



## CLERK ADVISORY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

02 August 2021 - 8pm

### MINUTES

#### **Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr. Ashton (Chair), Cllr. Hall (Vice Chair), Cllr. Ward, Cllr. Westin

**Clerk and RFO:** Mr S Baxter

**Members of the public (MOP):** 0

**Meeting commenced at 8.00pm**

### AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

**Please note:** All decisions taken in the meeting were ultimately taken by the Clerk under the delegated authority (as permitted under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972) which was given by the Parish Council and commenced on the 07 May 2021. The Clerk would seek the advice of the Councillors before any decision made.

#### 1. **Welcome to all Councillors and any members of the public sitting in observation**

The Chair welcomed all and checked all Councillors were able to see, hear and be heard as the meeting was held via a digital format. He reminded all the Meeting was recorded and the recordings kept for a minimum 12 months.

The Chair reminded the attendees the meeting was a Clerk Advisory Meeting and not a Full Parish Meeting. The Councillors will advise the Clerk on agenda points but that the Clerk will make the final decision through the delegated authority agreed at the previous Full Council Meeting.

#### 2. **Apologies for absence from Councillors**

The Clerk updated the Councillors that as this meeting was not a Full Council Meeting, the apology did not have to be formally accepted for recording purposes although the reason for absence is noted.

The Clerk did not that Cllr Murphy was absent due to a personal appointment. The Councillors did state that although they do not legally have to agree to absence (as it is not a statutory meeting), they wish to note that they do accept the absence as reasonable.

#### 3. **Declarations of interest** - for the Council to note including dispensations presented to the Clerk

The Clerk stated that he had not received any declarations of interest.



#### 4. Minutes of the last Clerk Advisory Meeting (05 July 2021) – to confirm that the minutes are accurate

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors. The Councillors briefly discussed the minutes for the accuracy.

- *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.*
- *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk agreed that the minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 05 July 2021 was a true and accurate and noted it as such.*

#### 5. Off-road use of Featherbed Lane – update from the Clerk

The Clerk stated that he had no heard from the contact at the ERYC despite contacting the PRow team several times. Should the PRow fail to contact again, then he will raise the issue with the PRow Team Manager.

The Chair did state that he had unfortunately seen some illegal off roading at another part of the village.

The Clerk confirmed that he will ensure the PRow Team are aware.

**Actions:** Clerk to continue to chase the PRow Team at ERYC and to update Councillors at next meeting

#### 6. Telephone Box maintenance – update from Cllr Murphy

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Murphy had sent some notes on the update on the Telephone Box.

The update details were that the telephone box is back in the original position and that it had been partially renovated. He noted that they are still some work to be done on the box in situ but it is hoped that during August more work can be done. The painting had been done and the structure refurbishment was done.

The Councillors wished to place on note that not does the box looks brilliant and is a great statement for the village, but they wish to sincerely thank Cllr Murphy and his team and done an amazing job. The community owe them a debt of gratitude.

The Clerk did confirm that the Box is a Parish Council asset and that should any member of the public wish to help with any work on the Box, they would need the permission of the Parish Council so that they could ensure the work was done properly and safely.

#### 7. Financial update from the Clerk – including bank reconciliations

The Clerk had previously sent the full financial update and bank reconciliations to the Councillors for their perusal. He stated that he had already started to take onboard the Internal Auditors recommendations in regard to the financial reports.

The main points of the update were:

- i) Bank Balance as of 31 July 2021 was £8,826.68. But this amount included the provision for the External Auditor investigation as well as costs owing to Peninsula Insurance.



- ii) All budget lines were on course as predicted apart from the Clerk costs which are higher unfortunately due to costs incurred by extra work needed because of external issues
- iii) Still forecasted for a small surplus in the accounts
  - *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the financial report was acceptable.*
  - *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk noted the support of the Councillors of the financial report and confirmed that it would be published on the Council's website as per the Internal Audit recommendations.*

## 8. General expenditure for approval

The Clerk had previously sent all the expenditure detail to the Councillors for their perusal.

- i) Salary and Expenses of Clerk – amount withheld due to confidentiality
- ii) Peninsula Insurance direct debits for February 2021 - £138.62 / month
  - *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the expenditure as detailed was acceptable.*
  - *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk noted the support of the Councillors of the expenditure and that he would now initiate the payments through the bank and request they are authorised in the bank by the Councillors.*

## 9. Update on the External Audit Investigation

The Clerk confirmed that there has been no contact with the External Auditor but that as normal he would continue to periodically chase PKF Littlejohn for an update.

## 10. Planning Applications for discussion and decision of support

The Clerk stated that there was no planning permission as the one that was applied for (21/02281/VAR Land North Of Home Farm, Main Street, Spaldington, East Riding Of Yorkshire, DN14 7NJ) had already been submitted on support through the delegated authority.

## 11. Correspondence to discuss

The Clerk confirmed that the Council had received a formal Freedom of Information Request from Ms Wendy McKay on the 22 July 2021. He confirmed that the name can be disclosed as FoI requests are not confidential.

The request was to provide various documents in regard to the AGAR documents and the submission to the External Auditor. The clerk confirmed that unfortunately this request would cause the Council to incur costs due to overtime that the Clerk would need to incur as there is insufficient resource in the normal contractual time of the Clerk. The Clerk has confirmed that he will update the Council at the next Clerk Advisory Meeting.

The Council will have 20 working days to respond although the Clerk is seeking legal clarification on the request.

The Clerk did state a consideration in the vexatious communication policy is persistent or repeated FoI requests.



## 12. Signs on Pathways in the Parish – item moved from last meeting from Cllr Westin

Cllr Westin confirmed that the signs on the pathways in the Parish are under review and she hopes to ensure to at the next meeting (work permitting) there will be an update at the next meeting.

## 13. Walkabout with the ERYC Parish Team – update from Cllr Westin

The Clerk confirmed that following the meeting that Cllr Westin had with the Parish Team at ERYC, and the detail and work they discussed, the Council had received a full and detailed report on the work and timescale.

There were two reports: one was for the work that the Parish Team at ERYC would be undertaking and the second report was for the work that was being passed to Highways at ERYC. He was aware that some work had already been done – this was a sign that through the Parish Council's commitment to the Village things could be improved for the benefit of all.

The Clerk stated that both reports had been published on the website for the community to review.

In regard to the timescale, the Clerk has stated that if he doesn't hear from the ERYC Teams in the next few weeks, he will chase them up to ensure that the Council and community are aware.

## 14. Communication from ERYC about the Village broadband connection – update from the Clerk

The Chair opened the discussion in regard to the agenda point of the broadband connection for the village. He stated that he discussed with locals in the village who were grateful for the work the Council had done in regard to providing an update on the various local and central government initiatives to help rural communities with broadband connection.

The member of the community stated they had been very frustrated with Open Reach and BT and asked the Council for help.

The Councillors discussed the options that the Community faced in regard to their broadband connection and felt any help they could give, they wanted to actively support. They felt that if an unofficial pressure working group could be formed with some members of the community and the Parish Council to press Open Reach and the ERYC this may prove fruitful.

The Clerk confirmed that this could be formed but it would be on the basis that it would be advisory to the Council with no powers but that it would provide an ideal opportunity to use all Parish Council resources to help the community. This would not need any formal motion as the group would be unofficial. He confirmed that he would put a notice on the website and Facebook to invite people to express an interest in joining such a group.

**Action: The Clerk to write an Expressions of Interest notice and ensure that it is publicised.**

## 15. Policies needed as per Internal Auditor Review – recommendation from the Clerk

The Clerk stated that in line with the various recommendations from the Internal Auditor, he had already started to work on the suggested policies, most crucially the amendments to the Standing Orders and the



Financial Regulations (in line with NALC recommendations) and the creations of the Corporate Risk Assessment to link in with the previously agreed Business Recover Plan.

The Clerk confirmed that while these policies can be worked on and informally discussed, for them to be formally agreed they need to be voted at a Full Council Meeting which will need to be face to face (unless the legislation changes). This is likely to be in December so that the Budget and Precept can be discussed.

The Councillors appreciated the work that is needed to ensure that the Council follow the recommendations from the Internal Auditor.

## 16. Wind farm grant application submissions – update by the Clerk

The Clerk confirmed that he had received confirmation that the Council was not successful in any of the applications of grant funding for any project. While this was very disappointing, the Grant Panel confirmed that the fund was massively over-subscribed and we should consider reapplying next year.

Cllr Murphy stated as follows (through an email submission):

*“I don’t think we ought to be too disappointed with the fact we have been unsuccessful on all counts with our funding applications, we ought to be well pleased with the general progress made in balancing the books in such a short period of time and specifically after inheriting such a mess, the telephone box refurbishment and the provision of a ‘village bench’ have progressed. I believe we can enhance the annual Xmas display anyhow.”*

The Councillors wanted to note that they fully agree with this statement and support the sentiment.

Cllr Ward has given some feedback on what the Council could consider for the following year and the approach to be taken.

## 17. Newsletter – update from the Clerk

The Clerk confirmed that the most recent newsletter had been published and printed. The Councillors had kindly hand delivered the newsletter to the community which had also allowed a good opportunity for the Councillors to engage with the various members of the community.

The Clerk confirmed that the newsletter had also included an opportunity for the members of the community to make the Council aware of their feelings in regard to the privately run pop-up-pub.

The intention was that there would be another newsletter at the end of September 2021.

## 18. Parishioner concerns relayed to Councillors – any update from Councillors from Parishioners

The following were concerns relayed:

- 1) **The citing of the village bench by the CIC:** there has been some disquiet over the citing of the bench that the CIC have proposed as this has been done with no village consultation or with any locals to near where the bench is proposed. This has had the effect of causing great concern to some members of the community who felt that the CIC should have appreciated their concerns and done more in research to where the bench should be located – possibly near the village noticeboard.



The Clerk confirmed that these concerns had been relayed to the Highways Team at ERYC to whom they stated that the Parish Council (while supporting the addition of the village bench in principle) do not support the location. The Parish Council supports its community members in their concerns and hope the CIC take notice of their feelings.

The Council also confirmed that there had been some comments from the community that some of the recent behaviour from a minority of the community which has caused some much bad feeling was from a small amount of people but that these people were new to the village and need to take into the account of long standing members of the Village who supported the Parish Council in their recent endeavours to move on from the issues the Council have faced in the past under the previous administration.

- 2) **The lack of access to the Meeting:** a member of the community spoke to the Chair and felt that while they understood the action the Council took in response to the appalling behaviour of a minority of the community at the last meeting, they have asked if the Council could find a way to ensure that people could participate in the next meeting. The Councillors discussed this at length and while they do not wish the conduct of some members of the community to be repeated, they do wish to encourage participation.

They asked the Clerk if there was a way where questions could be sent prior to the meeting or that there was a way to ensure that any conduct not befitting the standard of courtesy could be dealt with swiftly. The Clerk confirmed he would look into the issues and make several proposals for the public participation for the next meeting. All Councillors agreed that ensuring the minority don't destroy the rights of the majority was important.

- 3) **Communication with the Council:** There had been a discussion with the Chair about the communication of the Council and the recent updates on Facebook. The resident appreciated that the Council did have to ensure that any communication that was abusive or not within a level of decency had to be removed, but the issue with was that because of the Village website the CIC were managing was in effect a closed shop only accessible to the 'permitted few', then some members of the community felt that they were not seeing the full story.

The Councillors confirmed that Facebook was not the best format to have detailed discussions with the community and that while they do support ensuring being as transparent and open as possible, if members of the community wanted to discuss items, they should email the Clerk at the first instance or meet the Councillors in person. The Councillors felt that if the CIC wished to run a village Facebook page through a 'closed' format that is their choice but the Parish Council wishes to be open with the only request that cordiality is maintained.

- 4) **The Community holding a summer fete:** there was a proposal by Cllr Murphy (which was actively supported by Councillors) that the Council should hold a community fete in late summer. He was prepared to offer to allow the staging of the event on his land for the benefit of all. The Councillors felt this was an ideal opportunity for the community to re-engage through community spirit.

The Clerk and Councillors discussed the funding element and it was agreed the Clerk should investigate the funding available by ERYC in regard to 'coming out of covid community celebration'. Cllr Murphy had already outlined the possible costs in regard to the various elements of a possible summer fete.



**Action:** The Clerk to write the funding team at ERYC to both investigate the funding opportunities as well as applying for funding if possible.

## 19. Complaint made to the Council

The Chair and Cllr Westin confirmed that they had asked the complainant repeatedly for evidence to substantiate the complaint and to then allow Cllr Westin to properly investigate it. The Councillors confirmed that they are yet to receive anything from the complainant and thus until this happens the complaint investigation must be paused.

## 20. To agree the next Clerk Advisory Meeting of the Parish Council - 8pm on Mon 06 September 2021 by Zoom

- *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the date for the next Clerk Advisory Meeting is acceptable*
- *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk noted the advice of the Councillors and would arrange the C A M accordingly.*

**MEETING WAS CLOSED BY THE CHAIR AT 9.45PM.**

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