

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Council Meeting** held on **Monday 22nd August** at 7.15 pm
in Walberswick Village Hall

Members: Cllr. E Richardson (Chairman) Cllr. L Sutton Cllr. P Widdowson
Cllr. R Catchpole Cllr. P Dunnett

Also present: County Councillor M. Gower, Mr. B Clench (East Areas Highways Engineer) and Mr D Oldham (East Area Highway Manager) of Suffolk County Council K. Forster - Clerk to the Council and 28 members of public

12/16 Chairman The Chairman opened the meeting and proposed that items 7, 8 and 9 be moved to after item 4, so that the meeting could continue under the most recent governance. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to move the order of the agenda as per the proposal.**

13/16 Apologies: There were no apologies

14/16 Declarations of Interest: Cllr. Widdowson declared that he received finance from SCC with respect to his NUT activities.

15/16 Proposed 20 MPH speed limit

Mr. B. Clench presented a short report describing the activities that had been undertaken to date and would be required in the future for the proposal to change the speed limit to 20 MPH in some parts of Walberswick. He stated that the public consultation was now underway and comments needed to be returned by 2/9/2016.

The public were invited to ask further questions. In summary, the questions and replies were as follows:

Signage: Signs would be posted at regular intervals and would replace the current 30MPH signs. There may be a couple of extra signs on minor side roads. The aim was not to increase the street furniture.

Flashing Signs: Flashing signs could be used additionally. They are not included in the current proposals and would be in the region of £4k to purchase. The recommendation was to wait to see how the proposed signage worked in slowing down the traffic.

Finances: It was not the remit of the Engineers to discuss the financing by Walberswick Parish Council.

Public consultation: Positive and negative comments can be made on the consultation. If there are any objections the proposal would need to go to another committee for resolution. If there are no objections then the proposal can proceed immediately.

Other markings: As well as signage, there will be road markings. On entering the village, there will be a sign for 30 MPH and then after 120 metres a sign for 20 MPH, before Adams Lane. There will not be any humps in the road. There will not be any need for additional street lighting or chicanes.

Timing: If there are no objections then the order will placed immediately. If there are any objections then it is hoped that the proposal can be referred to committee by 10th October 2016. Once the order is placed then it will be up to 16 weeks before completion.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Clench and Mr. Oldham for their time and the public gave them a round of applause in appreciation.

16/16 Code of Conduct: The Suffolk Local Code of Conduct was presented by the Clerk. The Chairman proposed that it was adopted, seconded Cllr. Catchpole. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the Suffolk Code of Conduct.**

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17/16 Standing Orders: The latest set of Standing orders, revised in accordance with Walberswick Parish Council, was presented by the Clerk. The Chairman asked for clarity on S.O. 3e, regarding public participation. The Clerk explained that there was no statutory right for any member of the public to participate in a meeting, although it was common practice for a period of time to be set aside in ordinary meetings. It was not common practice to have the same open forum in extra-ordinary meetings. The use of the word “may” implied that it was at the discretion of the Chairman. The Chairman then proposed to add the words “at the discretion of the Chairman” to S.O. 3(e) so as to clarify the implication.

Cllr. Widdowson proposed S.O. 3(l) be changed to read “Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted without the Council’s consent.

Cllr. Widdowson proposed that S.O. 20(b) be changed to read “Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Chairman of the Council who shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. “

The proposals were seconded by Cllr. Catchpole. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the Standing Orders incorporating the proposed changes.**

18/16 Financial Regulations: The Clerk presented the latest Financial Regulations. She explained that Financial Regulation 4.1 had been amended to give the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman of the Council authority to approve any items below £1000 as opposed to £500. This was in line with recommendations from SALC so that, in the case of emergency, there would be sufficient funds available prior to any extraordinary meeting to approve expenditure. It was proposed by Cllr. Widdowson and seconded by Cllr. Catchpole that the Financial Regulations were adopted. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to adopt the Financial Regulations.**

19/16 Public Interest Report issued by B.D.O.:

a) Prior to proceeding with the Public Interest Report the Clerk spoke to Council and the Public. She reported that, shortly after her appointment, she had been informed that member or members of the public had contacted both the external auditors (BDO) and the monitoring officer at Suffolk Coastal District Council, to inform them that she would not know about publishing documents etc. and asking them to intervene.

She considered that this was a personal attack on her character and abilities and was both offensive and unacceptable to contact external agencies without any evidence. It represented harassment and bullying and would not be tolerated. She is seeking a public apology and requires that the member or members contact both BDO and Suffolk Coastal to retract their allegations.

The majority of the public audience gave a round of applause and voiced their support.

b) Regarding the Public Interest Report (PIR), in accordance with the requirements, a notice was placed in the East Anglian Daily Times on August 11th 2016 stating that a Public Interest Report dated September 2015 would be reviewed by Council. The subject of the PIR is the non-submission of accounts to the external auditor for the year 2014/15. The external auditor has requested that a plan is submitted showing how this will be avoided in the future and that this plan is monitored. The Clerk had circulated a plan showing key stages during the financial year, with planned dates and activities. It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Catchpole that this plan is accepted. **It was unanimously RESOLVED that the proposed plan is submitted to BDO in response to the PIR and that this plan is then used to ensure that accounts are submitted on time in the future.**

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The Clerk also clarified that the accounts for 2014/15 no longer needed to be submitted as long as a Bank Reconciliation for the year was submitted, which she had already prepared.

20/16 Annual Return:

- a) The Clerk stated that the **Internal Audit** had been completed and that there were no financial discrepancies in the accounts for the year ended 31/3/2016. **NOTED**
- b) The Chairman read out the figures in the **Accounting Statements** and proposed that these were accepted. Seconded Cllr. Widdowson. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve the accounting statements in Section 2 of the Annual Return** and the return was signed by the Chairman and the RFO.
- c) The Chairman read through the **Annual Governance Statement** and responded to the statements. A number of the statements were answered NO due to the fact the Council had been inquorate for most of 2015/16 and that there had been no RFO/Clerk. The Clerk confirmed that this had already been discussed with BDO. The Chairman proposed that the Annual Governance Statement was approved. . **It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance statement in Section 1 of the Annual Return** and the return was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- d) The Clerk read out the items from the **Annual Internal Audit report (page 5 of the Annual Return)**. These items were noted.
- e) The Chairman asked for any comments on the **Internal Auditors report** which had been previously circulated. The Clerk stated that an action plan was to be drawn up so as to correct the items identified which were not directly related to the council being inquorate or without an RFO/Clerk. **Noted**
- f) The Chairman re-signed the minutes of March 7th 2016 as the originals had been mislaid.

21/16 Accounts:

- a) The Clerk had previously circulated a statement of accounts. There were no comments made. **NOTED**
- b) The Clerk stated that a payment of the precept of £4000 had been received in April. It was expected that there would be a further payment at the end of September. **NOTED**
- c) The Clerk asked for approval to pay the items listed on the Authorisation To Pay report. The total was for £912.32 and included a payment of £277.56 for the notice of the PIR appearing in the EADT. Additionally, the Clerk had since found an invoice for £1 for the Walberswick Common Lands Charity date 31/3/2015 and expenses that had not been paid to the previous Clerk R. Whiting of £ 65.82, dated 31/5/2015. She asked if these could be added to the approval. It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Catchpole to approve the payments, including the two additional invoices. . **It was unanimously RESOLVED to approve all payments.**

22/16 Clerks report:

The Clerk had previously circulated a report listing the items achieved in the previous 3 weeks. She had also commented on the work load due to the issues with processes and procedures at Walberswick. These required recreating or updating as they were either out of date or not in place at all as there had been a continuous change of Clerks and then, in the last 15 months, no Clerk at all and a Council that had been inquorate for the majority of that time. This would require hours of work to complete.

The post is for 5 hours per week which should be sufficient for a parish the size of Walberswick. However, in addition to the normal workload of a Clerk there was a continuous stream of correspondence from 2 or 3 individuals within the parish. The Clerk showed the meeting the quantity of correspondence received from these correspondents

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and read out the topics and snippets from some of them, so as to give an idea of the workload required and general tone of the emails.

At this point the Clerk regretfully announced that she was unable to commit to what she considered would be a full time post to complete the work required and to continue to respond to the correspondence She was therefore resigning. She would however complete the accounts and submit the PIR and external accounts to the External auditor.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for the report and the work completed. She then went on to address the meeting. As a consequence of the Clerk resigning and the continuous problems that have beset the council for the last 6 years, due to the type and level of correspondence, she proposed to ask the District Council to undertake a Community Governance Review. This would be with a view to implementing a Parish Meeting which would mean the cessation of the Parish Council.

To do this would require a report to be compiled and presented to Council, outline the process and the issues with both systems. If Council then voted to continue the process, a petition would be organised to collect 151 signatures, which is 50% of the electorate, asking the District Council to initiate the review.

Cllr. Dunnet stated that he fully supported this idea and seconded the motion. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to proceed with the activities 4required to undertake a Community Governance Review with a view to setting up a Parish Meeting and ceasing to be a Parish Council.**

23/16 The Scroll: The Chairman invited Mr. Bill Ungless to address the meeting regarding the Village Scroll. A report prepared by the Committee of the Walberswick Scroll had been published on the website and discussed storing the Scroll and proposed some modifications to the Heritage Hut. Mr. Ungless read out the report and asked for the parish council to set up a working party to establish further information, funding opportunities, the need for statutory approvals and to procure estimates. The Chairman stated that she would be happy to assist with the working party although she could only commit a limited amount of time.

The Chairman asked if it might be necessary to put the Scroll in a secure place in the meantime however Mr. Ungless stated that he didn't think so at the moment.

Cllr. Catchpole asked about whether planning permission would be required for proposed alterations. This needed to be established, particularly as this was in a conservation area.

It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Sutton that the Council agreed in principle with the report and that a working party is established to prepare a more detailed specification. **It was unanimously RESOLVED to accept this proposal.**

Meeting closed at 20:20. Next meeting 7.30 pm 21st November 2016 in Walberswick Village Hall

Karen Forster
Clerk to Walberswick Parish Council
Heritage Hut, The Green, Walberswick, IP18 6TT

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