

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall annex at 7.30pm on 4 February 2013

NOTES of the pre-meeting public participation session

Mr Hunt said that he had written an open letter to Cllr Gower. Cllr Gower replied that Mr Hunt would be able to read it out during the meeting as would Cllr Gower read his reply. Mr Ungless asked whether the issue of Broadband was being taken up by Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC). Cllr Burroughes replied that it had signed up to "Better Broadband", Walberswick should have better broadband access by 2015.

Mr Buncombe said that, in his view, item 10 on the minutes of the previous meeting meant that the Council was moving forward. He felt it was a pity that previous Councillors had not been interviewed before the apology was made, but it was good that the complainants had been identified. He felt that part 10.7.b) of the agreed motion was categorically wrong. It implied that previous Councillors had mismanaged the Council's finances; the complainants must take some responsibility. Cllr Gower said that a statement about the future intention of the interim Council should not be taken as a criticism of the previous Council. Cllr Tytler replied that the Council was bankrupt and its financial management needed to be improved.

Mr Gomm asked whether it was the view of the Council that the previous Council was not open and transparent. Cllr Gower replied that he was not trying to blame people. Mr Buncombe said that the interim Council had endorsed openness, transparency and a commitment to an early election; it had also said it would "move forward with mutual agreement". He said that the Council should ensure what it puts forward was balanced, he was not sure that its decisions at the last meeting and action taken as a result had been balanced.

Mr Cardwell said that what he had read in the Village News was very one sided, it implied that the problems were all the fault of the previous Council. Cllr Burroughes responded that perhaps there could be a memo of intent between the parties. Mr Buncombe thought that would engender trust. Cllr Gower said he felt the Council was not changing tack radically with what the previous Council had been doing.

MINUTES of the Meeting

PRESENT: Councillors Mr P Austin, Mr S Burroughes, Mr M Gower (Chairman and District Councillor), Mr D Tytler and Mr D Webb and Mrs J Gomm (Clerk).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Suffolk County Councillor R Leighton and PCSO Newson.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2013 were signed by the Chairman, proposed by Cllr Austin and seconded by Cllr Tytler.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Pecuniary interests: None.

Local non pecuniary interests: Cllrs Burroughes and Gower, member of Suffolk Coastal District (SCDC).

4. REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS AND THE POLICE

A report was received from County Cllr Leighton that he had applied for £1,000 from his locality budget to fund new office equipment for the Parish Council. It was possible that Suffolk County Council (SCC) would wish to carry out the procurement.

PCSO Newson had sent a report saying that there had been three reported crimes in Walberswick during December, two "theft – other" of a wallet and keys and of a wallet and cash and a "burglary – other building" of various tools including a chainsaw and brush cutter. He reported on the next visit of the mobile police station and next Safer Neighbourhood tasking and public meeting. He provided information on heating oil theft which the Clerk suggested she post on a notice board.

5. ACCOUNTS

Receipts noted:

- Walberswick Common Lands Charity, grant for costs of training of Councillors - £231 and contribution to grass cutting costs for summer 2012 - £118.64 - total £349.64

Payments:

The following payments were **agreed**:

- Waveney Norse Ltd, during the summer of 2012, 10 grass cuts to open spaces at previously agreed rates - £700.70 plus vat of £140.14 and 3 grass cuts to sports field at previously agreed rates - £90.21 plus vat of £18.04 - total - £949.09
- Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC), election fee for election 09.08.12 - £64.71 and election fee for election 15.11.12 - £64.71 - total - £129.42, no vat
- J K Linley (also known as J K Gomm), Clerk's net salary for January, for the dates 20 Dec – 30 Jan, comprising 68 hours 40 minutes, of which 27 hours, 10 minutes were spent on Freedom of Information related work - £920.86, no VAT - total £920.86

6. REVIEW EXISTING RISK ASSESSMENT ADOPTED 01.10.12 AND ADDITIONAL DELEGATIONS TO CLERK DATED 01.10.12

It was **agreed** to defer the review of the risk assessment to the next meeting.

It was **agreed** to accept the Clerk's recommendation to revoke all the additional delegations given to her at the meeting held on 01.10.12 except the following delegation which would remain in place:

The Clerk may, after consultation with at least one Councillor who does not have a pecuniary interest in the matter, grant a dispensation to a Councillor in respect of a pecuniary interest in accordance with section 33 Localism Act 2012 after receipt of a Councillor's written request for a dispensation.

7. RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROLS

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) had produced a written report for Councillors. She reminded Councillors that the Council's Internal Controls should be reviewed at least annually and this would be checked as part of the internal audit. In her opinion, the most important areas to control were:

- to ensure that financial management was adequate and effective and
- to ensure that arrangements for the management of risk were in place.

She set out her concerns in these areas which had arisen since the previous Councillors had resigned. The Council considered the RFO's written recommendations and Cllr Webb's suggestions for managing the risks and **agreed** the following:

- A nominated Councillor, with the assistance of volunteers as necessary, will carry out checks at frequent intervals of the play areas, sports field and Greens together with the equipment and buildings for health and safety concerns.
- Any repairs and/or maintenance needed to manage identified risks will be immediately reported to the Clerk and Chairman together with recommendations for remedial action (including action by volunteers, if necessary).

- The Chairman will meet with the RFO at three monthly intervals to ensure accounting records are correctly maintained, reviewing a random selection of items.
- Annual reports on internal controls, will, in future, be made by a Finance Committee or Councillor Financial Controller with the RFO.
- Other existing internal controls set out in the RFO's report would remain in place.

8. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR FINANCIAL YEAR END 31.03.13

The Clerk reported that Financial Regulations relating to contracts did not apply to this appointment as it was for a specialist service. She had identified two potential internal auditors. It was **agreed** to appoint Heelis & Lodge as internal auditor for the financial year end 31.03.13 and noted that the fee would be £90. It was also **agreed** to write thanking Mr Kohn for his previous honorary services as internal auditor and to thank him for his offer to donate to the Council the cost of the internal audit for the year end 31.03.13.

9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

It was **agreed** to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting.

10. REVIEW OF DELEGATIONS TO THE CLERK IN RESPECT OF THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS 2004

It was **agreed** to revoke and replace the existing delegations in the minutes of the meetings held on 05.09.11 and 03.12.12 with the following:

The standing orders adopted by the Council on 7 March 2011 state that the Council's Proper Officer is the Clerk for processing all requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998.

- The Council **agrees** that the Clerk should also be the Proper Officer for requests made under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and any further legislation which gives people the opportunity to request information from the Council.
- The Council **agrees** to ask people who wish to make requests under any legislation to do so by letter addressed to the Clerk.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the Council **agrees** that the term "processing" within the standing orders includes providing information requested, declining to provide information when appropriate, corresponding with those requesting information, corresponding with the Information Commissioner's Office and when the Clerk deems it necessary to seek advice.
- The Council **agrees** that the Clerk also has the power to do anything else conducive or relating to dealing with requests for information.
- The Clerk will act in consultation with the Chairman before responding to requests for information.

11. TO NOTE RECENT DECISIONS OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Chairman reported that the two most recent decisions of the Information Commissioner had been to the effect that the Council had correctly refused to supply information requested because the requests were vexatious. The Clerk had prepared a summary of all Information Commissioner decisions relating to the Council. It was **agreed** the summary should be placed on the website. A discussion followed concerning the desirability of the Council putting all correspondence relating to these matters in the public domain by placing it on a file or on the website. Cllr Burroughes **agreed** to research the issues relating to re-publication of libellous material which may arise from this course of action.

12. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM MR A HUNT

Standing Orders were suspended to enable Mr Hunt to read his open letter addressed to Cllr Gower concerning the statement made by the Council in the January Village news. Cllr Gower read his reply to Mr Hunt's letter. (See appendices to minutes.)

13. CONSIDERATION OF ROSPA'S 2012 REPORT RELATING TO PLAY EQUIPMENT AND SURFACING ON THE VILLAGE GREEN AND PLAYING FIELD

Cllr Tytler proposed and Cllr Burroughes seconded that no action be taken by the Council and this was **agreed**.

14. MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

Cllr Gower said that he had prepared some notes on the long term issues facing the Council and asked that at the next meeting an item go on the agenda entitled "Strategic Direction".

Cllr Gower also raised the issue of the Clerk's contract. He said the Council should consider the affordability of the Clerk's pay which had been increased in May 2012 by 86%. Cllr Webb said the rate was fixed according to national pay scales. The Clerk referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 14.05.12 when it was agreed her salary be placed on band 35-38 on LC2 and that her salary be paid pro rata from 01.04.212 in accordance. Councillors would discuss it with her.

No other matters were raised.

15. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 4 March 2013 provided the Village Hall annex is available.

The meeting closed at 9.08pm.

Signed.....

Date.....