

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minute of the meeting held on Monday 14th January 2019 in the annex of the village hall at 7.15pm. Planning papers were available from 7pm.

Present: Councillors Bassinette (in the chair), Lewis, Mackay, Richardson, Sutton and Winyard. Mary Mitson-Woods, Clerk.

290/19. The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

Councillor Bassinette updated the meeting on progress on the audit for 2017/18 and its relationship to this year's budget and the 2019/20 precept and would, as requested at the December meeting, make the statement available for publication in the Village News and on the Walberswick website. (statement available on website).

291/19 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sutherland-Rogers as she was away. They were accepted and approved

292/19 Declarations of interest – Councillor Lewis declared that he lives nearby to Dickon House which is the subject of Planning Application DC/18/5068/FUL, so would not vote on it

293/19 Open Forum topics raised.

Two members of the public spoke to express their dissatisfaction with a number of items on the Authorisation to Pay sheet and the documentation being used for the budget approval. The Chairman said that she would take it up during the agenda items themselves, if relevant.

294/19 SC District Councillor Michael Gower. Reported that the next draft of the SCDC Local Plan was out for consultation although there was little that he thought would be of impact specifically to Walberswick. He said that in his view, too many houses were allocated in the document which may lead to protests about larger developments in those villages that are affected. He mentioned the importance of the 3rd round Consultation on Sizewell C including that the new proposals included a road route further north which would impact a different group of people from the earlier route. EDF was still intending to build the 2000+ workers campus at Eastbridge which had drawn heavy criticism from the community because of its impact on the AONB. Councillor Gower urged people to make their views known to EDF.

Councillor Lewis said that the WPC had arranged with EDF to make a presentation and take questions at a meeting on 4th February at the Walberswick village hall at 7.30pm. He strongly encouraged all villagers to attend given the impact that Sizewell would have on the Village and the area and that this was the final round of Consultation for the public to make its voice heard.

295/19 The Minute of the meeting of 10th December 2018 was accepted and signed as a true and accurate record.

296/19 Finance Matters (4 papers)

a) **Lloyds Bank account ****1763 Reconciliation.** The Chairman passed the bank statement to Councillor Sutton who checked it and confirmed that it agreed with the Reconciliation Sheet. In response to a question raised in the public forum, the Chairman stated that the deposit of £2998.25 was the payment from SCDC of the first half of the grant given to support the playground renovation and repair on the Green. The second and final payment would be made once the playground repair was complete. **It was resolved that the Reconciliation Sheet accurately reflected the bank statement.**

b) **HSBC Account ****1870 Reconciliation.** The Chairman passed the bank statement to Councillor Sutton who checked it and confirmed with his signature that it agreed with the Reconciliation Sheet. **It was resolved that the Reconciliation Sheet accurately reflected the bank statement.**

c) **Performance against budget.** In response to an earlier question raised in the public forum, it was noted that expenditures on the Clerk's salary were in line with the expected amount. **The status of the budget was noted by Councillors.**

d) Authorisation to Pay. It was resolved that payment was authorised for the items on the ATP sheet. In response to an earlier question raised in the public forum, it was noted that, as shown on the ATP, the payment to Action Play and Leisure, had been paid between the December and January meetings.

297/19 Approval of budget for 2019/20

The Chairman noted all the line items on the final draft budget had been considered and agreed by the Councillors at the meetings in November and December. Unfortunately, an amount of £5000 for the external audit had to be included because of the possibility that the same objectors would choose to follow a similar approach next year in running up a highly disproportionate external auditor bill. It was noted that without these objections, the cost of the external audit was £200. The Councillors all expressed the view that it was hugely unfortunate that such an amount was being wasted rather than being put to good use for a village project. The Council agreed on the 2019/20 expenditure items.

The Council then discussed the income side of the budget and particularly discussed the necessary amount for the precept. The Council accepted that the cost of expenditures had to be covered and that a responsible level of reserves needed to be held, mindful of the recommendation from SALC of holding between 6-9 months of expenditures. Again, the Council had to consider that the potentially uncapped liability caused by the three objectors related to the audit had to be taken into account as this could erode the reserves. They considered three sample scenarios and determined that a precept of £27,000 should be approved. The Councillors all expressed dismay at having to increase the precept from the current £23,000 solely for the purpose of covering the external auditor costs. The Clerk confirmed that the advice from the SCDC Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer was that the Council was correct in planning for the potentially high external audit cost and that, should the council get an indication of a lower cost, the requested precept could be reduced if SCDC were informed before 14 February 2019.

It was resolved that the line item expenditures in the budget paper be approved as the 2019/20 budget and that a request be made to the district council for a 2019/20 precept of £27,000. It was further resolved that the Council would seek confirmation from the external auditor of the likely amount of the external audit cost for 2018/19 by the time of the February Council meeting so that the Council would have the information to know whether it would be possible to lower the precept from £27,000 for 2019/20. The Clerk was asked to inform SCDC of the precept decision, but to inform the SCDC Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer that this may possibly be revised at the 11th February 2019 Council meeting in light of any additional information from the external auditor.

298/19 Policies Review – Councillor Lewis announced that these were the last set of policies and procedures in order to complete the review of all relevant WPC policies. The Council thanked Councillor Lewis for the tremendous work he had done in leading the review process and in ensuring that all policies were up to date, relevant to Walberswick and easily available to the public on the website. The Council also thanked Councillor Lewis and Kay Ungless for their effort in improving and maintaining the website especially during the challenges of GDPR.

It was noted that the Financial Standing Orders were being amended to take into account the ability to have either a joint or a separate Clerk and RFO. **It was resolved that the new version of the Council's Financial Regulations be adopted and placed on the Council's website.**

It was resolved to adopt the template for the Annual Financial Risk Assessment and the template for the annual internal control and policy checklist. It was further resolved that Councillor Sutherland-Rogers who had done an excellent job last year should again be asked to complete this year's checklist.

299/19 Oral reports from Councillors

SID – Councillors Winyard and Sutton reported that 4 people had volunteered and are in place to organise the charging of the SID batteries and the moving of the SID as appropriate. The Council thanked Councillors Winyard, Sutton and WCLC Chairman James Darkins for the work they had put in to get the SIDS operational in the village.

Sizewell C – Councillor Lewis strongly encouraged everyone to urge their friends and fellow parishioners to turn up to the meeting with EDF on February 4th 2019 in the Walberswick Village Hall. This would also help enable the Council to develop a response on behalf of the village.

Heritage Hut – Councillor Bassinette said that work was underway to complete the Heads of Terms sheet that the solicitors would use to draft the HH lease.

300/19 Planning Applications and PAG reports were considered and recommendations were made for the following:

DC/18/5059/FUL Resolved that the PAG report is accepted and that the application be supported.

DC/18/4800/FUL Resolved that the PAG report is accepted and that the application be supported.

However, the Clerk was directed to write to SCDC planning department to express concern that no papers had been received for this application and that SCDC had given consent before the end of consultation period. Therefore, had the Council not supported the application, our input would not have been properly taken into account by SCDC.

DC/18/5068/FUL Resolved that the PAG report is accepted and that the application be supported.

301/19 Councillor Lewis proposed, seconded by Councillor Mackay *“To pass a Resolution in Accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the public as their presence would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business, namely matters relating to 2017/18 Council response to audit objections and in particular a direction from the auditors of the need to maintain confidentiality at this stage in the process.”*

Following a full discussion of the draft audit response, it was the view of the Council that none of the objections to the audit lodged by three individuals met the criteria for acceptance by the external auditor. **Resolved that the written response to the objections to the audit that had been prepared be approved and that the Chairman should forward this to PKF Littlejohn for consideration.**

Date of next meeting: Monday 11th February.

The meeting closed at 21.02pm.

Items for the next agenda to the Clerk by Wednesday 30th January 2019