

NOCTON PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the meeting of Nocton Parish Council held at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022 in The Nocton Hub.

PRESENT: Councillor Mike Clarke (Chair)
Councillors Ian Goldsworthy, Mike Kaye, George McDonnell and MaryAnn Williams

Approx. 25 members of the public were also in attendance

No.	Item	Action By
1.	CHAIR'S WELCOME TO THE MEETING	
	<p>The Chair welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting and reminded all those present that the meeting was being recorded.</p> <p>The Chair also referred to the recent invasion of Ukraine and to the suffering of that country's population. He expressed the hope that the conflict would soon be over and said that the thoughts of the Parish Council and all residents would be with all Ukrainians at this very difficult time for them.</p> <p>Finally, the Chair said that following a conversation with the Highways Authority, he was able to confirm that the works due to take place along Main Street involved a resurfacing of the road. However, they were unable to provide any further information relating to the work and the impact on residents.</p>	
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
	<p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor Neil Faulkner and his reason was accepted. It was noted that District Councillor Amelia Bailey had also advised the Chair that she would be unable to attend the meeting.</p>	
3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	<p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
4.	FORMAL APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR	
	<p>Following recent advice from LALC, it was noted that it was necessary to appoint formally Councillor Mike Clarke as Chair of the Parish Council, the term "Acting Chair" not being valid in the current circumstances.</p> <p>MOVED by Councillor Ian Goldsworthy; SECONDED by Councillor Mike Kaye and RESOLVED that Councillor Mike Clarke be appointed Char of the Parish Council for the remainder of the Municipal Year.</p>	
5.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2022	
	<p>MOVED by Councillor MaryAnn Williams; SECONDED by Councillor George McDonald and RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February, 2022 be agreed as a correct record of the proceedings.</p>	

	The minutes were then signed by the Chair.	
6	DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT	
	It was noted that as Councillor Amelia Bailey was unable to attend the meeting, she had provided the Chair with a copy of her report which had been circulated to all councillors and which would be placed on the Parish Council website.	CHAIR
7.	REPORT FROM THE ACTING CLERK (COUNCILLOR MIKE CLARKE)	
7.1	<u>Schedule of Payments</u> A Schedule of Payments made during February was approved.	CHAIR
7.2	<u>Parish Council Bank Accounts</u> The Chair reported that as at 1 March 2022, the Parish Council had a combined total of £26,965 across each of its three bank accounts. There were, however, a number of significant payments to be made shortly, including the year's final instalment of the PWLB repayment (£8,393.63), which would reduce this total. The Chair stated that he would shortly be contacting the VAT Office to discuss the position regarding the Parish Council's VAT Claim for the current year in the absence of any documentary records handed over by the former Clerk	
7.3	<u>Resignation of Former Parish Clerk</u> The Chair gave a brief update on the current position regarding the return of the Parish Council's equipment, records and data. Of particular concern was the former Clerk's failure to return the Parish Council's electronic financial data and records which was having a significant effect on its ability to prepare for the end of year Audit. Appropriate action to secure the return of these items was, therefore, now being taken.	
7.4	<u>Parish Council Website</u> It was agreed to place on record its appreciation of Mr Darren Wilson's (a local resident) assistance in helping to maintain and update the Parish Council's website in the absence of a Parish Clerk. It was, however, further agreed that to reduce the calls on his time, Councillor Graham Kempster would also assist. The Chair asked that all requests from Parish Councillors and others for information to be posted on/deleted from the website be directed to him (as Acting Parish Clerk) in the first instance so that he could arrange for the necessary action to be taken. Finally, it was agreed that all of the existing statements, etc posted by the former Parish Clerk during his period of employment be deleted from the website.	

7.5	<u>Appointment of Parish Clerk</u> It was hoped that interviews for the post of Parish Clerk would be held during the beginning of the week commencing 14 March.	CHAIR
7.6	<u>Opus Energy and EON Next</u> The Chair reported that he had managed to negotiate a one-year contract with Opus Energy for the supply of electricity to the street lamp posts and a two-year fixed price contract with EON Next for the supply of electricity to The Hub, both on reasonably advantageous terms give the difficult conditions prevailing in the energy markets.	
7.7	<u>The following item of correspondence was noted:</u> A Freedom of Information Request regarding the costs incurred by the Parish Council in respect of the investigation into the former Parish Clerk (Ms Ruth Keillar) had been received and would be responded to by the Chair within the prescribed timetable.	CHAIR
8.	PARISH COUNCIL INTERNAL AUDIT 2021/22	
8.1	<u>Preparation of Accounts</u> The Chair gave a brief update on the work being undertaken by Mr Geoff Hall and Councillors Ian Goldsworthy and Mike Kaye to construct a set of Parish Council accounts for 2021/22 in the absence of any meaningful information handed over by the former Clerk on his resignation. This was proving to be a particularly challenging task and the Chair thanked Geoff Hall for all his hard work, advice and support to the Parish Council.	
8.2	<u>Appointment of Auditor</u> It was agreed to request LALC to provide the Parrish Council with an auditor from amongst those on its “approved” list to undertake the 2021/22 Internal Audit. It was noted that from the Scale of Charges provided by LALC the cost would be £150, provision for which was included in the Parish Council’s budget.	CHAIR
9.	REQUEST FOR GRANT AID – MID-LINCOLNSHIRE CITIZENS’ ABDVICE BUREAU	
	The Chair reported that he had received a request for grant aid from Mid-Lincolnshire CAB. Whilst appreciative of the work carried out by CABs across the country, the Parish Council did not currently have provision to make grants to national organisations and so it was agreed, reluctantly, that it could not provide financial support as requested.	
10.	NOCTON 200 CLUB	
10.1	<u>Application from Nocton and District WI</u>	

10.2	<p>The Parish Council considered a request from the local WI (which was deferred from the last meeting) for a grant of £231.99 to enable the provision of a portable sound system to assist its members with hearing difficulties. Although, the Hub Management Group was already considering the provision of an induction loop in the main Events Hall, it was felt that the equipment being proposed by the WI would be a more effective solution (induction loops being limited to persons wearing certain types of hearing devices only). The equipment proposed would also be available to other users of The Hub. The application was, therefore, agreed subject to any comments which the Promoter of the 200 Club might wish to make.</p> <p><u>Provision of Projector and Screen</u></p> <p>It was noted that although the Parish Council had not yet been able to secure the return of the equipment purchased previously by the former Clerk, a projector to the same specification had now been procured (at no cost to the 200 Club or Parish Council). This would be added to the Parish Council's Asset Register. However, it has been found that the screen provided with the projector was not suitable for use in the Events Hall. Janet Goldsworthy, a member of the Nocton Parochial Church Council, said that the Church had a screen which it currently did not use and, as such, she would ask the PCC if it could be made available to The Hub, subject to it being returned should it ever be required by the Church.</p>	CHAIR
11.	HUB MANAGEMENT GROUP	
11.1	<p><u>Minutes of the HMG held on 3 January 2022</u></p> <p>At the invitation of Councillor George McDonnell, the recently appointed Events Co-ordinator, Nicola Clarke, gave a presentation to the meeting on the work she was currently doing on behalf of the HMG to increase the profile of the village and The Hub and, in so doing, helping to engender a sense of community spirit. She made it clear, however, that her role would not involve fund-raising.</p> <p>Councillor George McDonnell also invited the Hub Manager to report on a number of issues to have arisen at the meeting on 3 January and, more recently, at the meeting held on 28 February, 2022. Details of these and other items relating to The Hub are set out below:</p>	
11.2	<p><u>Provision of non-slip paint to the access ramp</u></p> <p>It was noted that in accordance with Building Regulations, a number of coats of non-slip paint had been provided at the time of the ramp's construction. As such, it would be necessary to ascertain from the Contractor (Maher Millard) whether the surface had failed or whether normal maintenance required it to be re-coated over time.</p>	CLLR N. FAULKNER

11.3	<u>Provision of Anti-fungal Paint to Cellar Room</u>	
	<p>It was noted that the Ripon Arms had asked if the Parish Council would fund the provision of an anti-fungal coating to its Cellar room as it said had been promised as part of the original building specification. It was agreed that this would need to be checked with the Contractor (Maher Millard) and whether it had been raised as part of the “snagging” checks carried out before the building was handed over.</p>	<p>CLLR N. FAULKNER</p>
11.4	<u>Provision of Tiled Splashbacks and Washable Paint to Gents Urinals</u>	
	<p>It was noted that the absence of tiled splashbacks was causing a cleaning and odour issue. As such, the HMG had asked the Parish Council to consider meeting the necessary costs of the materials involved to provide a more appropriate covering. The Parish Council reserved its position until it had been provided with details of the costs involved. It might also wish to obtain advice from the original Contractor.</p>	<p>CLLR N. FAULKNER</p>
11.5	<u>Additional Cleaning Requirement</u>	
	<p>It was noted that current use of the building required an additional two hours cleaning per week (07.30 – 09.30 on Saturdays) which could not be met by the existing staff. The necessary cleaning was currently being carried out by volunteers but this arrangement could not continue indefinitely. In the circumstances, it was agreed to authorise the Hub Manager to place the necessary advert.</p>	<p>HUB MANAGER</p>
11.6	<u>Meeting Room</u>	
	<p>The Hub Manager reported that whilst open to suggestions as to how the room might be brought back into use for the purpose originally intended, current demands on storage from both the Hub itself and hirers made this extremely problematic. She would, however, arrange a meeting with parish councillors at The Hub to consider what, if anything, could be done.</p>	<p>HUB MANAGER</p>
11.7	<u>Admission of Dogs to Lounge Area</u>	
	<p>It was agreed that the Ripon Arms’ request to allow dogs to be admitted to the Lounge Area for all of the sessions on which it was open be approved. In so doing, however, it was made clear that all dogs would be kept on a lead and under close control. It was noted that the RA had Third Party Liability Insurance (as did the Parish Council) should any incident involving a dog occur.</p>	<p>HMG</p>
11.8	<u>Nocton Hub Hire Charges</u>	
	<p>Following a detailed discussion, it was agreed to defer implementing the HMG’s proposed increases in Hire Charges until 1 July 2022 by which time</p>	

	<p>further information relating to the Hub's overheads and their impact on its overall financial situation would be available through the work currently in hand on the Parish Council's accounts. In that way, any increases could take into full account of the financial situation and would ensure that they would be appropriate and not detrimental to existing users and thus risk losing their custom.</p> <p>There would also be a need to undertake a fundamental review of the invoicing system introduced by the former Clerk as it was not fit for purpose. This would involve exploring the possibility of utilising the function in the Hallmaster Booking system and which may result in additional costs.</p>	HMG
11.9	<p><u>Hub Toilets</u></p> <p>It was noted that the blockage in the drain had now been cleared and that the Hub Manager was taking appropriate action to prevent the problem from recurring.</p>	HUB MANAGER
11.10	<p><u>Pest Control Service</u></p> <p>It was agreed not to engage a Pest Control Service to deal with the sightings of rats in the close vicinity of The Hub as this was unlikely to prove a long-term solution. Rather, the incidence of such sightings, etc would be kept under review by the Hub Manager.</p>	HUB MANAGER
11.11	<p><u>Apology to Andrea Freeman</u></p> <p>Councillor Ian Goldsworthy reported that his attention had been drawn by a resident to an email exchange between the former Clerk and Andrea Freeman, who had hired The Hub for use in connection with her Yoga Classes. The tone and content of the emails sent by the former Clerk was entirely inappropriate and unprofessional and had led directly to the hirer taking her custom to a neighbouring Village Hall. It was agreed, therefore, that the Chair, on behalf of the Parish Council would offer an unreserved apology to Ms Freeman. In the meantime, the Hub Manager was asked to make contact with her and to see if she would be willing to return to the Hub. As a token of the Parish Council's regret at the way she had been treated, it was agreed that she be offered free hire of the Hub for a period to be determined by the Hub Manager.</p>	CHAIR HUB MANAGER
11.12	<p><u>Fairy Lights</u></p> <p>Councillor Mike Kaye drew attention to the potential planning and other implications arising from a proposal by the HMG to instal fairy lights in the Lime Trees fronting The Hub which were subject to Tree Preservation Orders. The Events Co-ordinator made clear that this was only a suggestion and that in view of the advice, it would not be pursued further.</p>	

11.13	<p><u>Appointment of Members to the Hub Management Group</u></p> <p>In accordance with the provisions of the existing Terms of Reference of the HMG, it was MOVED by Councillor Ian Goldsworthy; SECONDED by Councillor Mike Kaye and RESOLVED that Nicola Clarke, Bob Webster and Councillor MaryAnn Williams be appointed formally to the Group.</p>	
11.14	<p><u>Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>Arising from discussion of the various issues associated with the Hub Management Group, it became apparent that the provisions of its existing Constitution and Terms of Reference were not fully understood by either members of the Group itself or the Parish Council. The document was unnecessarily complicated and did not properly clarify the nature of the relationship between the Parish Council and members of the Group nor its responsibilities. It was agreed, therefore, to draft a more concise and purposeful document better suited to the needs of both parties.</p>	CLLR I. G'WORTHY
11.15	<p><u>Proposed Open Weekend – 9th/10th April 2022</u></p> <p>Councillor MaryAnn Williams gave a brief outline of her proposals for this weekend which would provide an opportunity for all residents to visit the Hub and to see, at first hand, its facilities and the sort of activities which currently take place. She explained that she was being assisted in the arrangements by a small group of residents who would work closely with members of the HMG as details were finalised. She hoped that councillors would be able to attend the event which would take place between 10.00 – 12.00 noon on the Saturday, and 14.00 – 16.00 on the Sunday.</p> <p>MOVED by Councillor Mike Kaye and SECONDED by Councillor Graham Kempster and RESOLVED that a budget of up to £100 be established (from the Reserve) to meet the costs of advertising the event.</p>	CLLR M. WILLIAMS
11.16	<p><u>Easyfundraising</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded residents of the benefits of signing up to Easyfundraising, the proceeds of which could help the Hub, Church, Ripon Arms or other local organisations. Mark Cunningham of the RA offered to provide advice to any resident who was unclear as to how to sign up.</p>	
11.17	<p><u>CommunityLincs</u></p> <p>It was agreed to consider re-joining Community Lincs at the next meeting as the organisation had, in the past, provided the Parish Council with valuable information about the running of its village hall,</p>	CLLR M. WILLIAMS

12.	PLANNING ISSUES	
	<p>Councillor Mike Kaye reported that there were no planning issues currently requiring the Parish Council's attention.</p> <p>It was, however, agreed to reinstate the former Parish Council's Policy whereby it would submit comments of support in respect of all those applications about which it was not making a formal objection.</p> <p>He also drew attention to a number of issues associated with the recent sale of the land behind The Hub and the advice he had received recently from the solicitor acting for the Parish Council during the earlier negotiations with the former owner at the time of the rebuilding of the village hall. He would keep the Parish Council informed of any developments.</p>	CLLR M. KAYE
13.	DEFIBRILLATOR AT NOCTON HUB	
	<p>Following advice from Mr Steve Coles-Reid, it was noted that a more up-to-date device (and which was suitable for use on children) could be purchased for approximately £1,400.</p> <p>The Parish Council noted that this could potentially be funded by the use of the £500 obtained by Councillor Neil Faulkner from Lincoln Rotary, £200 from excess funds raised for the device at Nocton Park and, subject to consultation with the Nocton 200 Club Promotor, a re-purposing of the £700 grant previously earmarked for the Nocton Park device but which was no longer required.</p> <p>It was agreed to pursue the funding proposal further with all interested parties.</p> <p>It was further noted that Steve Coles-Reid would be arranging to deliver CPR and Defibrillator training later in the year for residents. The Hub would be made available for this purpose free of charge.</p>	CHAIR
14.	NOCTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE	
	<p>It was noted that following a review of accommodation needs at The Hive, Dyson Farming was no longer able to store the Nocton Village Archive and that this had now been returned to The Hub where it would remain for safe-keeping until a more permanent arrangement could be identified. The Archive would be put on display as part of the Open Weekend event.</p>	
15.	REFURBISHMENT OF NOCTON VILLAGE SIGN	
	<p>Councillor MaryAnn Williams reported that Jim Eagle and Jim Parker, local residents, had very kindly agreed to refurbish the Nocton millennium sign. They had estimated the cost of materials as being in the region of £150 and it was MOVED by Councillor Ian Goldsworthy; SECONDED by Councillor Mike Kaye that the Parish Council establish a budget of up to this amount (from the Reserve) to meet the cost of the refurbishment.</p>	

16.	DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS	
16.1	<u>Ordinary Meeting</u> It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Tuesday, 12 April 2022 at 7.00 p.m.	
16.2	<u>Annual Parish Meeting</u> It was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting be held between 6.30 p.m. and 7.30 pm, immediately prior to the Annual General Meeting/Ordinary Meeting on 10 May 2022 which would commence at 7.30 p.m. A suggested topic for debate at the Annual Parish Meeting was how to encourage members of the community to come forward to serve as parish councillors to ensure that the village could continue to benefit from having a Parish Council. This would be particularly appropriate given that elections for a new Parish Council were due to be held in May, 2023. The meeting would need to be widely publicised through 'What's On in Nocton', Limespring and other media to ensure the best possible attendance.	
17.	EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC	
	MOVED by Councillor Ian Goldsworthy; SECONDED by Councillor Mike Kaye and RESOLVED that the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.	
18.	RESIGNATION OF FORMER PARISH CLERK	
	The Parish Council again considered a range of issues associated with the resignation of its previous Parish Clerk and agreed a number of courses of action to deal with the matters which had been identified. The detailed proposals relating to these matters are confidential and are recorded separately in a minute which will not be available for publication but which will, nevertheless, be kept as an official record should it be required for formal disclosure at some point in the future.	
19.	FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST	
	A further discussion took place on the Freedom of Information Request submitted by Mr Ralph Timms last year and which had resulted in a formal complaint by him to the Information Commissioner about the way in which it had been dealt with by the Parish Council on advice from its former Clerk. The nature of the request was for the Parish Council to release the detailed content of the private and confidential minute of its meeting held on 26 April 2021. Whilst accepting that the advice it had received for not originally providing a copy of the minute to Mr Timms was flawed, nevertheless having reviewed its content, the Parish Council could not agree to its release given the	

	<p>extremely sensitive nature of the issues contained therein. It could not, therefore, do so unless instructed otherwise by the ICO.</p> <p>In the meantime, however, it was agreed that Councillor Mike Kaye would contact Mr Timms to explain the situation to him and why Parish Council still felt that it could not comply with the terms of his request. It was also agreed that the Parish Council apologise to him for the way in which the former Clerk had dealt with the matter and for the completely inappropriate nature of the emails he had sent to him.</p>	CLLR M. KAYE
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SIGNED: _____

Date: _____