

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of the Parish Council held in the Village Hall annex at 7.30pm on 4 March 2013

NOTES of the pre-meeting public participation session

Mr Hunt explained that the Parish Plan Steering Group wished to move onto phase 3 of the plan, but that it depended on the involvement of the Parish Council. He asked whether it was still planned to have an elected Council in place by May. Cllr Burroughes replied that maybe the election would be in September as the appointed Councillors didn't want to leave when the job was not done. Cllr Gower said that if there were people ready to stand for the Council then he would go. Mrs Hunt asked if the Council was still receiving freedom of information (FOI) requests. He replied that there weren't so many, but that there was a lot of business with the Information Commissioner (ICO). Mrs Hunt commented that this meant that the Parish Plan was still stymied.

Mr Gilby asked why the draft Publication Scheme listed both Mrs Hunt and Mrs Gomm as Clerk. Mrs Gomm replied that she had used an original copy of the scheme to make suggested changes and Mrs Hunt's details were highlighted in yellow as part of the Clerk's suggested deletions, but that the highlight did not show up well on the website. Mr Gilby also asked why the Council hadn't used the exact wording of the summaries found on the ICO website of ICO decisions. Cllr Austin replied that if a decision was on the website then the Clerk had and would continue to use the ICO summary.

Mr MacCarthy said that he still had outstanding requests about anonymous donations. Cllr Webb said that Mr MacCarthy's recent email suggested that he had behaved improperly in accepting the anonymous donations which had been left on his doorstep or put through his letter box. He asked what Mr MacCarthy would have done in his position. Mr MacCarthy replied that he wouldn't have accepted them as it didn't smell right. The Clerk pointed out that she had no records of any outstanding requests for information, but it was possible that there had been a problem with emails. Cllr Gower suggested that Mr MacCarthy resend it. He said he wouldn't and so Cllr Gower said he would forward his copy to the Clerk. Cllr Tytler said we should cut to the chase and answer the three simple questions in the email. Mr Gomm commented that he agreed with Cllr Tytler that we should cut to the chase. If one looked at the summary of ICO decisions concerning the Council, the overwhelming impression was of a Council that was well run and properly managed. This had been verified by an independent organisation at the tax payers' expense. In each case the ICO had either required no steps to be taken by the Council or found the complaint was ineligible for consideration or the case had been closed at the complainant's request or that the complainant's request was vexatious.

MINUTES of the Meeting

PRESENT: Councillors Mr P Austin, Mr S Burroughes, Mr M Gower (Chairman and District Councillor), Mr D Tytler and Mr D Webb and Mrs J Gomm (Clerk).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

PCSO Newson.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2013 were signed by the Chairman, proposed by Cllr Webb and seconded by Cllr Austin.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Pecuniary interests: None.

Local non pecuniary interests: Cllrs Burroughes and Gower, member of Suffolk Coastal District (SCDC), Cllr Webb, member of the Visitor Centre Working Group.

4. REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS AND THE POLICE

County Cllr Leighton reported that there would be County Council elections at the beginning of May and from April there was a moratorium on Councillors using County Council resources. He had attended a joint Councils meeting on Sizewell C, comments sent to EDF in response to its consultation were mainly to the effect of lack of information especially on the company's transport proposals.

PCSO Newson had sent a report saying that there had been one reported crime in Walberswick during February, a "burglary – other building" of tools.

5. ACCOUNTS

a. Receipts noted:

- Walberswick Village Hall Management Committee, contribution to grass cutting costs for summer 2012 - £118.64 (no vat)
- Mr AD Kohn, donation to cover the cost of the Council's internal audit for the year end 31.03.2013 - £90.00 (no vat)

b. Payments:

The following payments were **agreed**:

- Walberswick Village Hall Management Committee, annex rental for meetings, 03.12.12, 07.01.13, 04.02.13 & 04.03.13 - £49.00 (no vat)
- J K Gomm, expenses, stamps - £6.00 (no vat), stationery - £30.00 plus £6.00 vat – total - £42.00 (incl vat)
- J K Linley (also known as J K Gomm), Clerk's net salary for February 2013, for the dates 31 Jan – 25 Feb, comprising 54 hours 55 minutes, of which 22 hours, 40 minutes were spent on Freedom of Information related work - £778.61 (no vat)

c. Consideration of rates for grass cutting in 2013

The rates proposed by the Council's contractor under the existing contract were considered. It was **agreed** to pay £27.05 per cut (plus vat) for cutting the sports field, excluding the children's play area, with up to three cuts in the season. It was **agreed** to pay £71.82 per cut (plus vat) for cutting the village greens and open spaces, with up to seven cuts in the season. Restricting the cuts would ensure the costs were within the budget provision.

d. Chairman's proposal to close two bank accounts

It was **agreed** to leave three of the Council's bank accounts dormant and that the Clerk should transfer all except £10 from two of the deposit accounts to the current account and to leave the balance in the third deposit account.

e. Update on HMRC Penalty Notice

The Clerk reported that HMRC had acknowledged in January 2012 that the Suffolk Association of Local Council's (SALC) was the Council's PAYE and NI agent. However, it had issued a penalty notice for £400 in September 2012 for failure by the Council to submit an end of year PAYE return, despite SALC having received an acknowledgement from HMRC that it had been received. After extensive correspondence HMRC had issued an amended penalty notice which required the payment of £0.00.

6. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Clerk reported that it was good practice to periodically review the Publication Scheme required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. She had made some suggested changes which had been circulated to Councillors, mainly reflecting the fact that more information was available and more could be made available on the website than previously. It was **agreed** that the changes be made with an implementation date of 01.06.13 to enable all the information including the scheme itself to be placed on the

website. Cllr Austin questioned whether the scale of charges for photocopying was still set at an appropriate rate. Cllr Burroughes **agreed** he would obtain the rates Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) used for consideration at the next meeting.

6. REVIEW OF EXISTING RISK ASSESSMENT ADOPTED 03.04.12 AND AMENDED 01.10.12

After consideration of the existing risk assessment, item by item, including the additional risk that was agreed on 01.10.12, it was **agreed** to make no changes to the risk assessment and the Chairman signed a copy at the meeting.

8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

It was **agreed** to defer consideration of this item to the next meeting, to allow Cllr Burroughes to seek advice from SCDC's Solicitor on the position of Cllr Gower and himself who were appointed Councillors using their SCDC email addresses, in respect of the requirement in the draft policy for all correspondence to be kept for a minimum of one year.

9. TIME RECORDING PROCESS FOR CLERK

The Clerk had recorded her time for the last week allocating time to each function and she produced copies of it. Cllr Austin had produced a template time recording document. It was **agreed** the Clerk would operate both systems plus her existing time recording system and report back on outcomes to the next meeting.

10. APPOINTMENT OF A COUNCILLOR TO UPDATE THE ASSETS REGISTER

It was **agreed** that Cllr Webb would update the assets register. Councillors also requested the Clerk to add use of the visitor centre to the agenda for the next meeting.

11. APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

It was **agreed** to appoint Mr A Hunt to represent the Council on the Village Hall Management Committee.

12. PROPOSED COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY ON BEACH

A commercial photographer proposed to take photographs on the beach and near the beach huts for a day in April. It was **agreed** to raise no objection, but to ask for a donation to Parish Council funds.

13. SPECIFICATION FOR OFFICE EQUIPMENT

The Clerk had, in consultation with Mr Byrne, produced an office equipment specification for the equipment to be provided by the County Councillor's locality budget. The specification was **agreed** with the addition that as much as possible should be wireless enabled and an additional 22inch monitor should be provided if within budget.

14. REQUEST TO USE VISITOR CENTRE

A request had been made by Mr Kett to use the visitor centre on 1 and 2 May 2013 as a base for an archaeological dig by the McDonald Institute for Archeology. It was **agreed** to charge Mr Kett £50 for the use of the hall and to require the Institute to ensure its use of the hall was fully insured.

15. COUNCILLOR GOWER'S LONGER TERM ISSUES PAPER

It was **agreed** to put Cllr Gower's paper on the website as a draft document and defer the matter to the next meeting.

16. CLERK’S JOB EVALUATION

Because the Clerk’s job had not been evaluated since May 2012 Cllr Gower had obtained a proposal from the Local Government Association to carry out an evaluation which he had circulated to Councillors. It was **agreed** that another evaluation should be undertaken. Cllr Webb abstained from the vote as he had been on the previous evaluation panel.

17. INFORMATION COMMISSIONER’S RECENT DECISIONS

It was noted that the two most recent decisions of the Information Commissioner to the effect that the complainants’ requests for information had been vexatious had been appealed by the complainants to the Information Tribunal.

18. FLOODGATE KEYS

The Clerk reported that the Environment Agency had now obtained new keys to the floodgates, which would be provided to the key holders, the Clerk, Mr B Tibbles and Mr M Fisher in due course.

19. MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

Cllr Tytler suggested that, from May 2013, the Council meet every other month.

Cllr Burroughes said that he thought it might be appropriate to hold elections for the Parish Council in September 2013.

Cllr Webb reported he had recently attended a meeting of Southwold Town Council, where only electors could question the Council and suggested this might be a matter for consideration in future.

20. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 2 April 2013, if the Village Hall Annex is available.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed.....

Date.....