**NOCTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of the meeting of Nocton Parish Council held at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 25th January, 2022 in The Nocton Hub.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mike Clarke (Acting Chair)

Councillors Ian Goldsworthy\*, Mike Kaye\*, Graham Kempster, George McDonnell and MaryAnn Williams\*

(\* - present as councillors for part of the meeting only)

1. members of the public were also in attendance
2. **ACTING CHAIR’S WELCOME TO THE MEETING**

The Acting Chair welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

1. **PARISH CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

It was MOVED by Councillor N. Faulkner; SECONDED by Councillor G. Kempster and RESOLVED that the Acting Chair, Councillor M. Clarke, be confirmed as the Nocton Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer until such time as a permanent appointment is made to this position(s).

1. **REVENUE BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2022/23**

The Parish Council considered a detailed report on a proposed budget and Precept for the financial year 2022/23. The proposals had been prepared by the Acting Clerk against a difficult financial background although he considered that, in the circumstances, they represented a reasonable and prudent way forward.

In summary, the proposed budget would represent an increase in expenditure of £935 over the current year to £30,110 which, with a Litter Grant from NKDC and contribution from the General Reserve and/or excess Hub income of £2,820, would give a Precept requirement of £27,110. Although this would result in a small increase of £5.37 a year for a Band D property, it would continue to compare favourably with the precept charged by similar sized parish councils in the area.

The General Reserve at the start of the new financial year is estimated to be in the region of £11,000 which whilst lower than the previous year is, nevertheless, considered to be sufficient to meet any possible unforeseen calls on the Parish Council’s budget.

The report also sets out an indicative but balanced budget for Nocton Hub based on known trading details to date and those projected to the end of the year and that there are no further costs to be paid to the Contractor, Maher Millard\*. Given the general uncertainty around the financial information relating to the Hub (largely as a consequence of the decision to separate out its costs from the Parish Council’s not being fully implemented by the former Clerk) it was agreed that the Hub Management Group monitor closely all income and expenditure and to submit regular reports to the Parish Council so that any corrective action can be taken.

It was MOVED by Councillor G. McDonnell; SECONDED by Councillor N. Faulkner and RESOLVED unanimously that (i) the Revenue Budget for 2022/23 be as set out in Appendix A to these minutes with a consequent Precept request to North Kesteven District Council of £27,110; and (ii) the notional budget for Nocton Hub in 2022/23 be as set out Appendix B to these minutes.

*(\* since confirmed)*

1. **PLANNING APPLICATION – TREE WORKS**

The Parish Council agreed to make no comments on an application to carry out works to trees at 4 Woodland Drive.

1. **RESULTS OF THE UNCONTESTED ELECTION CALLED FOR 8 FEBRUARY 2022**

The Acting Chair reported that Ian Goldsworthy, Mike Kaye and MaryAnn Williams had been elected unopposed to the three vacancies on the Parish Council and proceeded to sign their respective Acceptance of Office. He thanked them for coming forward to take on the role and, as experienced former parish councillors, looked forward to their contribution to the work of the Parish Council.

1. **DATE OF NEXT MEEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 8 February, 2022 commencing at 7.00 p.m. in Nocton Hub.

1. **OPUS ENERGY**

It was agreed that the Acting Clerk be authorised to negotiate a revised contract with Opus Energy for the supply of electricity to the street lamps, the current contract for which expires on 14 February.

1. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING**

It was MOVED by Councillor M. Clarke; SECONDED by Councillor G. McDonnell and RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items of business on the ground that the nature of the matters to be considered was confidential.

1. **CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE RESIGNATION OF THE FORMER PARISH CLERK, MR SIMON BAXTER**

It was noted with concern that following an examination of the Parish Council’s laptop, there appeared to be no evidence of it having been used since 17 April 2021 for Parish Council business. As such, the Parish Council did not currently know the whereabouts of its electronic data and records for the period 1 April 2021 to date and it was, therefore, agreed that Councillor I. Goldsworthy contact the Information Commissioner’s Officer for advice.

1. **INVESTIGATION INTO THE FORMER PARISH CLERK, MS RUTH KEILLAR**

The Parish Council agreed that it would make a public statement on this matter at the next meeting.

Councillor Mike Clarke

Acting Chair