

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minute of the meeting of Walberswick Parish Council held on Monday 6th March at 7.15pm in the annexe of the Village Hall.

Present: Councillors Richardson (in the chair), Sutton, Catchpole, Widdowson and Dunnett. Also Mary Mitson-Woods and Councillor Gower from SCC.

There were also a number of members of the public.

54/17 Chairman's welcome

Councillor Richardson welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

55/17 To confirm the appointment of Mrs Mary Mitson-Woods as Clerk/ RFO to the Council.

Councillor Richardson introduced Mrs Mitson-Woods and said that she had been recommended by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and Suffolk Coastal District Council. The appointment was made three months after the Parish Council had been unable to find a suitable candidate.

Mrs Mitson-Woods gave members and parishioners a brief resume of her experience as the one time youngest PC chairman in Suffolk. She had also been the CEO of Suffolk Association of Local Councils for ten years during which time she worked closely with the National Association of Local Councils and University of Gloucester developing a national training scheme for councillors and accredited training for parish clerks. She had also worked with Sir Tony Holland and his team at the Standards Board for England in developing and introducing the Code of Conduct in 2000.

Councillors RESOLVED to affirm the appointment of Mrs Mitson-Woods which had been authorised at Minute 37/16d) of the meeting of 23rd November 2016. Councillor Richardson read out the section of the Minute to confirm this authorisation. On 5th January 2017 Councillor Richardson had sent a Letter of Offer for the role with accompanying Contract of Employment and Job Description which Mrs Mitson-Woods had accepted. A contract of Employment and Acceptance Letter were formally signed at the meeting and **Councillors RESOLVED that her appointment is affirmed.**

56/17 To consider and approve any apologies for absence

There were none.

57/17 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Catchpole declared that, in view of the fact that he is on the SCDC planning committee, he would take no part in the Planning discussion at item 9

58/17 To consider the Minute of the meeting held on 23rd November 2016

Councillors unanimously agreed that the Minute of the meeting of 23rd of November was a true and accurate record of the meeting. Each page was initialled and signed by the Chairman.

59/17 Open Forum

The members of the public had no matters to raise but the chairman offered to close the meeting and accept comments later if anyone wished to make a comment on any matter on the Agenda.

59/17 County and District Council reports

Councillor Catchpole, SCDC, reported East Suffolk, the amalgamation of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council, is moving forward and completion will allow the combined Council to concentrate on essential business now the workload of the merger is almost complete. The proposal for Devolution has fallen. The enabling communities' budget is being increased to £6,500 from first April which is good news for the communities of the District.

Councillor Gower, SCC, reported that Sizewell is a major issue which is being dealt with at present. Suffolk County Councillors feel that the proposal to build accommodation for staff at Eastbridge was not acceptable. This is an area of huge importance nationally and should not be damaged. It is hoped that EDF will come back with a better proposal. SCC has asked for an access road from the A12 as this seems possible within the large budget that EDF has available for the complete project. Devolution is no longer happening. It was not going to be a huge benefit to Suffolk. Promised money was not sufficient to outweigh the amount of money that is taken from Suffolk to Her Majesty's Government.

Councillor Gower asked the Chairman's permission to read an excerpt from a Judgement on vexatious requests for information and the problems that have impacted on WPC. He pointed out that Council employees and Councillors should not have to work under such extreme pressure. Inevitably it leads to mistakes. He also highlighted the enormous cost to the community and the taxpayer to pick up the costs to the public purse of the FOI debacle and tribunal costs caused by the constant requests and complaints.

60/17 Finance: a) Councillors received a report from the RFO on the current financial situation and noted the current bank balances & approved the bank reconciliation. Money has been transferred from the Account no. 07147051 to Account no. 00281763 as the Council does not need to hold two accounts. The balance at present is 14,864.87. A VAT reclaim of 416.91 has recently been received. (Statement of accounts attached)

b) To resolve to close bank account number 07147051 at Lloyds Bank. The Clerk advised that it is not necessary for WPC to hold two accounts and it was unanimously **RESOLVED that Account number 07147051 be closed.**

d) To approve payments on the Authorisation to Pay Document. (previously circulated).

e) To confirm that Councillor Catchpole has carried out internal financial review according to Financial Standing Orders. (Circulated and attached)

f) To confirm the Suffolk Association of Local Councils as Internal Auditor for the year ending March 31st 2017. **Councillors RESOLVED that SALC continues to undertake the statutory Internal Audit for Walberswick PC.**

g) RFO to report on receipt of Conclusion of Audit from BDO, the Council's External Auditors, for the year ending 31st March 2016 and to consider the Issues Arising Report.

BDO has issued an Issues Arising Report for the year 2015/16 and subsequently asked WPC to hold a meeting before 9th March 2017 with 8 clear days' notice advertised on the Notice Board and Website. Councillors had received the Conclusion of Audit Report and the Clerk's response before the Notice of Meeting had been posted and had been able to carefully consider it's content.

Councillors were reminded by the Clerk that the Audit Report referred to the year ending March 31st 2016. It had been a period when the Council had been brought to a standstill by multiple complaints and requests. The Council had become inquorate and,

at one point, had no Clerk/RFO. In August 2016 BDO had issued a Public Interest Report that had resulted in the Council and RFO putting measures in place to address all the issues that BDO had raised. The Clerk reported that she had worked closely with the previous RFO, Mrs Karen Forster, to consider each point raised by BDO and had checked that measures had been put in place to satisfy the requirements of the legislation from the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities which governs financial administration and audit for Parish Councils.

Additional measures have been introduced which include publications, copies of legislation and guides to be given to each Councillor. These are: -
The Good Councillors' Guide 2016, Suffolk Code of Conduct, SALC Briefing Paper on Code of Conduct and Precept Setting, Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, Openness and Transparency on Personal Interest – A Guide for Councillors and Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England - section 5 published June 2016

Councillor Catchpole noted that the Clerk's report was excellent and addressed the issues to his satisfaction. Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Clerk's Report provides an adequate plan to comply with the recommendations from BDO and would ensure that WPC remains compliant with the relevant legislation and regulations in the future. (BDO Issues Arising Report and RFO recommendation report attached)

61/17 Planning Matters

DC/17/0318/FUL Crestholme The Lea Walberswick. Walberswick PC had received a copy of the PAG report on this application and Councillors concurred with its conclusion that the design is supported but request an amendment to it omitting the proposed fencing and reinstate hedging which has already been removed. (PAG Report attached)

DC/17/0337/VOC Mallards and Mirna Manor Close Walberswick

Councillors had no objections to this application and there was no report from PAG.

Two other applications, **DC/17/0864/TCA Long Roof Leveretts Lane and DC/17/0800/FUL 1 Anchor Cottages The Street** had been received on 3rd March and could not therefore be on the Agenda. The Council will rely on the PAG to comment, in this instance, on the basis of them being residents of the parish.

62/17 To consider a request from a parishioner for community sandbags to be supplied by WPC. Councillors discussed the merits of this idea but were unsure that sandbags provide a good solution to preventing flooding. The Clerk was asked to investigate the cost and effectiveness of the modern inflatable barriers that can be deflated and stored when not in use. The matter will then be brought back for discussion at the next meeting.

63/17 Walberswick Scroll and Heritage Hut

The Chairman opened the meeting and invited Bill Ungless to give Councillors an update on progress by the Scroll and Heritage Hut Committee. Mr Ungless reported that an application for funding was completed and asked Councillors to endorse this by the Chairman and Clerk's signature. The funding was to do work on the Heritage Hut to make it suitable to hold the Scroll and to carry out necessary repairs. **It was RESOLVED that this should be supported by WPC and the Chairman and Clerk should sign the application for funding. It was further RESOLVED that the Clerk should be authorised to apply to SALC for Transparency**

funding to include putting in telephone and broadband provision to make the Heritage Hut suitable for the Clerk and other parishioners to meet and to work from there.

64/17 Gorse clearing and ongoing maintenance of the playing field. Councillors were told that the gorse had been cleared around the playing field with a generous amount cleared at the edge to slow down ingress. A quote has been received from Conservation Works for £250.00 to spray off the gorse in June/July 2017. **Councillors RESOLVED that this quote is accepted and that the Clerk confirms to Conservation Works that this should be done.** The Clerk also reported that she had spoken to Sarah Shinnie at SCDC who has money left in her sports and play grant budget. **It was RESOLVED that Walberswick PC applies for this funding to provide new safety matting under The Green play equipment.** The clerk was also asked to speak to Sarah Shinnie about the pavilion and whether it's ownership status allowed WPC to apply for funding for repairs. She was also to discuss the fencing around the field.

65/17 To fill vacancies on the Council

a) Josie Bassinette has applied for co-option to fill the advertised vacancy. Mrs Bassinette had provided a resume of her experience which included 30 years with the World Bank with executive and project management responsibilities. She has a Master's Degree in Finance and an MSc. It was **RESOLVED unanimously that Josie Bassinette be co-opted** to serve on WPC. The Clerk advised that the s91 Councillors would be no longer in place after Councillor Bassinette had returned her signed Acceptance of Office proforma to the Clerk.

b) In view of the fact that there are four more vacant seats on WPC it was **RESOLVED that Casual Vacancies for all four be declared** and publicity be issued to encourage people to come forward.

66/17 Schedule of Meetings for 2017/18

May 15th 2017 (Annual Parish Council Meeting)

July 17th 2017

October 16th 2017

January 15th 2018

March 19th 2018

May 21st 2018 (Annual Parish Council meeting)

Annual Parish Meeting: Thursday 13th April 2017

Date of Next Meeting: Annual Parish Council Meeting 15th May 2017