

NOCTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

CLERK ADVISORY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

04 August 2021

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Cllr. Clarke (Acting Chair), Cllr. Faulkner, Cllr. McDonnell

Clerk and RFO: Mr S Baxter

Members of the public (MOP): 7

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

Please note: All decisions taken in the meeting were ultimately taken by the Clerk under the delegated authority (as permitted under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972) which was given by the Parish Council and commenced on the 07 May 2021. The Clerk would seek the advice of the Councillors before any decision made.

1. The Chair's welcome to all Councillors and any members of the public sitting in observation and opening remarks.

The Chair reminded all Councillors and any members of the public of the following:

- The meeting is not a formal Parish Council Meeting; it is a Clerk Advisory Meeting to provide guidance to the Clerk. Final decisions will be made by the Clerk through the Delegated Authority motion agreed at a previous Full Council Meeting
- The Clerk has confirmed that while the meeting is not a Full Council Meeting, normal procedures and formats will be followed including given opportunities for the Members of the Public to ask questions
- The Chair will also remind the attendees the meeting is being recorded and the digital recording is saved for a minimum of twelve months

2. Apologies for absence from Councillors

There were no apologies as all current Councillors were present.

3. Declarations of interest

The Clerk stated that there were no declarations received from any Councillors prior to the meeting. There was no declaration by any Councillor during the meeting.

4. Exclusion of members of press and public – to discuss and recommend to the Clerk to ensure Press and Public cannot participate but will be able to listen

- ***The Councillors advised the Clerk that this would be appropriate for the proper handling of the meeting.***
- ***CLERK DECISION: He agreed to the advice and thus decreed that any public and press would be excluded from participation but that they could observe.***

For the following agenda points members of the public and press will be excluded from participating in meeting and will be muted but can view the meeting

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5. Minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting 23 June 2021- Recommendation to the Clerk to accept the minutes

The Chair asked the Councillors if there was any point of note or any inaccuracy they wished to bring to attention. There was none offered.

- *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.*
- *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk agreed that the minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 23 June 2021 was a true and accurate record and noted it as such.*

6. Council vacancy: Guidance to the Clerk on the way forward for advertising of the process of co-opting an eligible member of the community

The Chair asked the Clerk to update the Councillors and the community on the current situation.

The Clerk stated that the Council had received an application from a member of the community to be co-opted onto the Council. The application had however been received after the deadline had been received and thus to ensure that any other qualifying members of the community that wish to apply has the same opportunity, the Clerk recommended to the Councillors that the deadline should be extended to the 16 August 2021.

The Clerk confirmed that the co-option application (and any others) will be discussed and voted at the next Full Council Meeting in early September.

In regard to the election for the three other vacancies, the Clerk confirmed that he had been made aware that for the second time there had been no name put forward to the Monitoring Officer at NKDC. Thus, there would be a third election arranged for the 09 September 2021. The Clerk confirmed that these continue elections will continue until the three vacancies had been filled as the law dictates that once the 10-signature letter had been submitted, it cannot be reversed.

7. Bank accounts for the Council

The Clerk stated that the Council had agreed that the Council have three bank accounts; one current account for the core PC operations, one for the Hub Finances and a savings account for the PC reserve. This approach would allow the finances of the Hub and the PC to be kept separate but under the same umbrella. It would also allow the HMG to see the financial activities of the Hub more clearly.

The Clerk stated that the bank account for the core PC operations was being used well – the only minor issue was that as there was only three Councillors (all of whom now had authority to approve through the bank) it does put pressure on the same Councillors to be available to log in and approve the payments.

In regard to the second bank account for the Hub, payments had already started to be paid into this account. The long-term aim was that all payments for the Hub would also be paid from this account as well. It would then allow a proper overview of the financial picture of the Hub.

8. Clerk's report and Financial Report

In regard to the Clerk's report, the Clerk confirmed that the digital report could not be sent due to a software issue. But that he would read from the rough notes as follows:

- The report and detail from District Cllr Byatt was published on the website as promised. The report was primarily an update on the Nocton Hall, and the process that NKDC are following in regard to Covid safety.
- Councillor vacancies – as detailed earlier
- SLA with the Ripon Arms – the clerk confirmed that the SLA is in full operation and that the relationship with the RA is going well.

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- AGAR and Internal Audit Report – all the necessary documents had been published on the website and sent to the External Auditor. In regard to the Notice of Inspection – this had been advertised for the community if they wish to inspect.
- Welcome Pack – this had been completed and through the hard work of the WP team and the Council the Pack has been distributed. It has also been uploaded on the website for access for current residents.
- HMG Terms of Reference – it was confirmed that the ToR had been sent to all the HMG members and that the Chair of the HMG (Cllr McDonnell) had asked for a meeting on the 23 August for all members.
- Hub Noticeboard – the Clerk confirmed that the design had been lodged with Dyson Farming of whom had graciously agreed to provide the noticeboard for the Hub at no cost to the Council. As the work would be fitted around the normal farming work, there was no time frame as yet for completion.
- Hub Accounts – the Clerk stated that from the provisional revenue review from late April 2021 until 31 July, the provisional accounting detail suggested a deficit of £340. But this did not include reimbursements from the RA on the electricity and that there were some refunds. But the overall picture was that the bookings were increasing well through the hard work of the Hub Manager.

The Clerk had previously sent the Financial Reports to the Councillors and it will be published on the website.

The Chair asked the Clerk (as RFO) to update the Councillors and community on the financial details.

The Clerk shared (through the Zoom software capability) the financial report and details of the financial picture of the Council.

The main points of the Financial Report were:

- At the 31 July 2021, there was £43,591 in the bank accounts of the PC – he did state that the salary and payments to the Clerk, Hub Manager and Hub Cleaner were not included as they were paid on the 02 August 2021.
- No VAT reclaims had been made for the 2021/22 year and there was also VAT claim to be made for the last quarter of the last financial year
- The budget for the insurance (as detailed previously) was insufficient and will be in deficit by around £600
- The bank account seems high although there is still around £16k of PWLB payments to be made this financial year
- The forecast for the financial year is a deficit in year balance
- The balance includes Nocton 200 funds balance of £2,222
- ***The Councillors advised the Clerk that they accepted the financial reports.***
- ***CLERK DECISION: The Clerk thanked the Councillors for their support confirmed it would be noted that the financial detail was accepted by the Councillors.***

9. AGAR Publication

The Clerk confirmed the details in the Clerk's report as detailed above.

10. Asset Register

The Clerk stated that he had reviewed the NALC guideline on the asset register format and that from the information gathered from the Hub Manager and the Councillors it would be for discussion at the next meeting.

11. Nocton 200 update - Update from the clerk on the Nocton 200 funds

The Clerk stated that from the review of the details provided by Mr Eagle and the review of the limited records, it was agreed that there was £2,222 in the Nocton 200 Funds. No application had been made for the funds for the last 18 months.

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12. Schedule of payments: Guidance to the Clerk on what payments are acceptable for payment

Payee	Amount	Reason for payment
Staff pay and overtime		Amount withheld due to confidentiality
Clerk's expenses	£ 26.00	Office & Printing allowance
EON	£342.42	Hub Electricity
Equals Debit Card	£200.00	Use for Hub Manager and Village Keeper
PlusNet	£ 26.40	Wi-fi for the Hub
NKDC	£157.50	Refuge Collection for Hub
Opus Energy	£43.40 (est.)	Streetlight electricity
Unity Trust Bank Charges	£36.00	Two quarterly bank account service costs

The Councillors discussed the payments, together with the budget implications. But there was consensus of the approval for the payments.

- *The Councillors advised the Clerk that the expenditure as detailed was acceptable.*
- *CLERK DECISION: The Clerk noted the support of the Councillors of the expenditure and that he would now initiate the payments through the bank and request they are authorised in the bank by the Councillors.*

13. Planning Permission applications / Application for Tree works - Discussion and recommendation to the Clerk on how respond to the Planning Team at NKDC

The Clerk stated there was no Nocton planning permission applications nor any applications for tree works.

14. Village Welcome pack: Update by the Clerk

The Clerk updated the Councillors through the Clerk's Report.

15. Village bench removal and plant a tree – update from Cllr Clarke

The Chair stated that the Village Bench had been removed as it was a safety hazard due to the state of disrepair. It was hoped that the bench could be replaced – possibly with a plastic bench. The councillors confirmed that they had started to look at options and costings. The Chair had confirmed that the plaque from the bench that was for the coronation of HM the Queen in 1953. There was also a hope that a tree could be planted in honour of the Queen for the Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

16. District Councillor Council report

There was no District Councillor Report.

The Chair did welcome Cllr Carrington, who was the Lincolnshire County Council representative for the area. Cllr Carrington reported as follows:

- He stated that the use of Clerk Advisory Meetings, in his opinion, was a very good idea as it allowed the community to participate but also remain in a safer environment in regard to Covid. He had seen a few Councils use this process and he thought it was a very good decision.

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- He stated that since his election he has found that while the issues of adult social care and the provision of excellent provision for the Children Services Team, he stated that issues like pot holes and the state of the roads was often the most critical issues for the community. While he appreciated that the services for adult and child care was critical, he appreciated that the LCC need to be aware of the roads issue.
- In regard to health provision, he stated that the LCC had invested £2.5m to improve the health services provision in the area. This was primarily targeted at young people and it was in partnership with the Lincolnshire Partnership Trust to deliver services into the community.
- He stated that the Children's Services of LCC had been recognised for the high standard of work especially with the high-level needs of the children with special needs.
- LCC had received £20m from the Government's levelling up strategy and while it would be used across the county, there was special focus on the coastal areas.
- In regard to roads management, he wanted to confirm that the work on Pelham Bridge was one time and on budget – significant work had been undertaken on the bridge. The A15 repairs was also on target and on budget and with the eastern bypass open it would ease traffic congestion
- He confirmed that in regard to funds provided by central government, they had reduced the roads provision funds by £12.5m – LCC had decided to make up £10m of this from their reserves.
- He confirmed that there would be Highways Improvement Map published to allow the community to see where the work was being targeted and being undertaken
- He confirmed that the Household Recycling Centre had now changed to pre-covid openings in that an appointment for cars was not needed but that vans would still need to book. This would hopefully ease the issues surrounding the area as well as fly tipping.
- The LCC and the Lincolnshire Clinic Commissioning Group was targeting funding through the Lives Team to focus on community members who had falls to ensure they are properly cared for and reduce calls on the NHS.
- The final issue was the storage of nuclear waste at Theddlethorpe. He confirmed that this was a decision by a national body and was not a LCC decision. But while the issues were complicated, it would be a decision for local people.

CLLr Carrington asked if there were any questions:

- i) A question was asked about the work on the Pelham Bridge and the additional work undertaken by the gas, electric and water companies while this work was being undertaken.

He stated that while he fully appreciated that often these utility works being done while major roads were being worked on often heightened the issues, as they were considered 'Statutory Undertakers' it was very difficult to stop the work they need to do unless there was a critical reason. And while they do have to apply for road closure permissions, they had been regularly been encouraged to co-ordinate their work or to provide a good level of notice to LCC to allow the County to coordinate the works.

- ii) A question was asked about the money used for the bypass and it would appear that while Nocton and Potterhanworth had been waiting for years for work on their roads, Lincoln city centre had a lot of money spent.

He stated that while he can appreciate the feeling from more rural areas is that Lincoln itself gets the money spent, there were significant issues that had to be addressed. But that he wanted to ensure that he was fully aware of the

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local issues and that he would be arranging with the Council to have a walk around of the area to ensure that he could report these issues back to LCC.

He did state that it was important that the 'repairs' and 'major programmes' were treated separately as funding from these came different sources but he fully appreciated that there was never money and that it was very difficult to manage the near 5,000 miles in the county.

The Chair thanked Cllr Carrington for his very detailed report and time.

17. Nocton Hub update

i) **Hub Noticeboard:** updates by the Clerk

This was detailed in the Clerk's Report.

ii) **Charitable Status of the Hub:** update by the Clerk

The Clerk stated that the former Councillor, Mr Johnson-Davis, has stated that while he is still wanting to help or participate in investigating the formation of a Charity, as there may be possible issue of the leasing of the Hub, he would pause the work until this was clarified.

iii) **Service Level Agreement with the Ripon Arms:** update by the Clerk

This was detailed in the Clerk's Report.

iv) **Booking Clerk for the Hub:** update by the Clerk

The Clerk stated that the Hub Manager had successfully started the role of the Bookings Clerk and through her hard work the bookings had started to increase which would mean the financial picture of the Hub would increase. The Clerk wishes to thank the Hub Manager for her hard work and commitment.

v) **Keys for the Bar Area of the Hub:** update by the Clerk

The Clerk stated that the agreement with the Ripon Arms for there to be emergency access to the keys for the bar area had been put in place – he wished to thank the Ripon Arms for their help in finding a solution.

vi) **Update on the snagging list and funds owed by Builder:** update by Cllr Faulkner

Cllr Faulkner stated that he had met with the main contractor (Maher Millard Ltd) of the Hub build to go through the snagging list items – this was done with a former Chair of the Council as well as a manager of the contractor. He confirmed that a lot of the work had been done but the contractor acknowledged that there was still some work to be done. Various workmen from the contractor had been to the Hub and undertaken work. Cllr Faulkner stated that he was aware that an issue with the disabled toilet and the smell had been known and that while the flushing mechanism needs some attention, it was hoped that once the toilet was used more it would help to solve the problem.

The Clerk asked about the fencing and the funds owed by the contractor for the overpayment. Cllr Faulkner stated that he was working with the contractor and the previous Chair to go through the accounts to confirm the balance owed and that he would ensure the fencing situation was discussed at the next meeting.

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vii) **PRS Music licence:** update by the Clerk on the licence

The Clerk stated that he had had numerous conversations with the PRS Music Society about the licence to ensure that the Hub was covered for the use of music. PRS apologised for the lack of response and that they would be looking into the issue. They did confirm that the Hub was covered for music playing and that it was just the final licence cost and the actual paperwork needed.

viii) **Alcohol licence:** update by the Clerk on the licence

The Clerk stated that he had been in contact with the Licencing Manager at NKDC to enquire about the actual licence in place and the need for the change in the licence to cover the external area and take away drinks. The Licencing Manager confirmed that the licence was in the name of the Council with the Clerk as the contact and thus there was no current need to change the name. In regard to the provision of the external area, he confirmed that as yet the Government had not extended the permission (without a licence change) from end of September so the Council would need to vary the licence to cover the provisions. But as long as there were no objections, it would be a straightforward process and cost around £89.

The Clerk confirmed that the minor variation would be applied for in early September and that the RA had agreed to pay the variation fee.

ix) **Bank account for Hub invoices:**

This was detailed in the Clerk's Report.

x) **Hub Noticeboard:**

The Clerk had detailed this in the Clerks report. The update was that he had received confirmation from the Planners that as long as the notice was in keeping with the conservation area, it would not require planning. In regard to cost, the example the Clerk had found was in the region of £1,300 as it needed to be wood and large enough to be able to have room to allow the Hub and the Ripon Arms to publicise their events.

The Clerk stated that he had approached Dyson Farming for any sponsoring or commercial partnership opportunities to help pay for the noticeboard. He had received an initial reply but asked if the Councillors would allow more time to allow him to communicate with the Dyson Farming team.

The Councillors agreed that a standalone noticeboard would be very useful for the Hub and the RA and that there was a consensus to allow the Clerk more time, and to move the point to a future meeting.

18. Next Full Parish Meeting – Tuesday 07 September 2021 7.00pm.

The Chair asked the Clerk what was the date considered for the next meeting. The Clerk initially stated that the 01 September 2021 was an option. The Councillors discussed the date and agreed the Tuesday, 07 September 2021 would be appropriate and all could attend.

19. Questions from the Public – at the discretion of the Clerk, the Chair will moderate

There were the following questions asked of the Councillors and Clerk:

- 1) *A question was asked about the use of the Internal Auditor Yorkshire Ltd for the auditor and that at the meeting on the 08 June 2021 it was stated by the Clerk they had been used by other Councils he worked for.*

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Yet upon examination on other Councils minutes, it as the Clerk that recommended them to the Council. Can he explain?

The Clerk stated at the beginning of the financial year there was another auditor in place but that this person had then at a very late stage told the Council he was unable to do the audit – not giving a reason. The Council was left with finding a reputable auditor at a very late stage that was willing to undertake the full audit needed – especially because of the financial issues in the last financial year that had been highlighted. He confirmed that his original recommendation was based on clerking forums and also from colleagues and that he had done his due diligence. In regard to the cost, while it was higher than last year, a more thorough audit was needed and the fact the audit would be by remote means, it would save multiple journeys for the clerk – thus overall it was considered value for money.

- 2) *There was a question about the budget – it was noted that there had been several extra expenses that were not in the original budget and that while it was noted that the costs were gross and there was VAT reclaim to be made, there was a concern that the Council would need to use reserves to support the year. He did continue that the carry over figure of £3,620 was not included.*

There was also a follow up query about the Hub finances and the 'seed' money that was transferred.

The Clerk confirmed that due to the unfortunate and very short handover from the previous clerk, that while the previous Chair did provide as much information as she could, it did leave the situation that the Council was trying to ascertain the true details from the budget decisions, the Hub Funds and why some decisions were made.

In regard to the carry over picture, as the records were not properly organised, and the last end of spreadsheet did not balance, it was appreciated that the accounts for this financial year would need reviewing.

The Clerk also stated that some decisions would need to be made in regard to the budget lines later in the year.

- 3) *A question was raised about the use of the Zoom Clerk Advisory Meetings and not face to face meetings, and did this prohibit local people without access to the zoom software?*

The Chair stated that the next meeting would be a face to face but that these Clerk Advisory Meetings saved money for the community. There was no intent to stop any member of the community from attending. He looked forward to the questioner attending the next face to face meeting.

- 4) *There was a query raised about the recent statement published by the Council about the alleged financial irregularities found and why the Council felt the need to publish this as it may have caused concern in the village?*

The Chair stated that while the Council appreciates that it may have caused concern amongst the community, it was agreed that as some of the details were already known in the village, the Councillors had agreed that they needed clarify the situation and while he cannot comment on the precise details due to ongoing investigations, the statement did show the Council was taking this very seriously.

Cllr McDonnell stated that it was better to say something than nothing as these issues through 'Chinese Whispers' may cause even more anxiety. This statement clarified the situation and was made with the best of intentions.

The Clerk confirmed that the Police and HMRC were investigating the situation and that is why no further comment could be made.

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- 5) *In regard to the Hub Management Group, the secretary of the HMG asked if as the HMG had not met for many months was the group relevant any longer? Would it be better for the Council to take the management of the Hub back 'in house'?*

The Chair asked several members of the community who were in attendance (but previously were heavily involved in the Hub creation and the working groups) of their opinion.

They stated that the previous group had set up a lot of policies and procedures and that it was useful tool to set up and complete the actions needed. There also a detailed update from Mr Kaye that the covenant was that the Council for 80 years (from 1981) could not sell or lease the previous village hall but that through negotiations with the landowner, the Council had agreed that the new Hub could be built. But he was aware that in the covenant it does state that a Management Group is needed and thus the HMG is needed to meet the obligation.

Upon a request from the Chair, Mr Kaye, did state that he would help with any negotiations with the landowner to see if there was a way for an agreement for the formation of a Charity to lease the Hub from the Parish Council. He hoped that with a proper and honest approach the landowner may be approachable to this.

Mr Kaye did state that if the Charity was able to be formed, it would be completely separate from the Council. He did state that it may be worthwhile for the HMG, once they get into proper operation, to operate under Charity Commission simulated rules to then ensure that if the Charity project does come to fruition, then they have experience of what is needed.

It was confirmed that the Chair of the HMG (Cllr McDonnell) had called a meeting on the 23 August 2021 at the Hub.

The Chair thanked all participants for their help and hopefully it may the glimmer of hope needed to restart the charity project.

- 6) *There was a question about the Clerk's recommendation to review the hiring costs and that this may put them a lot more expensive than other village halls.*

The Chair stated that a proper review would have to be made, with comparable village halls but that it would be for the HMG to review and recommend to the Council.

Cllr McDonnell confirmed that at the meeting of the HMG on the 23 August this could be discussed.

THE CHAIR THANKED EVERYONE FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION AND CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.10PM
