

# NOCTON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Parish: Mr S R Baxter JP MIFA ADPS ADIP Email: [clerk@noctonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@noctonparishcouncil.gov.uk) Tel: 0781 444 3058

## FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

04 May 2021

### MINUTES

#### Present:

**Councillors:** Cllr. E. Murray (Council Chair), Cllr. M. Clarke (Council Vice Chair), Cllr. G. McDonnell, Cllr. H. Wilson, Cllr. P. Johnston-Davis

**Clerk and RFO:** Mr S Baxter

**Members of the public:** Five

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

### AGENDA ITEMS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. **The Chair's welcome to all Councillors and any members of the public sitting in observation and opening remarks.** The Chair will also remind the attendees the meeting is being recorded

The Chair welcomed all, including the new Clerk and checked all Councillors were able to see, hear and be heard as the meeting was held via a digital format.

2. **Apologies for absence from Councillors** – to agree the reasons for absence (if any)

The Clerk had previously been made aware of the apology given by Cllr Faulkner who is absent due to a previously booked holiday. The Council confirmed that they would accept his apology which was duly noted.

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

The Clerk confirmed that no declarations had been received from the Councillors. No declarations were made by the Councillors at the meeting.

4. **Motion to exclude members of press and public from participation but able to view the meeting**

- ***Motion to exclude the members of the public and press from participation but allow them to view the meeting was proposed by Cllr. McDonnell, seconded by the Chair and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

*For the following agenda points members of the public / press will be muted but will be able to view the meeting.*

5. **Minutes of Full Parish Meeting (20 April 2021)** – to agree and vote as accurate record

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors. The Chair asked for any comments or any issues that needed raising in regard to the minutes – none were forthcoming.

- ***Motion to agree the minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 20 April 2021 as a true and accurate was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

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## 6. Actions and results following the last Full Council Meeting

The Clerk stated that there were various issues that had been actioned and these would be detailed in the Clerk report. The Chair accepted that the Clerk's updates on the actions could be detailed in the agenda point 10.

## 7. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting (26 April 2021) – to agree and vote as accurate record

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors. The Clerk stated that as the EOM was held behind closed doors due to confidentiality, there was the public minutes for publication but there were also the confidential minutes for the Councillors view only.

The Chair asked for any comments or any issues that needed raising in regard to the minutes – none were forthcoming.

- *Motion to agree the public minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting on the 26 April 2021 as a true and accurate was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.*

## 8. Actions following the results Extra Ordinary Meeting

The Clerk stated that while he cannot comment publicly due to the confidential nature of the meeting detail, he can confirm the actions discussed at the meeting have been followed up.

The Chair accepted this on behalf of the Council.

## 9. Report from Local Representatives

The Clerk stated that no reports had been received from any local representatives.

The Chair asked the Clerk to ensure that future summons and invitations of meetings could be sent to District and County Councillors to allow them an opportunity to attend the meetings.

**Action by the Clerk – to ensure that the County and District Councillors are invited to future meetings.**

## 10. Clerk's Report including Financial update

The Clerk had previously circulated the financial statement for the end of year as well as sending the Clerk's report. The main points were:

- The confirmation of the council vacancy formally held by Mr Duff – the notice has been advertised with the deadline of 18 May
- The Council had appointed the Hub Manager and Hub Cleaner, the first bookings had taken place and that the Clerk had met with the Hub Treasurer
- The Council cannot meet remotely as of 07 May due to the Court's decision – the Council will now have Clerk Advisory Meetings through the delegated scheme of authority

The Clerk stated that the state of the accounting records upon investigation were not ideal and that a considerable amount of work had to be undertaken to get the end of year accounts completed. From the initial differential

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figure between the bank and the accounts in excess of £8k, after substantial work the difference had been reduced to £365 which in the Clerk's opinion was, while not ideal, just about acceptable considering numerous other factors.

The main points that the Clerk wish to state in regard to the accounts:

- The Council made a deficit of £14,890 in the last financial year – from income of £63,602 to expenditure of £78,492.
- This had the effect of reducing the financial reserve from £43,224 to £28,335 – a reduction of 34%. However, the reserve was still healthy in regard to the NALC recommended reserve of 50% of the precept – the recommended would be around £13k.
- The deficit within the in-year budget for 2020-21 was £8,774 – this was a deficit of nearly 31%. The Council would need to live 'in year' within its budget as the Council cannot afford such a deficit again if it was to remain in a healthy position
- The main three deficit budget lines was Hub Building (£3,497), the Clerking cost (£2,391) and the Auditing (£1.100) – these three budget lines contributed to nearly 80% of the deficit.
- The Hub made a revenue loss of £2,368 over the short period it was open.

In regard to the format of the accounts, a new format far more detailed yet straightforward will be used to allow the Councillor to have far better insight of the finances and allow a better control. The aim of the format would allow the lay Councillors to understand at least the overview of the financial position.

The Council briefly discussed the financial position and agreed that the suggested format would be an improvement.

- ***Motion to agree the financial position as reported by the Clerk and RFO was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Clarke and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

## 11. Schedule of Payments:

Payee	Amount (gross)	Reason for expenditure
Staff Salary	Amount withheld due to confidentiality	
Clerk's expenses	£10	Hub phone redirection deposit
Clerk's expenses	£181.61	Stationary for clerking work, travel and secure storage
Plusnet	£26.40	Wi-fi for the Hub
OPUS Energy	£55.68	Streetlight electricity
EON Maintenance	£58.65	Streetlight maintenance
EON Energy	£100 (est)	Hub electricity
Grandchildren's Trust	£39	Rent for the garage storage
NKDC	£70	Alcohol licence

- ***Motion to agree the schedule of payments was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

**Action by the Clerk** – to email the bank signatories with details of the payments needed and request payments to be actioned.

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## 12. Bank Account Set up – to agree to the RFO’s recommendation to open three bank accounts (one for the main Council operation, a Reserve Funds Account and the Hub Management Account)

The Chair stated the recommendation of the Clerk had merit and that it would allow the Council to separate the finances of the Hub and the Parish Council, as well as having the specific reserve account.

The Council agreed with the recommendation but asked if the monthly bank account charge was per bank account or per customer.

The Clerk stated that he was not sure of the charging policy of Unity Trust and would need to come back to the Council once he had spoken to the bank.

**Action by the Clerk – to contact Unity Trust and investigate the charging policy for multiple bank accounts.**

## 13. Bank mandate – for the Council to agree who is on the bank mandate for expenditure approval

The Chair stated at the current moment the signatories on the bank account were herself, Cllr Faulkner and Cllr Wilson.

The Clerk confirmed that all Councillors apart from Cllr McDonnell had provided their personal details for the new bank application for UNITY TRUST BANK. Once the bank application was made and accepted, all the Councillors that had submitted their details would be technically authorised to approve the payments on the bank.

The Chair stated that the Council could consider to keep the same authorised bank signatories as previous with the other Councillors used as backups.

- ***Motion to agree the continuation of the Councillors authorised to agree the payments in through the bank account was proposed the Chair, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

## 14. Nocton Hub Update:

- i) Intruder and fire alarm servicing
  - The servicing was being arranged by the Hub Manager and will report back to the Clerk
- ii) Hub noticeboard
  - The Clerk had contacted Beeswax Dyson to ascertain if there was an opportunity for sponsorship. Nothing had been received as yet. The Clerk had also emailed the planners at NKDC to ascertain if planning permission was needed due to it being in a conservation area – nothing heard back as yet.
- iii) Update from Cllr Faulkner on the snagging list and the repayment of the funds from the Contractor
  - As Cllr Faulkner was not present no update was available. The Clerk did state that he had received all the pertinent information and would be contacting the contractor for details when the owed amount would be paid as well as the work on the snagging list.
- iv) Update from the Clerk on the moving of the Fire Assembly point
  - The Clerk confirmed that the local resident had withdrawn their request
- v) Hub staff update
  - This was detailed in the Clerk’s report

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- vi) Discuss and consider updates of SLA from Ripon Arms
  - The Chair confirmed that the SLA was very nearly agreed with the Ripon Arms and she was hopeful that it could be formally presented to the Council at the next meeting to agree.
- vii) Update of electricity supply
  - The Clerk stated that he had chased up the electrical contractor for the quotes for separating the phase of the electrical supply. Nothing heard back as yet.
- viii) Quotation of work on moving thermostat and heating in the defib cabinet
  - The Clerk stated that he had chased up the electrical contractor for the quotes for the electrical work. Nothing heard back as yet. If nothing was heard soon then he would source other quotations.

## 15. Charitable Status for Hub – to receive updates regarding the establishment of a group to investigate charitable status for the Hub

The Chair asked Cllr Johnston-Davis for an update on the work for Charitable status for the Hub.

He stated that the community group of individuals that were looking into the charity registration, now wanted to move forward and agree terms of reference to then establish the detailed review of what was needed, the process and the implication. It would be part of the eight steps to get the charitable status.

He continued that the working group would need the:

- Letters of empowerment
- What constraints the group would be under to explore and recommend
- To formally agreed the deadline of November 2021

He stated that the group would need to know the planning guidance and the covenants on the Hub.

The Chair stated that she was aware of some constraints and that the group would need to establish the issues of leasing the Hub to the Charitable Trust. She continued that she would discuss the various issues and information needed with the Clerk and update the Council at the next meeting.

**Action by the Clerk – to liaise with the Chair and provide an update to the Council.**

## 16. Planning permission applications for Nocton

*Application Reference:* 21/0321/HOUS  
*Proposal:* Erection of a detached garage  
*Location:* Land to the rear of The Post Office, Main Street, Nocton

The Chair stated that the planning application was an amendment to the previous planning application which had not been opposed by the Council

The Council briefly discussed this recommendation by the Chair and agreed.

- **Motion to agree the Council position of NO COMMENT for the planning application proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Clarke and agreed by majority due the abstention of Cllr John-Davis. Motion carried.**

**Action by the Clerk – to ensure that the Planning Team at NKDC were made aware of the Council's position.**

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## 17. Planning permission applications for Potterhanworth (*for note only*)

The Clerk confirmed that there were no planning applications for Potterhanworth.

## 18. Permission of Tree Works

The Clerk confirmed that there were no applications for permission of tree works.

## 19. Welcome Pack for the Community – Council to discuss and agree (if they deem) to recommence the provision

The Chair stated that she had reviewed the amount of house sales in the last year and that there was 18 in the previous year and 20 in the year before. She continued that the Council would need to know what a 'Welcome Pack' would look like and that ideally it would be single piece of paper with pertinent details.

The issue that the Council would face is to keep the information in the pack up to date – as well as ensuring that it was relevant for all new comers to the area.

The Council discussed that most of the information was on line but that if the Council decided to adopt the Welcome Pack then it should be printed on demand with a few copies in the Hub and the Post Office.

Cllr Johnston-Davis stated that the best approach may be to have a centralised and reference point.

The Council felt that while the members of the community who were pushing for the adoption of the Welcome Pack the agenda discussion should be moved to the following meeting.

**Action by the Clerk** – to ensure the discussion point is added to the next meeting agenda.

## 20. Agreement of approval of overtime by Council staff – to agree to the Clerk's recommend process of agreeing overtime of staff as well as the Clerk

The Chair invited the Clerk to go through the recommendations that he made to ensure there was proper control mechanisms in place.

The Clerk stated that at present all overtime for any staff needed to go to the Full Council. This meant that not only was there very little proper scrutiny or review of the overtime claimed (as in effect it was a corporate body) but that payment of the overtime was considerably delayed. Thus, the recommendation was as follows:

### Staff other than the Clerk

- i) All staff would need to complete an overtime sheet for any overtime claimed
- ii) For the Hub Manager, Hub Cleaners and the Village keeper this would need to be submitted to the Clerk by no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month.
- iii) The Clerk would receive the overtime sheets, verify them and then pass these to the Payroll for adding to the main payroll for the employee for than month
- iv) The Clerk would then receive the payslips for the month and arrange for payments to be made over and above the contractual pay
- v) Any overtime for the staff between the period of 25<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month will need to be added to the following month's overtime claim

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## Clerk's overtime

- i) He would be permitted up to five hours a month overtime without needing to seek prior approval – anything above this will need for Full Council approval or in very urgent extreme cases verbal agreement from the Chair or Vice Chair.
- ii) He would submit the overtime claim forms at the end of the month to the Full Council for approval the meeting during that month
- iii) Once approved, the Clerk would send the details of the overtime to the Payroll for adding to the contractual pay
- iv) The Clerk would then receive the payslip for the month and arrange for the overtime payment to be made over and above the contractual pay. Thus, the overtime claim for the Clerk would always be a month in arrears.

The Clerk stated this recommended approach allowed a degree of control for the Council and put the onus on the line manager of the claimant to be sure of the validity of the overtime and that it was necessary.

The Council discussed the matter and felt that it allowed a proper control of the overtime claims of staff as well as ensuring.

- ***Motion to agree the Clerk's recommended process for staff claiming overtime was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

**Action by the Clerk** – to ensure the staff of the Parish Council are aware of the new process and that it was added to the contracts of the staff.

**21. Sickness Pay for Council staff** – to consider the recommendation by the Clerk to adopt a Sickness Pay scheme for all staff of the Council, to be based on the standard NALC clerk's contractual sickness scheme

The Chair opened the agenda point by stating that previously the Council did not offer sickness pay to staff nor statutory sick pay as the staff generally were below the statutory threshold. She continued that she supports the recommendation by the Clerk as it was considered good employer practice – crucially that while it supports the staff it doesn't stop the Council from managing any sickness of staff and dealing with it appropriately.

Cllr McDonnell stated that in his experience an employer sickness pay scheme works well as it both supports vulnerable staff but doesn't stop the employer from managing the actual causes of the sickness if it is work based. Cllr Johnston -Davis wasn't sure how it would benefit the Hub Manager and Hub Cleaner as he wasn't aware of how it would work. He thus felt it appropriate to abstain from the vote.

- ***Motion to agree the recommendation of the Clerk to adopt the same sickness pay provision and was provided for the Clerk was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr Clarke and agreed by majority due the abstention of Cllr John-Davis. Motion carried.***

**Action by the Clerk** – to ensure the staff of the Parish Council are aware of the new sickness pay policy and that it was added to the contracts of the staff.

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## 22. Formation of a Council FINANCE COMMITTEE – to consider the RFO's recommendation to have the formation of Finance Committee on the agenda the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

The Clerk asked for this agenda point to be withdrawn as the motion had been agreed at the earlier Annual Parish Council Meeting. The Chair agreed.

## 23. Replacement of street light – to consider the request to replace a streetlight from recommendation from EON Maintenance contract at a cost of £990

The Chair stated that the Clerk had been made aware that following an inspection by EON under the maintenance and review agreement, they had identified that Streetlight number 18 near the Hub was rotting at the base. It would need completely replacing at a cost of £990 + VAT.

The Council discussed if there was a guarantee with the replacement and what caused a rotting of the metal base. Cllr John-Davis stated that he was aware that often dog 'usage' of the streetlight base caused the metal to corrode and rot.

Cllr Wilson asked if the Council could agree to this project with going for the usual three quotes due to the cost. The Clerk stated that due to the urgency because of the safety implications and that the Corona Virus 2020 Act allowed for the normal three quotes process to be suspended.

Cllr Wilson asked if the work agreement could be delayed by a few days to allow her to see if through her employment contacts she could ascertain if the work could be undertaken cheaper. The Council felt his was prudent.

It was informally agreed with the Clerk's suggestion that we should delay the decision a few days to allow Cllr Wilson's contacts to respond but that if nothing was heard by Friday 07 May, the Clerk would use his delegated authority to approve the work.

## 24. Internal Auditor appointment – to agree to the Clerk's recommendation to appoint INTERNAL AUDIT (YORKSHIRE) LTD as the internal auditors for the Council for 2020/21

The Chair stated that as previously discussed, the Auditor who was going to under the Internal Audit had pulled out at a very late stage and that as the council was required to have an Internal Auditor in place, she had asked the Clerk to source a IA and then seek permission retrospectively due to the very short timeframe.

The Council discussed the appointment and agreed with the Chair's approach that while normally it would best practice to approve the appointment before the appointment, due the circumstances it was acceptable.

- ***Motion to agree the recommendation by the Clerk to appoint INTERNAL AUDIT YORKSHIRE LTD as the Internal Auditor for the Council and thus give retrospective permission was proposed by Cllr. McDonnell, seconded by the Chair and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

**Action by the Clerk** – to ensure that the Internal Auditor was provided with all the necessary records and details in order to undertake the work.

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## **25. Delegated scheme of authority for the Clerk** – to agree the details of the circulated Scheme of Delegated Authority to the Clerk

The Council had formally approved the Scheme of Delegation of Authority to the Clerk at the last Full Council Meeting.

The Clerk had had sent the confirmed details of what authority can be delegated to him and what had to remain with the Council as per legislation.

The Chair confirmed that as the Court had not allowed Local Councils permission to continue to use remote meetings and the Government had not instigated new legislation, as from Friday 07 May 2021 and Full Council Meeting would need to be 'in person'.

The clerk stated that the remote meetings would continue in the guise of CLERK ADVISORY MEETINGS and would follow the same pattern of the Full Council Meetings. This included the advertising of the meetings in the normal way and place as well as a chance for the public to see the meetings and ask questions at the end. The main difference would be that the Council would advise the Clerk on decisions, but that it would be the Clerk making the decisions (albeit strictly following the Council's advice).

The Clerk confirmed that the delegated authority that had been agreed was for a period of six months or until the Council meet face to face – whichever is sooner.

## **26. Next Council meeting** – to agree the Nocton Council Clerk Advisory Meeting to be held on Tuesday 08 June 2021 at 7pm.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting would be a Clerk Advisory Meeting but would be held in the same pattern and format.

## **27. Questions from the Community** – any questions are at the Chair's discretion and limited to three minutes each

- i) *There was a question about the Nocton 200 funds – the member of the community wanted to know what Nocton 200 funds the Council were holding and what had been distributed as grants.*

The Chair stated that the Council fully recognise the great benefit of the Nocton 200 and that it had been a valuable source of funding for local groups. The issue that the Council had faced unfortunately was that due to the unfortunate state of the physical accounts that the current Clerk inherited it was not clear currently exactly what funds the Council were holding – but that the community could be confident that the funds were safe and that through the Clerk's investigation of the accounting records, the Council would be able to ensure that at the next meeting, full details would be disclosed.

A former Chair of the Council (not on the Council any longer) stated to the Council that as far as he was aware when the last full accounting of the Nocton 200 funds were discussed, the funds had been fully used.

The Clerk confirmed that as RFO he would ensure that in future, when the accounts on a monthly basis were produced, there was clear detail of the Nocton 200 funds including the accumulation as well as any distribution of funds to local groups.

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- ii) *A member of the community wanted to ask the Council about the Policing Panel and the Council deciding not to have a Councillor with the specific Police portfolio. (This was decided in the previous Annual Parish Council Meeting).*

The Chair stated that as far as she was aware unfortunately the Police themselves did not use the functions of the Police Panel any longer, which included the Neighbourhood Watch. She had been informed that the Police want the community to use the NEXT DOOR programme.

The member of the Community stated that she was aware other villages did still have representatives on the 1188 Police Panel and was disappointed that Nocton Parish Council decided not to send a representative.

The Chair continued that she appreciated that previously when the Police Panels played a greater role it was very beneficial to have a Councillor with a Police portfolio but as the Police did not recognise the usefulness of these panels as well as the Neighbourhood Watch it was the Council's opinion that if there were any Police issues they could be fed through the Clerk.

- iii) *There was a statement from a member of the Community that she was disappointed that the Council had decided to use an Auditor from outside the area and not even in Lincolnshire.*

The Council did not comment but it was acknowledged.

- iv) *A question and statement were raised by a member of the community about the Clerk's statements about the state of the accounting records and accounts in general. As far as he was concerned, as previous Chair of the Parish, he felt the previous Clerk did a good job and he never saw any issues.*

The Chair stated that at this time the Council cannot comment. The Clerk advised all Councillors not to make any comment or statement in regard to what had been stated by the member of the public for reasons that cannot be disclosed.

**MEETING WAS CLOSED BY THE CHAIR AT 9.05PM**

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