



## FULL PARISH MEETING

07 December 2020 – 7.30pm

### MINUTES

#### Present:

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

**Clerk and RFO:** Mr S Baxter

**Members of the public:** Four

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

### AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

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.

2. **Members of the public participation** – this will be limited to 10 minutes and each member of the public will have a maximum time of three minutes. This is at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair asked for any comments from any members of the public – none were received.

3. **Motion to exclude members of press and public from participation** – but can observe

- *Motion to agree the motion was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

*For the following agenda points members of the public could observe the meeting but could not take part in any discussion or debate. Any persons not Councillors or the Clerk were muted on Zoom*

4. **Apologies for absence from Councillors**

The Chair received no apologies.

5. **Declarations of interest** – for the Council to note and dispensations presented to the Clerk

There were no declarations of interest presented nor did the Clerk receive any prior to the meeting

6. **Minutes of the last Full Meeting** (02 Nov2020) – to confirm that the minutes are accurate

- *Motion to agree the minutes as a true and accurate was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

7. **Minutes of the FoI Sub-Committee** (26 Oct 2020) – to confirm that the minutes are accurate

- *Motion to agree the minutes as a true and accurate was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*



8. **Minutes of the FoI Sub-Committee** (23 Nov 2020) – to confirm that the minutes are accurate

- *Motion to agree the minutes as a true and accurate was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

9. **Discussion and approval of Sub-Committee recommendations** – including agreeing response to External Auditor following audit challenges

The clerk confirmed that as an action following the Sub-Committee he had written a full response letter to PKF Littlejohns and had circulated it around the Councillors for their thoughts. Cllr Westin (as the Chair of the Sub-Committee) stated that she was happy with the letter and just wanted a minor consideration to be included in the fact the in the previous administration the Chair and the RFO was one and the same person. Cllr Ashton wanted a minor amendment in regard to one of the points about the purchase of software. The Clerk agreed and would amend accordingly.

- *Motion to agree the format and detail of the formal response of the Council to the various audit challenges and for to be sent to the External Auditor in the next few days was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

The Chair wanted to ensure that it was detailed that the Clerk had had a response from the External Auditors in the previous week about possible costs of their services. They had confirmed that the cost would be at a rate of £355 per hour plus VAT but could not give an indication of the length of time it would take.

The Chair also wanted to clarify the position of the letter in regard to any FoI requests. The Clerk stated that any FoI request would be considered as per legislation and would ascertain if any of the exceptions applied. If none applied, the Council would need to provide a copy of the letter to PKF Littlejohns within 20 working days and the Council then could not be held responsible for what the respondent does with the letter subsequently.

10. **SPC Councillor nominations for the standards committee of ERYC** – discuss and vote

The Chair had expressed an interest in being nominated by the Council to sit on the Standards Committee of the ERYC. He felt it would be good to understand the role of the committee and also provide a good insight to the Council especially in regard to past problems the Council had been involved with.



- *Motion to nominate Cllr Ashton for the ERYC Standards Committee was proposed, seconded and agreed. It was unanimous by the three Councillors that voted (Cllr Ashton felt it appropriate to abstain as to not influence the vote for his nomination). Motion passed.*

## 11. Winter preparation - discuss and vote

Cllr Murphy stated that the Council needed to contact Mr Taylor who very kindly last year managed some of the aspects of the winter preparedness in regard to spreading grit on the Spaldington Lane junction. He also stated that he had some grit and the gritter machine to use. He was aware that there was some grit in the various grit boxes and that while more grit would be needed it was not at an urgent stage.

Cllr Westin stated that she was aware that in previous years the Council had a Winter Committee to help coordinate the issues in the winter planning and was aware that some local residents had been very helpful especially Mr Evans who helped with his digger bucket.

- *Motion to ensure that the Council purchase the necessary grit needed for the various grit buckets around the Parish was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion agreed.*

### Actions:

- All Councillors to let the Clerk know what grit is needed in their area of the Parish they are closest to. The Clerk would then coordinate the response needed.**
- The Clerk will contact Mr Taylor to ascertain if he is willing to help again.**

## 12. Update from Cllr. Murphy on the grant applications

Cllr Murphy had previously written an outline of how the Council and the Community may consider a more long-term sustainable plan in regard to various grants available through the Windfarm etc rather than reactive and small applications. This was received by the Councils and Clerk prior to the meeting.

Cllr Westin agreed it was a good idea but wanted to ensure that all the Parish was allowed to participate – including the outlying areas. This was agreed by all Councillors as very much appropriate.

**Chair allowed Mr Southworth to make an observation (and not participate as per the motion in agenda point three).** Mr Southworth stated he had previously had expressions of support for a more wider reaching local plan for the grant applications. He had also, as the representative on various bodies, been in contact with



ERYC to produce a survey for local residents to have their say on what the community want to support. He would also ensure that the plan that Cllr Murphy had outlined would be placed on the Community Facebook page and asked if it could go on the Parish Website. Councillors informally agreed.

### 13. Update from Cllr. Hall on the Defibrillator

Cllr Hall asked if this agenda point could be moved to the next meeting to allow him to collate more detail. Chair (through their powers) allowed this.

#### **Actions:**

- i) **Clerk to ensure this agenda point is carried forward to the meeting on the 04 January 2021.**

### 14. Confirmation of vacancy of Councillor role

The Clerk confirmed that as per the motion passed in the EOM, it was agreed that Mrs E Ward's Councillorship was now considered vacant. A letter had been written to Mrs Ward to thank you her community support but note the issues of the signature on the Acceptance of Office Form.

The Chair did want to reiterate that the Council did not consider that Mrs Ward had done anything wrong in terms of her action – just that it was unfortunate that the signing of the form was outside the legally allowed window of time. He also wanted to reiterate that he previous administration before the election was advised of the need of the signature in the two month window but that it had possibly not passed this advice to Mrs Ward.

The Clerk confirmed that the Notice of the Vacancy in the Council was forwarded to the Election Team at ERYC, had been published on the website and had been advertised on the Community Notice Board. The deadline for the Monitoring Officer to receive a letter signed by 10 electors of the Parish was the 18 December 2020 – if this was received it would trigger an election which because of Corona Virus Regulations 2020 would only be held in May 2021. If no letter is received, the Council could then decide to advertise for applications for co-option.

### 15. Clerk's Contract – formal agreement on adoption

- ***Motion to formally agree the contract of the Clerk and RFO of the Parish Council was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***



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

The Clerk had previous to the meeting sent the financial update of the Council's resources to the Councillors for their perusal and comment. The Clerk had stated that the format of the financial papers had changed to allow for easier review by non-accountancy lay people – the Chair acknowledged the Council was grateful.

The Clerk stated that all budget v actual estimations were still on course and that there was still a provision for any costs incurred by the External Auditor investigation. All costs had been accounted for and the bank reconciliations (up to 01 November 2020) were completed.

- *Motion to formally agree the financial papers submitted by the RFO and accept their accuracy was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

## 17. Budget discussion for April 2021 to March 2022 - discussion and agreement

The Clerk confirmed that the budget proposal had been emailed to all Councillors for their consideration and perusal. The Chair had confirmed that the Clerk and him had had some communication on the budget to establish the items and for some clarifications.

The Clerk stated that most operational aspects of the budget had not changed significantly apart from the Clerk costs as for six months of 2020/21 there was no clerk in post and thus no costs. The Clerking costs would be circa £3,200 this year which would include salary, travel to meetings, office allowance and some overtime. The other main operational cost would be the Peninsula insurance cost at nearly £1,700 a year which was a result of the issues the Council had faced in the years previously and the five year contract the previous administration had signed.

The final aspect of the budget was the extra provision for the External Auditor investigation costs. The Clerk submitted that an extra £5,000 provision should be made, which with the provision in the 2020/21 budget would allow a total of £8,500 to be held in provision. The Clerk explained that the cost from the External Auditor would run into the thousands due to their hourly cost and the amount of work they would need to undertake following the audit challenge and the issues caused in the previous years. Any monies assigned to the External Auditor investigation not used would start a level of reserve or emergency funds for the Council. The Clerk continued that the budget was based on the precept recommended for 2021/22 [*stated in the following agenda point*].



The Chair felt that the budget was appropriate and that it was unfortunately needed in regard to extra provision for the External Auditor investigation costs. It was also hoped that in 2022/23 the budget costs may be reduced but it would depend on future needs.

- *Motion to formally agree the budget for 2021/22 proposed by the RFO was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**Actions:**

- i) **Clerk to ensure that the budget is published on the website for transparency**

## 18. Precept for 2021 / 22 - discussion and agreement

The RFO, through the budget proposal, had made a recommendation of the precept rising from £7,900 a year to £10,000. This was primarily to ensure that extra provision was made on the possible External Auditor costs. The effect this would have on the average Band D property would be an extra £30 from the 2020/21 costs – rising from circa £114 a year to £143 a year.

It was hoped that if the costs for the External Auditor were not as high as feared, then the precept may possibly be lower in the year 2022/23 but that this consideration would have to be made in the next year.

The Chair accepted the recommendation and felt while it was unfortunate that the precept would have to rise, it was purely because of ensuring proper provisions were made for the as yet unknown External Auditor costs.

- *Motion to formally agree the recommended precept of £10,000 a year by the RFO was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**Actions:**

- i) **Clerk to ensure that the details of the Precept is communicated to the team at ERYC**

## 19. Policies to agree:

- i) Approving payments at Meetings Policy
- ii) Retention and Disposal of Documents and Data Policy
- iii) Business Continuity Plan

The Chair asked for a minor amendment was made to the BCP as it didn't affect the parish of Spaldington. This was agreed by the Clerk.



- *Motion to agree the policies as detailed in the agenda was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**Actions:**

- i) **The Clerk to ensure that the policies are published on the website**

**20. Councillor email address** – proposal to set a consistent email address

This was proposed by the Clerk in regard to best practice of the communication channels of the Councillors. It was not considered best practice to use their own personal email addresses for official Council business as this was not professional and could cause issues if there was a FoI request in regards to documents or data the Councillors may hold on their personal email accounts. It was proposed that each Councillor would have a distinct email address (such as [cllr.ashton.spaldingtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:cllr.ashton.spaldingtonpc@gmail.com)). Thi would also reduce the need for members of the community to be aware of the personal email addresses of Councillors.

- *Motion to agree the recommended Councillor email account set up was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**Actions:**

- i) **The Clerk would organise the set up of these email accounts and would forward the details to the Councillors when ready to be activated.**

**21. General expenditure for approval**

Payee	Amount
Salary and Expenses of Clerk	amount withheld due to confidentiality
Streetlight invoice from ERYCC	£298.44
Peninsula Insurance direct debits for October, November and December 2020	£138.62 / month

- *Motion to agree the payments as detailed in the agenda was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**22. Correspondence to discuss**

- i) ERYCC Press release on Covid guidelines
- ii) Complaint issued by two residents – *Clerk to update*
- iii) FoI submission – *Clerk to update*
- iv) PKF Littlejohn email concerning audit review





- v) Joint Local Access Forum Annual Report 2019-20 from ERYCC
- vi) Members Briefing - Information for Town and Parish Councils
- vii) ASB Six Month Statistics - Howdenshire Ward of ERYCC

The various pieces of correspondence had previously been circulated to all Councillors for their perusal and consideration. The Clerk briefly went through all the pieces of correspondence and gave any necessary minor updates.

The Clerk confirmed that the Complaints issued by two residents had been fully investigated through discussion with the Councillors in concern and from examination of the detail and had responded to the two members of the public.

The Clerk also confirmed that the same people had put forward a FoI request for copies of documents about a complaint the Councillors had allegedly made to the Police. After investigation and discussion with the Councillors in connection that no formal written complaint had been made to the Police and thus there was no document to surrender in the FoI request.

### **23. Planning Applications for discussion and decision of support**

The Clerk confirmed that apart from detail of a previously discussed planning application, there had been no further planning applications received.

The Chair did state that some of the ERYC planning meetings were held on Youtube for the public to watch. The Chair also stated that he had been made aware in the meetings he witnessed that it was the possible intention in the future for Parish Councils to have a greater input in planning decisions.

### **24. Banking of the Parish Council - decision on recommendation**

The Clerk had previously circulated to all Councillors the recommendation by him as RFO to consider changing banks to a more digitally enabled bank which was more appropriate in regard to modern use, was more suited to Council operations and was more ethically managed. He continued that the current bank, HSBC, had been very unhelpful in various mandate changing and that they did not offer the multi authorisation that the RFO felt was needed in the Council's financial operations - he felt the current use of cheques solely was more risk orientated.

The RFO recommended that the Council change to the UNITY TRUST BANK which did offer the necessary systems and processes the Council needed including digital multi authorisation payments, a quick process of



urgent payments and that any banking reconciliations would be more up to date. The disadvantage as the annual cost of £72 a year but it was felt this would be more than repaid through less Clerk and Councillor time in managing issues through HSBC.

- *Motion to agree the recommended banking change to UNITY TRUST BANK set up was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**Actions:**

- The Clerk would organise the paperwork and the set up of the new bank account.**

**25. Motion to agree the next Meeting of the Parish Council – 7.30pm on Mon 04 January 2021 by Zoom**

- *Motion to agree the date of the next meeting was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

**The Chair closed the meeting at 9.10pm.**

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