 6 months' worth of rates) are held there in the event of shortfall whilst waiting for the next rates to come in. We might have to put the rates up if we use the funds to make a one-off payment.

It is more economical to do it the way as proposed with LED lighting on the future columns with provisions for electrical charging points. This is a beneficial scheme, and we are reluctant to deplete the reserves.

In terms of the rate, this is still lower than what we have done in the past. There is no resale value and so not prudent to use the reserves. It is better to spread over 15 years, the reality of use is for the next 35 years so we must look at what is a fair balance for future ratepayers. To hit the reserves now would leave us exposed and having to set a higher rate if we have to pay for something else, we did not expect (we didn't expect COVID).

It was commented that the Contingency votes are not to be used for outside of Parish running costs, special votes cannot be used for anything else. The Constable advised that he hoped to put forward in the future a proposition a reserve for lighting and street repairs to be built up over the years.

It is unfortunate, but all the parishes have fallen into the same trap.

Q: What guarantee are the JEC giving? Life span of the lights is 40 years but what if something happens in 15 years?

We understand that as the loan is 15 years, the guarantee would be more than this therefore if something happened it would be down to the JEC to repair/ fix etc. If we do not repair / replace them then the Parish would be liable if anything happened.

Q. Why do we need lights in the village?

We believe that it was part of the original planning application when the houses were built, if we were to remove them now, we would be held responsible for any incidents that may happen.

Another parishioner stated that we live in an area with lights, part of living so have to accept this. The Constable said nothing can be done now about this, we cannot not replace them.

Q. It costs approx. £3000 per column, can we check first that all the lights do belong to the Parish and not the States?

We have already investigated this, there is one light based at the Gunsite where the States maintain the road, but the light was never given back to them- we have tried but they do not want it.

We have learnt our lessons now; historical positions cannot be rectified.

Q. Were other considerations for the loan taken into account or did we just go straight to the JEC ?

The Procureur advised they looked to see whether the loan was commercially correct, no quotes were obtained from anyone else as no other lenders would be willing to offer a loan on lights, as stated before, they have no value- no asset.

Q. Are the JEC looking at making easy money themselves?

The Constable stated that 5.5% over 15 years is not unrealistic.

Q. Can we approach the Tenants of the Marsh for the loan?

We cannot go to them as they are not a registered lender- they do have substantial amount of money but believe there would be legal grey areas of what they can spend the money on so they are not in a position to lend.

The Procureur said the only alternative would be to approach parishioners and ask them to lend the parish the money but there would be legal issues here too.

Q. As it is something we need to do, have we looked at pricing to be arranged as one job lot for all parishes? this could possibly bring the price down.

Several parishes need to spend more than us. The quote we have is exactly where it should be.

Q. Have other parishes used their contingency funds or gone directly to the JEC?

We do not have information on this. St Peter is willing to start a reserve and other parishes may have this in place.

Q. Instead of a loan, can we not use some of the contingency fund to reduce the costs and have we thought about solar lights to save money in the future?

Solar lights are very expensive- we perhaps need a separate scheme for this.

We must be careful about the future, again we need to be prepared for any emergency works for what is around the corner.

The longer we leave this, the safety aspect comes in.

Solar lights need a battery pack which are very expensive.

The current payment is £6484 per quarter. We could look at clarifying the position of the loan but feel that it is good. We could have the ability to take the loan now and dig into the contingency in later years, we could take this in terms of the finance but not a fixed loan. The assembly could look at this in a favourable position without penalty.

Q. If we go to the one supplier, surely cannot all parishes talk to each other? JEC are the only supplier, why have they got carte blanche on this?

All the infrastructure for the lighting belongs to the JEC, we could get someone else for the light fittings but would have to get JEC to do other parts, so the costs go up, we feel that the JEC are not taking advantage of us. They wish to have the lights fixed and safe as much as us.

Q. How long will this take? If we give the go ahead the plan is to start as early as 01 June for St Peter, they are hoping to do the whole Island replacement within a year.

As there were no further questions/ comments the Constable asked for a proposer for item 2: **John Refault** proposed, and it was seconded by **Roger Noel**. A vote of 22 For, None against with 1 abstention.

As regards item 3, it was stated that, should we know how much we hold in the contingency? It is a loan for parish property not for an individual, the parishioner however stated he was comfortable not having a full financial plan available at this time and was willing to support the agreement.

The item was proposed by **Joao Camara**, seconded by **Kristina Dickinson**. A vote for 21 For, 1 against, 1 Abstentions.

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The Constable explained the additional work undertaken by certain Parish and Community Centre Staff throughout the lockdowns to assist parishioners, much undertaken out of normal working hours with no requests for overtime or other remuneration. Normally this would be approved by the Constable and the two Procureurs but as there was not a unanimous agreement this was brought to the assembly. The total fund to be shared between 7 staff identified on above basis was £4,250.

The Procureur advised that he had suggested to the Constable that we should make some form of bonus payment to those that had gone over and beyond their contractual duties in the best interest of the Parishioners in these difficult times.

Mark Capern, Chairman of St Peters Youth & Community Centre clarified the additional work and actions of certain key staff within the Centre and the steps taken to keep the Pre-School open to support the children of key workers during lockdown and to maintain community support for some of the most vulnerable within our community.

Q. A parishioner asked why the bonus was only being paid to certain staff and why not for all.?

The Constable stated that the basis for the payment was for those that had undertaken additional responsibilities and worked hours far more than their contracted hours to ensure the provision of services. We could not justify a bonus for all staff who had been paid full salaries even if they had been unable to work or who undertook their normal roles only without material additional work or responsibility.

Q. Deputy Huelin reminded the Assembly that many Parishioners had found their income and businesses impacted and did not believe we should be granting such a bonus in these circumstances.

The Constable replied, His comment was to be noted and it was for that reason it was only being proposed for those that undertook additional material work and responsibilities in addition to their contracted role and the level of the bonus was only between 1% and 2%.

The Procureur said that the level of bonus was low and was a token of thanks as without their efforts we would have needed to contract outside help to cover various points and this would have been far more costly or have failed to provide much needed services.

A parishioner questioned the use of the Don funds for such an expenditure as this was with relation to Covid and providing support.

The Constable confirmed that the Don funds could and were used to provide direct support in cases of immediate need but could not be used for such a general purpose.

As there were no further comments, a vote was held with 21 For, 1 Against with 1 Abstention. It was proposed by **John Refault**, seconded by **Mark Capern**.

The Constable thanked everyone for attending.

This concluded the business of the Assembly.

05 May 2021

R P Vibert
Connetable