

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting Monday 29th July 2013 Village Hall Annex

Present; Cllr M Gower (Chair), Cllr S Burroughes, Cllr D Tytler, Cllr D Webb

Open Forum: (19 Members of the public present)

A member of the public opened by stating he had 2 points to make relating to the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) report and explained his concerns. He wanted a further review of the situation.

The member of the public then went on to discuss the future and in particular the Clerks pay, hours of employment and rate of pay. The information presented was based on published guidance.

The member of the public then concluded by saying that there had been false and misleading information published and the cause of the expenditure increase at WPC was due to the Clerks pay increase. He further stated that there was no justification for requesting an advance of precept as the Parish Council had money in their reserves. He also indicated that he considered the Accounting / Audit / Finance did not adhere to the appropriate procedures.

Cllr Gower agreed that for WPC to move forward the recent outstanding requests for information need to be responded to and he would see to this before he leaves the Council. He reported that the Temporary Clerks contract would state a maximum of up to 40 hours per month. He concluded that if the Clerk had not been responding to FOI requests what were they doing. The hours worked by the previous Clerks in 2012 had been going up for some time. He said that he would look at the hours worked by the Clerks over the last 3 years. Both increased hours and increased pay had contributed to increased costs for WPC. He saw no need for a further review of the earlier job evaluation exercise.

Cllr Webb then stated that, at the time the advance of precept was requested, WPC considered that costs were running out of control and in their estimation a request for an advance on their precept was the correct way forward and considered “a prudent request” Expenditure had been reduced to save money.

A member of the public, a previous Clerk, responded that the accounts were audited both internally and externally annually and had been passed each year.

A member of the public then stated that WPC had misrepresented to the public the need for the precept advance and that the FOI requests were not the cause of the financial difficulties that had faced the Council last years. He had not been able to get any confirmation from SCDC of a request for funds being made. Cllr Gower referred back to his earlier response and the response of Cllr Webb

Cllr Burroughes stated he would contact SCDC to find out about the request for an advance on the WPC precept and report back.

Cllr Gower closed the Open Forum

Parish Council Meeting

Cllr Gower proposed moving item 4 to the beginning of the meeting

All agreed

4 – Temporary Clerk Appointment

A contract of employment had been drawn up to limit the Clerk to up to 40 hours per month. The rate of pay, not disclosed at meeting, is set to £10.19 per hour

Proposal – Appoint J Boggis as temporary Clerk

All Agreed

J Boggis joined the Cllrs

1 – Apologies for absence.

Cllr Gower reported that Cllr P Austin had resigned from WPC.

Cllr Gower asked that a formal thank you be recorded for the work Cllr Austin carried out regarding his involvement with WPC

2 – Minutes of Last Meeting to be Held and Signed

Proposal – Accept Minutes of meeting held 1st July 2013 as presented

All agreed

3 – Declaration of Interests

Pecuniary interests – None Declared

Local Non Pecuniary Interest - Cllr Gower, Member of SCC and SCDC

- Cllr Burroughes, Member of SCC and SCDC

- Cllr Webb, Dog Bins

5 – Report from the County and District Councillors and the Police

County Report – Nothing to report

District Report – Local Development Framework now agreed and adopted by SCDC.

Conservation area consultation is underway. Although WPC are having no direct input, individuals can respond directly, or this could come from a local group. WPC were informed by a member of the public that there is a public meeting to discuss on 17th August.

The review of the number of District Councillors moves on with the recommendation that numbers are reduced from 55 to 43 now agreed. The next step is to agree the new ward boundaries. The consultation for this is underway and concludes in October.

Police Report – No report received

6 – Dog Bins

It was reported that one bin was broken and the cost to replace was £140

Proposal – Temp Clerk to order a new dog bin from SCDC

All Agreed

7 – East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) – job evaluation review.

There was a very short discussion about the report. It was noted that none of the four recommendations were now relevant following the resignation of the former Clerk

Proposal – Note the EELGA report

All agreed

Proposal – Accept the Temporary Clerk Contract document

All Agreed

8 – Clerk Vacancy

The position of Clerk was discussed and it was agreed that the temporary Clerk would remain in place until after the Election when the newly elected WPC can appoint their own Clerk.

9 – Election

There is a process that has to be followed for an election and includes a 35 consecutive day period. The Cllrs agreed that the target date for the election will be September 2013. The current group of Councillors hope that there is now sufficient structure in place to enable WPC to move forward.

Proposal – Cllr Gower to contact SCDC about starting the process

All Agreed

10 – Matters raised by Members

Resignation Letter – The Redacted names in the Honsea resignation letter had agreement to be published. The names on the email were David Webb, then chairman, and Ms M Vanetti, the then clerk.

Website – The member of the public who has updated the website for WPC for the last four years, on a temporary basis, made a request for the temp Clerk to take over this role.

Proposal – Temp Clerk to take on role to update the WPC information on the website

All agreed

Sport field – A request was received to install a basketball net at the sport field. This would involve putting in a concrete slab. It was suggested that it was unlikely that installation of a concrete slab would be allowed. There were further suggestions.

Proposal – Cllr Gower to contact the individual asking for more information

All Agreed

Cllr Webb thanked the other Cllrs for what they had done.. Cllr Burroughes thanked Cllr Webb and noted that politicians, at whatever level of government, need a thick skin. He was looking forward to a better future for the village..

Cllr Burroughes stated that even though, following the election he will have moved on, he will be watching developments at WPC from afar.

11 – Date of next meeting

Monday 2nd September 2013

Village Hall Anex

7.15pm Open Forum

7.30pm Parish Council Meeting

Meeting closed by Cllr Gower

Time meeting closed not recorded.