

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 23rd November at 7.15 pm
in Walberswick Village Hall

Members: Cllr. E Richardson (Chairman) Cllr. L Sutton Cllr. P Widdowson
Cllr. R Catchpole Cllr. P Dunnett

Also present: County Councillor M. Gower, K. Forster as RFO & 16 members of public

36/16 Recording the meeting

The Chairman opened the meeting by stating that, as displayed on the notice in the room, filming and recording may take place. Following the disturbance at the previous meeting, if any council member felt it necessary, they will start to record the proceedings, as evidence if necessary.

37/16 Appointment of Proper Officer and Clerk

- a) The Chairman Cllr. Richardson proposed that the RFO K. Forster, was appointed as Clerk and minute taker for the meeting. Seconded by Cllr. Catchpole **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the RFO act as Clerk and Minute taker for the meeting.**
- b) The Chairman pointed out that due to the resignation of the Clerk at the meeting in August there was no Proper officer and offered to take that role. Proposed Cllr Widdowson, seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the Chairman is appointed as the Proper Officer in the absence of a Clerk.**
- c) The Chairman stated that as there was no Clerk she had delegated some duties such as preparing the minutes to the RFO. As a consequence there was a need to change the hours of the RFO to be 10 in October and 20 in November. This would continue on an as needed basis to a maximum of 20 hours per month. Proposed Cllr. Widdowson, seconded Cllr. Catchpole. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the hours of the RFO be authorised as described.**
- d) The Chairman stated that there was someone who would be interested in becoming the Clerk. They would work alongside the RFO to ensure continuity. This person has been recommended by SALC and SCDC and has met the RFO who went through the current situation so that the candidate was aware of the issues of continuous correspondence and scrutiny. The Chairman invited other members to meet the candidate and Cllr. Widdowson expressed interest. The Chairman requested authorisation to offer the position to the candidate and agree a formal contract if deemed suitable. Proposed Cllr. Catchpole, seconded Cllr. Widdowson. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the Chairman is authorised to offer the position to the candidate if suitable.**

38/16 Apologies: There were apologies from Cllr. Dunnett

39/16 Declarations of Interest: There were declarations of non-pecuniary interest from Cllr. Widdowson as the NUT representative reporting to County and District Council and Cllr. Catchpole as Vice-Chairman of the SCDC planning committee.

40/16 Minutes of the Previous Meetings: The minutes of the meetings of 12th September 2016 & 14th October 2016 were presented for approval. The Chairman commented on the disturbance at the meeting 14th October and stated that the person responsible had been sent a letter from the Council explaining that in future, should this occur, the meeting would be suspended and if the person refused to leave, the police would be called. This letter has been retained on file. Because of that, the Chairman proposed that the RFO purchase to a maximum of £50 equipment to record future meetings. Seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the RFO purchase recording equipment for future meetings to a maximum of £50.**

Proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton, **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the minutes of 12th September be accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chairman**

Proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton, **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the minutes of 14th October be accepted as an accurate record and were duly signed by the Chairman**

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DATE

6/3/17

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

41/16 Open Forum: The Chairman invited the public to speak on any subject on the agenda, for a maximum of three minutes.

A member of the public raised 3 points:

Agenda item 10 – As the Audit was not complete, was the Council going to discuss the items raised. The RFO replied that it had been hoped that the Audit would have been complete which is why it was put on the agenda and therefore it would probably be deferred as a discussion to a later meeting.

Agenda item 11 – The member of the public recommended that item 9 should be after item 11 so that a legal budget was in place by which to write cheques. The RFO replied that a budget did not need to be in place to legally authorise the spending of money. Item 11 to set the forecast and budget was after the accounts items as a number of the decisions in agenda item 9 would affect cashflow and therefore the sums allocated in the forecast and budget.

Agenda item 9(6) – The member of the public questioned why the first two items had been paid and were on the authorisation list. The RFO explained that items such as Salary and PAYE had to be paid and therefore were frequently done prior to a meeting where they could be authorised. This is standard practice.

No other member of public wished to speak.

42/16 District Councillor and County Councillor Reports

a) District Cllr. Catchpole reported:

- That the Devolution bill had been dropped. However, SCDC has authorised its leader to explore Devolution in Suffolk with other District Councils.
- The East Suffolk District Council proposal was moving forward and had good support.
- That he still had available funds in his locality budget (available for applications until end January and that there was also funding available in the Enabling Communities Exemplar budget for bigger projects.

b) County Cllr. Gower reported:

- Confirmed that the Norfolk/Suffolk devolution deal was dead but that Suffolk councils were continuing to talk to central government to see what elements of devolution could be salvaged.
- The Consultation with EDF regarding Sizewell was underway and he urged members of the public to get involved. There was a lot of concern about the access to the site during the build and the future of the large campus that was to be built on the edge of Minsmere at Eastbridge as the plans are vague.
- The introduction of the 20 MPH speed limit was slow and was in the hands of SCC Highways.

43/16 Adoption of Policies and the Asset Register

a) **Asset Register:** The Chairman asked if there were any questions on the previously circulated Asset register as prepared by the RFO. There were none forthcoming and therefore its adoption was proposed by Cllr. Sutton, seconded Cllr. Widdowson. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the Asset Register is signed as correct by the Chairman.**

Risk Analysis: The Chairman asked if there were any questions on the previously circulated Risk

b) **Analysis.** Cllr. Widdowson confirmed with the RFO that this was based on the exemplar from NALC/BDO. There were no further questions and therefore its adoption was proposed by Cllr. Widdowson, seconded by Cllr Sutton. Proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton, **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the Risk Analysis is adopted and signed by the Chairman.**

44/16 Walberswick Playing Fields

The RFO explained that, following the notice given by WPC to end the lease for the playing fields with the Walberswick Common Lands Charity, the chairman of the charity had been in touch pointing out that there was a number of items of repair work required to be completed before they could be handed back. These included clearing the gorse around the perimeter and the pavilion, reinstating the

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DATE

6/15/17

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

fences and undertaking repairs to the pavilion, which may involve dealing with asbestos. The deterioration is due to the council being inquorate and continuous change of councillors and clerks. The Charity has been very helpful and gained quotations to clear the gorse and the one that has been recommended would be £2,500. Replacing the fencing would be budgeted at £3750. There is no information currently regarding the pavilion.

The RFO stated that currently there were insufficient funds to cover this work before March 2017 when the lease is due to end. She has established that there is approximately £13,000 in S106 money available to do this work however, this would not be paid should the playing fields be handed back. She has spoken to the Chairman of the Charity to ask if it would be possible to reverse the decision to give notice. He has confirmed that this would need to be considered at the next meeting of the charity in December.

The RFO therefore suggested that Council considered reversing the decision made in March to give notice on the lease.

After discussion the proposal was made to ask the Charity to allow WPC to continue with the lease. Alternatively, if the Charity would not allow that, then to extend the period of notice so that WPC could formulate alternative options. This was proposed by Cllr. Catchpole, seconded by Cllr. Sutton. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the RFO write to the Chairman of the Walberswick Common Lands Charity requesting that they allow WPC to reverse their notice. If this is not agreed, that the Common Lands Charity extend the notice period.

45/16 Finance

- a) **Bank Balance:** As at 14th October 2016 the reconciled Bank balance is £ 16,674.35. The Chairman signed the bank reconciliations and statements for September and October. The RFO stated that £4,000 as the second half of the precept had been received from SCDC. **NOTED**
- b) **Notice Board:** The Chairman had received a request for a contribution of £222 as a contribution towards the new noticeboard which had cost £1305. Proposed Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to authorise a payment of £222 towards the noticeboard**
- c) **Marriott Play and Leisure:** The Chairman explained that an invoice for £700 had been received from Marriott Play and Leisure for the modifications made to the play boats. However, when he had called her about the work that needed to be done she had insisted that she could not authorise any payment or work prior to a meeting being called. He stated that he would do the work for free and has written emails stating that. However, on completing the work, alongside Cllr. Sutton, he presented an invoice for £700. He has also approached SCDC regarding its non-payment. The Chairman asked for the advice from the RFO who stated that, as there was no emergency, the Chairman had been correct in not authorising any payment. Additionally, there was no contract that the RFO was aware of as, in fact, there were emails written by him stating that he had agree to do the work for free however this was for materials. In her opinion, they might be minded to not pay the invoice. But they could consider an ex-gratia payment for goodwill under S137 although there would have to be caveats regarding that the council were not admitting any responsibility for the invoice or the amount requested. All members expressed the view that they should not pay this invoice and were not prepared to make a payment for goodwill. Cllr. Widdowson proposed that a letter be written stating that the Council had decided to not pay this invoice however, should Marriott Play and Leisure be able to provide evidence of a contract then the invoice could be reconsidered. Seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the RFO write to Marriott Play and Leisure as proposed.**
- d) **Playground inspection** Following the modifications to the play equipment another inspection has taken place of the modified items, passed, and a new certificate received **NOTED**
- e) **Bloise Farms:** A letter and invoice had been received from Bloise Farms for £ 825 due for allotment rent since 2011, which they had not invoiced previously. The RFO had got agreement to pay this in two instalments - £425 now and a further £400 in April 2017. Payment was proposed by Cllr. Widdowson, seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that payment is authorised for this outstanding invoice in two stages.**
- f) **Authorisation to Pay:** The items on the previously circulated authorisation to pay document as well as

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6/12/17

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

an additional invoice since received for £ 13 for Village Hall hire were proposed by Cllr. Widdowson, seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that payments as listed are authorised.**

- g) **Clearing the Backlog:** The RFO explained that in order to sort out the vast amount of unfiled papers and documents, resource had been requested from SCDC. They would provide 2 accomplished administration staff to work with the RFO and, if on board, the new Clerk to work through the papers in the Heritage Hut etc. This would be charged as £ 548.66 and would take place in December. The RFO sought authority to go ahead with this. Proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Catchpole. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that payment is authorised for this payment to clear the backlog and organise the paperwork.**
- h) **Bank Signatories:** The Chairman stated that there was a need to increase the number of bank signatories to 3 and that Cllr. Widdowson had agreed to be on the authorised list. Proposed Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton. **It was RESOLVED that Cllr. Widdowson is added to the list of authorised signatories.** (Cllr. Widdowson abstained from this vote).

46/16 **Audit Completion** The RFO reiterated that it had been hoped that the audit would have been completed by this meeting and she had published the list of issues that were currently being discussed. This list may change before the report is issued. However, there had been 2 lengthy letters written to BDO and a number of phone calls and subsequent emails. Consequently BDO were having to respond and therefore there would now be a charge made for this. It is currently budgeted at £1000 to cover the costs that this are being incurred. Normally for a parish the size of Walberswick there would have been no charge for the audit. The Chairman stated that the RFO is intending to redact the letter and the responses and publish them on the website so that the public can see what the money is being spent on.

The RFO requested that this item be deferred to the next meeting. Proposed Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Widdowson. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the discussion and review of the issues on the Audit be deferred to the next meeting.**

47/16 **Reforecast and Budget**

- a) **Reforecast.** In view of the fact that the Council was inquorate and without a Clerk/RFO for the majority of 2015/16, a budget for 2016/17 was not set and the precept defaulted to the previous year. The RFO has therefore now prepared a forecast for the remainder of 2016/17 based on spending to date during 2016/17 and known income and expenditure for the remainder of the financial year.

The draft was circulated however, based on the decisions made in the meeting so far, some of the numbers were adjusted. As a result of this the cash flow is projected at the end of the financial year to be in the region of £ 4.5k. All major items of expense were discussed regarding the cost of BDO due to the correspondence, additional expenditure required to reinstate the administrative functions, the spending to repair the play equipment, the rates for the heritage hut, the cost of implementing the 20 MPH limit in the village, the back rent for the allotments and the significant increase in the cost of the grass cutting.

Cllr. Catchpole as district councillor offered £2k towards the 20 MPH costs. Costs incurred through the work required for the playing fields will be funded through S106 grant.

Cllr. Widdowson pointed out that, because there was no budget and therefore a default precept, for reasons explained above, there was now a gap between the spending requirements and the income and that now resulted in unallocated reserves which were lower than desired. It is normally recommended that the unallocated reserves are between 9 – 12 months of precept. Following a proposal by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Widdowson **it was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the reforecast for the remainder of the year.**

- b) **Budget:** The budget for 2017/18 had been circulated and the RFO explained the items.
- The rates for the Heritage Hut were being challenged and it was expected that this would result in the £1500 not being due however, this had been included in the budget as a cautionary measure.

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DATE

6/13/17

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

- There was the second payment for the back rent on the allotment.
- The administration costs would continue at approx. £450 p.m.
- There was a budget for general other repairs to the playing fields, however the works required now would be financed through grants.
- No other major projects had been included

The RFO stated that this was a budget that had been pared to the bone and yet it if the precept was maintained at £8000, it would still not result in an acceptable unallocated reserves amount. Having reduced the unallocated reserves in 2016/17 to £4.5 by the end of the financial year, there was a need to rebuild that fund and also function effectively as a parish council.

Cllr. Widdowson expressed concern that insufficient money had been allocated as expense. He recommended that £1000 be put in the budget for the possibility of audit costs (as this year) and additional funds included for village maintenance to allow for any repairs required. He also recommended that the precept should be significantly higher. It was agreed by other members to add these costs.

The RFO stated that she believed that the precept should be a minimum of £12,000. If all expenditure went as planned, this would result in unallocated reserves of £3.5k which is less than 4 months but she was optimistic that the rates would not need to be paid, that the audit fees would be less than £1000 and there would be a small VAT rebate. In which case this could result in 6 months unallocated reserves. However, she stated that if it was to increase further, then the unallocated reserves would be more comfortable.

The chairman stated that she did not wish to increase the precept to more than £12,000 and that to rebuild the reserves could take more than 1 year.

Some discussion ensued about raising the precept by such a large percentage but agreed that there was a need to reinstate the reserves as they had been reduced due to :

- paying for the audit fees generated by complaint letters which also needed to be budgeted for again in the next year.
- significant additional administration costs to reinstate the policies, deal with finance issues and similar caused by the council being without a continuous clerk or council for the last 6 years. Again, this higher than expected cost is budgeted for in 2017/18 due to the expected level of correspondence.
- administration costs to go through the backlog of years of paperwork
- repairs and replacement of play equipment
- additional items such as rates and allotment costs that were unexpected.

After much discussion, proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded by Cllr. Sutton, it was **unanimously RESOLVED** to accept the proposed budget and set the precept for 2017/18 at £ 12,000.

48/16 Vacancies on Parish Council

Cllr. Catchpole stated that there had been discussions with SCDC regarding further appointments on WPC so as to minimise the risk of meetings being inquorate due to commitments of current members. He was also keen to invite electorates from the Parish to join the Council which is now functioning well. There are 2 vacancies.

The Chairman suggested that there should be a joint approach to advertise for new councillors from the village and to request SCDC to put the motions in place to appoint additional councillors should the advertising not be successful. Following a proposal by Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton it was **unanimously RESOLVED** that SCDC are asked to consider a request for 2 new appointments under section 91 and advertising is organised in the village for local people to be co-opted.

49/16 Planning

DC/16/4406/FUL – Spindrift.

The Chairman read the report prepared by the Planning advisory group which recommended that this planning application is objected to by Council.

Cllr. Catchpole explained that he was not able to vote on this as he was Vice-chairman of planning on

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DATE _____

6/13/17

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

SCDC and therefore it could be viewed as pre-determined, should it come to committee. He could, however, be involved in discussions.

After discussion, proposed by Cllr. Richardson, seconded by Cllr. Sutton it was **RESOLVED** that the Council strongly objected to this proposed application. Cllr. Catchpole abstained.

50/16 20 MPH

County Cllr. Gower had no further update. The RFO had an email from end of October stating that Highways hoped to place the order soon. Cllr. Catchpole to forward the application form for the grant to the RFO for completion.

51/16 Heritage Hut Review

The Chairman invited Mr. W Ungless on behalf of the committee of the Walberswick Scroll to present a report regarding the modification of the Heritage Hut to accommodate and display the Walberswick Scroll.

Regarding funding this project, Cllr. Catchpole suggested that the Communities Exemplar could be approached and he will forward the forms. He also recommended that there was some matched funding and a presentation to the committee for the grant. Mr. Ungless will also be approaching the Walberswick Common Lands Charity for underwriting and/or providing some of the funding.

Mr Ungless asked Council to approve the report and recommendations. Proposed Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton it was **unanimously RESOLVED** to approve the report submitted by the Committee of the Walberswick Scroll

52/16 Appointment of the Nominative Trustee to Walberswick Common Lands Charity

Following a letter from the Chairman of the Walberswick Common Lands Charity, the Council were pleased to accept the recommendation regarding the nominative trustee. Proposed Cllr. Richardson, seconded Cllr. Sutton it was **unanimously RESOLVED** to nominate Mrs. R Woodcraft to continue as the nominative Trustee to Walberswick Common Lands Charity.

53/16 Community Governance Review

The chairman confirmed that to date there had been approximately 100 signatures on the request for a Community Governance Review to change to a Parish Meeting in Walberswick.

Meeting closed at 9.03pm. Next meeting 7.15 pm 20th February 2017 in Walberswick Village Hall

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