

WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

The minutes of the Full Parish Council meeting held on Monday 14th October 2019 at 7.15pm in the village hall annex. Plans for DC/19/3545/FUL. DC/19/3523/FUL, DC/19/3618/FUL, DC/19/3616/FUL were available before the meeting.

Present: Councillors Bassinette (in the chair), Sutherland-Rogers, Lewis, Richardson, Sutton and Winyard. Also in attendance was Mr. Mark Knight (Parish Clerk), Mr. Simon Ashton (Responsible Financial Officer), Suffolk County Cllr Richard Smith and seven (7) members of the public.

428/19-20 Chairman's welcome.

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and thanked the new Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer for their help.

429/19-20 To consider and approve any apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Mackay. These were accepted.

430/19-20 Declaration of Interest and Requests for Dispensation.

None were declared.

431/19-20 Open Forum

None

432/19-20 To receive a report from County Councillor Richard Smith

Cllr. Richard Smith was not present at this time. However, he did come to the meeting at 7.40pm at which point the Chair moved that standing orders be suspended to allow for Cllr Smith to speak. This was so **RESOLVED**.

Cllr. Smith opened by apologising for not attending a meeting sooner but that this was due to co-option issues following the recent elections at Saxmundham. It was also reported that other Councils met on the same day as WPC which caused logistical problems.

Cllr Smith updated the meeting on the ongoing Electoral Commission boundary review for Suffolk which would be completed by the 2021 elections and County Councillor seats would be reduced to 70 with a view to making each County Councillor the representative of approximately 8,000 members of the public rather than the current 7,500.

A report was then given on the Sizewell C Stage 4 consultation which had recently finished. Cllr. Smith had 150 responses copied to him. He noted that while he was not opposed to nuclear power in principal, his work on Sizewell

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over many years had convinced him that it was not possible for Suffolk to absorb the construction of such a huge piece of infrastructure. He said that the impact on the local wildlife, roads and environment would be unmanageable and could not be mitigated. He believed that the road and rail infrastructure that would be needed could not be put in place and gave as an example that transporting materials by road would mandate the construction of seven additional roundabouts on the A12 north of the A14.

Cllr. Lewis pointed out that the compounded effect of Sizewell with the land based infrastructure associated with the Scottish Power wind farm would make things even worse. Cllr Smith said that not only that, but that the same area of Suffolk was to be the landing spot of two international connector cables coming from under the North Sea and another proposed windfarm development.

Preparations for the County Council budget was underway but had been held up due to national political uncertainty which made medium to long term planning impossible. But that the budget would probably be in excess of £550 million for the next financial year, details would be in the public domain in November.

433/19-20 To receive a report from East Suffolk District Councillor David Beavan

Cllr. David Beavan was not present.

434/19-20 To consider the Minutes of the Meeting of 9th September 2019 for accuracy and for the Chairman to sign as a true record.

It was **AGREED** by those members present to adopt the minutes presented. The Chair was given authority to sign these as a true record.

435/19-20 Finance Matters 2018/9

435/19-20.1 To review and approve the external audit report and certificate for 2018/9

The Responsible Financial Officer gave a verbal report of the final stage of the External Audit process and that the necessary documents had been displayed according to the mandated schedule by the end of September. It was noted that there were no matters of concern and that the audit had gone through, without any objections, for the first time in almost 10 years. The Council expressed its appreciation for the excellent handling of the audit by the RFO. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the external audit report and certificate for 2018/9.

435/19-20.2 To receive the Notice of Conclusion of External Audit 2018/9

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A verbal report was given by the Responsible Financial Officer which detailed how the Council reviewed and approved the external audit report and was also displayed as necessary by the end of September. The report was **RECEIVED** by the Council.

436/19-20 Finance Matters 2019/20

436/19-20.1 Review Lloyds Bank receipts/budget & payments/budget (as at 23 September 2019)

The report was reviewed and it was then **RESOLVED** to accept this report as presented and no questions were asked. Cllr. Richardson signed the document.

436/19-20.2 Approve bank reconciliation Lloyds Account (to 23 September 2019)

The report was reviewed and it was **RESOLVED** to approve this report as presented and no questions were asked. Cllr. Richardson signed the document.

436/19-20.3 Review HSBC Bank receipts/budget & payments/budget (as at 23 September 2019)

The report was reviewed and it was **RESOLVED** to accept this report as presented and no questions were asked. Cllr. Richardson signed the document.

436/19-20.4 Approve bank reconciliation HSBC account (to 23 September 2019)

The report was reviewed and it was **RESOLVED** to approve this report as presented and no questions were asked. Cllr. Richardson signed the document.

436/19-20.5 Approve items on the Authorisation to Pay Sheet

The report was reviewed and it was **RESOLVED** to approve this report as presented and it was noted that the Opus fee for a recent recruitment exercise was less than expected. Cllr. Bassinette signed the document.

436/19-20.6 Review of half-yearly budget setting amendments and to authorise any virements if necessary

The report was reviewed. It was **NOTED** that the Council had budgeted for a possible external audit fee of £5,000 given the Council's experience with the

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3 villagers who had objected in previous years and the uncertainty of what PKF would charge if objections were again submitted. As noted earlier in the meeting, the external audit for the latest financial year had gone through cleanly and without objections and therefore the cost was only £260. The Chair then gave a verbal report on the situation with PKF and the Council's efforts to challenge the £14,000 invoice that resulted from PKF's handling of the voluminous complaints and objections of the 3 villagers. The Chair reported that, to date, PKF Littlejohn had refused to reconsider its bill arguing that it had the sole authority to charge the Council for any amount it felt necessary to handle the complaints of the 3 villagers. They refused to accept that, although the entire year's precept was only £12,000, it was not disproportionate for them to charge the Council £14,000 for the external audit. The Council appealed this approach of PKF to SAAA, the body that contracts with PFK to undertake the external audits of smaller authorities. SAAA refused to challenge PKF's approach saying that the contract gave PKF the right to charge the Council. On the positive, both SALC and NALC had passed motions in support of the Walberswick Parish Council and are helping seek additional avenues of redress for this situation. However, this meant that the Council still had the liability of the £14,000 invoice and that provision would be necessary if/when the invoice had to be paid.

It was **RESOLVED** that a £7,000 adjustment from the reserves on top of the the £5000 current budget line, should be made in case the Council ran out of options and was forced to pay PKF's invoice. At the same time, it was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair should continue to seek every useful avenue of redress including possibly the MP, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, NALC and the NAO. The Council was also trying to get itself in front of the Redmond Enquiry that was looking into the Local Government Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to help ensure that the law was changed to keep this situation from happening to Walberswick and other smaller authorities in the future.

The Power budget line would need £200 to adequately budget to the end of the financial year.

The Village Hall budget line would also need £100 to adequately budget to the end of the financial year.

It was **AGREED** that all of the £500 of Legal Fees would not be needed and that £100 could be taken from it for the Village Hall Cost Code and £150 for the Power cost code.

It was **NOTED** that it was unlikely that all of the training cost code would be needed but that the monies would not be moved yet.

436/19-20.7 To consider this Council's response to the SALC Independent Review into Local Government Audit

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Following advice from SALC, it was **AGREED** that no further response was needed in this regard as the Parish Council was already heavily involved as noted in the agenda item above

437/19-20 To consider the proposal from Scroll Advisory Group for fundraising for new Scroll case

It was **RESOLVED** to support the proposal noting that the Walberswick Parish Council would retain the copyright on all the images. The Council thanked the Scroll Advisory Group for all its efforts to protect the scroll and share it with the public.

438/19-20 Update on children's play equipment on the Village Green

The Parish Clerk and Cllr Lewis gave verbal reports regarding the current situation regarding the slide and recent meetings with contractors. In particular, it was noted that initial quotes for the work suggest costs in the range of £6500. This figure comes from 2 quotes already received, with a third coming before the end of the month. This cost consists approximately of £750 for removal, £5,073 (including carriage) for the new slide itself, (which is a high pedestal slide) and £650 for installation and making good again the underground matting and grass that protect the entire play area. The Council agreed that the slide needed to be removed and replaced. However, per the budget discussion, the WPC's finances are difficult because of the £14,000 liability for the external auditor caused by objections lodged by the three villagers. It was agreed that alternative ways of financing the slide should be sought and if these could be found, the Council could make a decision at its next meeting. In particular the Clerk was asked to: (i) seek clarification if CIL monies could be used for the purposes of replacing the slide: (ii) follow up with Cllr Smith who generously offered to provide £500 from his locality budget and (iii) follow up with informal indications from WCLC that they may be able to consider covering the cost of the old slide's removal. On that basis it was **RESOLVED** to completely replace the slide when financing could be obtained based on the consideration of three quotes at the Council's next meeting. It was also **AGREED** that the seats for the swings should also be investigated for cost to enable this to be done as part of the same project if possible.

439/19-20 Oral updates from Councillors on areas of responsibility if relevant

439/19-20.1 Footpaths and Highways

Cllr. Sutherland-Rogers reported that at the back of the beach over the dunes closest to the Estuary, new wooden picket fencing and more metal railings have now been installed and this project completed. It has been agreed with the Harbour Master that she and Cllrs Winyard and Sutton will now meet with him in Spring to assess the movement of the sand and the impact of any Winter storm damage.

It was also noted that there was the possibility of a member of the public being interested in getting involved in the maintenance of trees in the Parish. This will be

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placed on the agenda for the November meeting to allow for more investigation to take place.

439/19-20.2 GDPR, SALC and Website

None

439/19-20.3 Litter

None

439/19-20.4 Playing Fields and the Green Play Area

None

439/19-20.5 Safe Spaces and Car Parks

None

440/19-20 Oral Committee reports if relevant

None

At 8.31pm C Cllr. Smith and 2 members of the public left the meeting.

441/19-20 Planning

441/19-20.1 Lu Shan, Mill Field

DC/19/3545/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Planning Advisory Group report in this matter, that the application should be **SUPPORTED**.

441/19-20.2 1 Manor Close

DC/19/3523/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Planning Advisory Group report in this matter, that the application should be **SUPPORTED**.

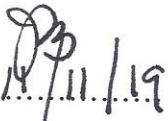
441/19-20.3 Longshore, The Street

DC/19/3618/FUL

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Planning Advisory Group report in this matter, that the application should be **OPPOSED** and that this Council should **OBJECT** to the development for the provisos detailed in the report.

441/19-20.4 Elfinston Corner, Stocks Lane

DC/19/3616/FUL


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It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Planning Advisory Group report in this matter, that the application should be **SUPPORTED**.

442/19-20 Date and Time of next meeting was confirmed as **Monday, 11th November 2019 at 7.15 pm in the Annex of the Village Hall.**

The meeting closed at 9.22pm.

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