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

FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

20 April 2021

MINUTES

Present:

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

Clerk and RFO: Mr S Baxter

Members of the public: None

Meeting commenced at 7.00pm

AGENDA ITEMS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Welcome by the Chair of the Committee to all Councillors and members of the public sitting in observation and to remind the attendees that the meeting is digitally 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 any Councillors

The Clerk stated that he had received an apology from Cllr Duff who stated that he would not be attending because he does not agree with the use of Zoom as a means for the Council meeting. The Clerk also stated that should the Council not accept the reason for apology from Cllr Duff then his Councillorship would become vacant as it would be the sixth successive meeting he was absent for without the absence reason being agreed. This was as detailed in the Local Government Act 1972.

The Clerk asked if the Chair would permit a vote by the Council to accept (or not) the reason for absence by Cllr Duff – it was felt pertinent as it would in effect result Cllr Duff from being a Parish Council. The Chair agreed a vote could proceed.

• Motion to not accept the reason given by ClIr Duff for his absence and not attending the Full Council Meeting on the 20 April 2021, and thus the subsequent result of ClIr Duff's councillorship becoming vacant was proposed by ClIr. Wilson, seconded by ClIr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

PLEASE NOTE: COUNCILLOR M. DUFF HAS AS A RESULT OF HIS FAILURE TO ATTEND SIX CONSECUTIVE FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS AND HIS REASON FOR ABSENCE NOT BEING ACCEPTED BY THE FULL PARISH COUNCIL, IS NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE PARISH COUNCIL AS OF TUESDAY 20 APRIL 2021. THIS IS A COMPULSORY PROCESS UNDER SECTION 85 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.

Action by the Clerk – to write Mr Duff and make him aware of the position and to let the Democratic team at NKDC aware of the vacant councillorship.

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- Declarations of interest for the Council to note including dispensations presented to the Clerk
 The Clerk stated that no declarations of interest had been received from any Councillor before the meeting.
 No declarations were made by the Councillors during the meeting.
- 4. Motion to exclude members of press and public from participation
 - Motion to exclude the members of the public and press from participation but allow them to view the meeting was proposed by ClIr. McDonnell, seconded by ClIr. Clarke and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

For the following agenda points members of the public and press could observe the meeting but could not take part in any discussion or debate. Any persons not Councillors or the Clerk were muted on Zoom

5. Minutes of Full Parish Meeting (09 March 2021) - to agree and vote as accurate record

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors.

- Motion to agree the minutes of the Full Parish Meeting on the 09 March 2021 as a true and accurate was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- 6. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting (23 March 2021) to agree and vote as accurate record

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors.

- Motion to agree the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Parish Meeting on the 23 March 2021 as a true and accurate was proposed by Cllr. Faulkner, seconded by Cllr. Cllr. Jonhston-Davis and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- 7. Minutes of the Personnel Committee (06 April 2021) to agree and vote as accurate record

The Clerk had previously sent a copy of the minutes to the Councillors.

- Motion to agree the minutes of the Full Parish Meeting on the 09 March 2021 as a true and accurate was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- 8. Report from Local Representatives:
 - i Local Police

The Clerk had previously circulated copy of the recent newsletter from the Police to the Councillors.

ii District Councillors

There was no report from the District Councillors.

iii County Councillors

The Clerk had previously circulated a note from the County Councillor who was retiring.

The Council discussed if they should send a thank you letter to the County Councillor for all his support of Nocton.

Action by the Clerk – to write the County Councillor behalf of the Nocton Parish Council.

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9. Clerk's Report including Financial update – Councillors will note there will only be an overview of the bank account and not a full financial update due to very recent change of clerk

The Clerk stated that as he had only been in post a couple of weeks, he could not provide the full and detailed Clerk report that the Council should expect. He did state that a full review of the records surrendered by the previous clerk and found historical records of the Council some of which dated back to the late 19th century. As the records had been given to him in plastic bags and cardboard boxes he felt that the Council records should be better secured and protected and thus would be recommending proper secure storage.

He stated that he had met with the Chair (by email and Zoom) and that she was kind enough to provide the historical information of the Parish as well as the working practices of the Council.

He did state that he wanted to ensure that although the working hours are limited, he would help and support all Councillors as much as possible.

In regard to the finance update, the Clerk had previously sent to all Councillors the most recent Financial update which was completed by the previous clerk before she left the role. The clerk stated that he could not verify the detail as no comprehensive checks had been undertaken to confirm the accuracy.

The Clerk finished by stating he is currently reviewing the financial records and details left by his predecessor and a full review and report would be provided at the next month's meeting.

10. Bank Mandate – to agree to place the new RFO on the bank mandate

The Chair stated that as the new Clerk was the RFO for the Parish Council as well, it was best practice that the Council formally voted to put the RFO on the bank mandate to ensure he was able to input payments through the Bank. The Council briefly discussed the need but agreed the suggested practice.

- Motion to agree that the new RFO was placed on the Council's bank mandate to give authority to input payments through the bank account was proposed by Cllr. McDonnell, seconded by Cllr. Wilson and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- **11.** Change of Banks to consider a recommendation from the RFO to change to a more ethically, digitally operated bank with specific expenditure safeguards, Unity Trust Bank.

The Chair stated that the Clerk had made a recommendation for the Council to consider moving bank accounts from the current provider (Lloyds Bank) to UNITY TRUST BANK.

The Clerk stated that he had undertaken a full investigation as part of his role at another Council, on the best banks for Parish and Town Councils. It was acknowledged that most high street banks do not appreciate the unique Parish and Town Council processes and that often their customer service was not ideally suited to the Parish Council. The investigation looked at various banks that provided banking services for Charities or not for profit organisations and had a more ethical approach. The result of the investigation found that UNITY TRUST BANK, while not the only bank that the Council may consider, is in his opinion the best suited. This bank had an

Clerk to the Parish: Mr S R Baxter JP MIFA ADPS ADIP Email: <u>clerk@noctonparishcouncil.gov.uk</u> Tel: 0781 444 3058 ethical approach and while it had a cost of £6 a month, the service would actually save a considerable amount of time of the Clerk and the Chair. It would also provide a better sense of governance as the bank account had a system where the Clerk could view the bank account and input payments (but not authorise), and the Councillors could view and authorise payments (but could not input payments).

The Chair stated that her experience of the current bankers, Lloyds Bank, was not very good and often had waited a considerable amount of time on hold when wanting to undertake a simple change on the bank.

Cllr McDonnell stated he was aware of UNITY TRUST through his employment and found them very good and easy to use.

• Motion to agree to the recommendation of the RFO to change the bank account provider to UNITY TRUST BANK was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to start the application process, which will involve emailing the Councillors to provide personal detail needed for the bank application.

12. Recording (and retention of) Parish Council Meetings – to consider recommendation to retain the recordings the meetings for a period of 12 months and to make then available for public viewing

The Chair stated that the previous process the Council had used was that all meetings were recorded to allow the previous clerk to use the recording for the compilation of the minutes. But as soon as the Clerk had completed the minutes the recordings were deleted. The Chair stated that the Clerk had recommended that these recordings, as well as helping the clerk to write minutes, should be saved for 12 months to ensure that should there be any disagreement by Councillors on the minutes, then the recording could be used. The Chair stated that the recording could also allow the Community who were not present at Meetings to listen to the discussion if they wished.

The Council discussed this proposal and felt it was absolutely right to ensure that while the minutes were the official record of the meetings, the recordings did allow a degree of transparency should there be a query of the discussion detail. It also served the community well.

Cllr Clarke did ask if the meetings could be recorded once the meetings resume in a face to face manner – the Clerk replied that proper recording equipment would be purchased to ensure that the meetings could be recorded.

• Motion to agree that all meetings (both by remote and face to face) would be fully digitally recorded and the recordings saved for 12 months but that the recordings were available to the community, was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Johnston-Davis and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – ensure that all meetings were recorded and to investigate how the recordings were available on the Council's website.

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13. Office Equipment and record storage – to consider request from the Clerk to purchase secure storage equipment for Council records

The Clerk made a request to the Council that they consider a request for the Council to purchase sufficient secured filing cabinets to store the Council's records. The storage of the records surrendered to the Council was in the Clerk's opinion not appropriate and for the legal and moral obligations of the Council needed to be more secure, and better organised. The Clerk felt it would cost in the region of £120-£150.

The Council agreed that the records of the Council needed to be far more secure and that plastic bags and boxes were not appropriate.

• Motion to agree the request by the Clerk to purchase sufficient and secure storage for the Council records was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to review the precise secure storage needed and to purchase the item.

14. Village Planters – consider request by members of the public to revamp the of Planters with a full risk assessment for this work to take place

The Chair stated that there had been an offer from a member of the community to replace the current planters that were wooden and falling into disrepair. The Chair continued that there had been a risk assessment for the work to be done to protect the individuals who would work on the planters and that all safety measures would be in place. The Council asked about the actual planters but felt that this was a generous offer from the member of the community and that as long as it was safe, the work would result in the area looking far better.

• Motion to agree to the offer to replace the planters and that the correct and appropriate risk assessment was carried out was proposed by Cllr. McDonnell, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to contact the member of the community and confirm they can proceed.

- **15. Nocton Hub Management** to receive a report from the Hub Management Group and for the Council to consider:
 - i To reopen for permitted activities as from 12 April 2021

The Chair stated that due to the rescheduling of the meeting the date was actually moot. She did state that the first booking had been scheduled for Thursday 22 April.

The Chair continued to state that arrangements will be made to ensure the Hub is fully cleaned before the first booking and that it would be Covid safe.

 $ii \quad$ Intruder and fire alarm servicing arrangements

The Chair stated the fire and intruder alarm systems would be annual servicing to ensure that they remain in the best condition. She stated that the options the Council had were to ask the installers of the systems

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to service them this year (in the next few months) and then get quotes for a servicing contract from 2022 or get quotes now to start the servicing contract.

The Clerk remined the Council that due to the Corona Virus Regulations from last year, the need to source three quotes for work had been suspended and thus the Council could ask the installer of the systems to service them without failing foul of procurement rules.

Cllr Clarke stated as the system was so new and that the systems may need checking to ensure they are fully operational, it was wise to ask the installers.

The Council discussed the need and felt that the new Hub Manager should contact the installers of the systems to arrange the servicing.

• Motion to agree to Chair's recommendation to ask the Hub Manager to ask the system installers to be asked to carry out the servicing for this year and then the Clerk to investigate the options for 2022 was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. McDonnell and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to contact the Hub Manager to arrange the servicing.

iii To consider an external noticeboard

The Chair stated that there was a notice board in the Parish but it is generally only for Parish Council matters and thus it would be beneficial for the Hub to have their own noticeboard to bookings at the Hub.

Cllr Johnston-Davis was stated that a proper noticeboard was always in the consideration of the new build and part of the plan but that funding had not been secured for this.

The Council also discussed if any local businesses or suppliers to the Hub could be approached to help sponsor the noticeboard.

The Council discussed the issue and agreed that it would be beneficial for the Hub, but the Clerk would need to check if planning permission was needed. Then this issue could be put back on a future meeting agenda.

Action by the Clerk – to contact the local planners to ascertain the planning issue (if any) and to contact suppliers for help to pay for the noticeboard.

16. 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 to update the Council. He stated that now there was a Hub Management Group in place, the next stage is to ask a group of local residents to formulate a plan on the way forward in looking to ascertain if charitable status could be achieved. This would involve significant legal advice and that eventually if the application proceeded, a Board of Trustees would be needed to be formed. It was hoped that near Christmas a better idea of how to proceed would be known.

He stated that the Parish Council need to consider a time bonded mandate and what terms of reference the working group should be given in regard to investigating the options.

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17. Nocton Hub update:

i) Receive report from Cllr Faulkner regarding Hub snagging list

Cllr Faulkner stated that he had been in contact with the contractor about the clearing and scraping of the car park and that this would happen in the next few weeks and that they had been told they had to work around the Hub hirers as to not put customers off. He continued that he would be meeting with the Contractors again to finalise the remaining small bits of the snagging list and would update the Council.

ii) To receive an update on the financial situation regarding the build

Cllr Faulkner stated in regard to the amount still owed to the Council by the main contractor, he stated that the Contractor had confirmed the debt owed to the Council but that he did not have any more details in regard to when the money will be paid to the Council. Once more is known he will update the Council.

iii) To receive report on location of fire assembly point signage

The Chair stated that there had been a request by the neighbours at the Hub is the fire assembly point sign could be moved along the wall. The neighbours offered that the sign can be attached to their wall as long as it was about a couple of fee to the right and that they would pay for the moving.

The Chair stated that there was a concern that while the current occupants allow the signs to be attached to their wall, if the property changed ownership then it may become a problem.

Cllr McDonnell stated that in his experience of H&S management, as long as the sign was clear it would be fit within legislation.

Cllr Clarke stated that a solution may be that the a solution would be to move the post with the Fire Assembly sign on it – this way there would not be an ownership issue, meet fire regulations and be cordial to the neighbour. But this was conditional that the neighbour paid for the work.

• Motion to agree to propose to move the post with the fire assembly point a few feet to the right was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Johnston-Davis and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to contact the neighbour to ascertain if they will still pay for the work and report back.

iv) To receive a report regarding request by owners to place planters

The Chair stated that the same Hub neighbours as the above point asked if they could install planters in the Hub carpark. The Chair stated as the car park is not owned by the Council they could not give permission.

v) To discuss electricity supply (and separation of supply) and installation of heater in defibrillator cabinet and relocation of thermostat

The Chair stated that it had been discussed that the items that the Ripon Arms used would be on a different electrical phase to allow for more accurate charging. She stated that the electrician previously used for the Hub work had stated it was possible; the Council would need to investigate the options.

The Chair stated that the Council were awaiting a quote to move the thermostat from the bar in the Hub to the lounge, and the defib cabinet would need the heater battery replacing.

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vi) Hub staff update – update from Personnel Committee Chair

The Chair of the Personnel Committee updated the Council in that the Committee had interviewed various candidates for the Hub Manager and Cleaner roles. Following the interviews, the Council have provisionally offered the role to MICHAELA HALL who had accepted the post on the terms as advertised. In regards to the Cleaner role, following a meeting with the new Hub Manager, the Clerk had discussed and interviewed the previous role holder and the Committee is delighted to say ELLEN CARTHY has accepted the role. These appointments are on a probationary basis but the Committee has no reason to think the role holders won't pass the probation as they have previously held the roles successfully.

The Clerk confirmed that references for both had been sought and received.

In regard to the other cleaner role, the Committee would like to recommend to the Council another advertisement is placed.

• Motion to agree the Personnel Committee's recommendation to hire MICHAELA HALL as the new Hub Manager and ELLEN CARTHY as the new Hub Cleaner was proposed by Cllr. Clarke, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk - to arrange the formal letters of invitation and the contract for both employees

vii) To discuss and consider updates of SLA for Nocton Social Club t/a Ripon Arms

The Chair stated that she had discussed the SLA with the Clerk and then had sent back the SLA to the Ripon Arms for their consideration. Once there was an update the Chair would update the Council.

18. Planning permission applications: Application: 21/0335/HOUS Crossroads Cottage, Wellhead Lane, Nocton

The Chair stated although the deadline had passed, it was felt that the development was in keeping with the other nearby properties.

19. Planning permission applications for Potterhanworth (for note only):

- i) Application: 21/0258/FUL Land between Station Road and Cross Street
- ii) Application: 21/0342/HOUS 42 Queensway, Potterhanworth
- iii) Application: 21/0331/HOUS Mere Oaks Cottage, Plough Hill, Potterhanworth
- iv) Application: 21/0293/HOUS School House, Nocton Road, Potterhanworth
- v) Application: 21/0211/VARCON Hanworth Country Park Station Road Potterhanworth

The Chair stated unless the any Councillors wanted to make an opinion known, the accepted process for planning permissions in Potterhanworth would be to not comment.

No councillor wished to make any comments – the Chair then stated the standard process would be adopted for these applications.

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20. Permission of Tree Works:

- i) Application: 21/0395/TCA The Old Vicarage, The Green, Nocton
- ii) Application: 21/0472/TCA 02 Potterhanworth Road, Nocton

The Chair stated that there was no Tree Protection Orders (TPO) on these trees and in her opinion as the Councillor with the planning portfolio she could not see any reason to object.

• Motion to agree the Council's position of 'No Comment' on the above tree applications was proposed by ClIr. McDonnell, seconded by ClIr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

Action by the Clerk – to response to the NKDC planning email to state the Council's opinion.

21. Annual Parish Meeting – to agree to hold the meeting on the 29 June 2021 at 7pm

The Chair wished to propose that the Annual Parish Meeting to be held the 29 June 2021 at 7pm. This would hopefully be after all the covid regulations and restrictions were relaxed, but that the Council should be minded to consider current government updates.

The Chair suggested that the Council may wish to consider inviting a member of the Planning Team to present how the planning regulations affect the Parish Council.

• Motion to agree the Chair's recommendation to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on the 29 June 2021 at 7pm was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.

22. Annual Meeting of the Parish Council – to agree to hold the meeting on Tuesday 04 May 2021 at 7pm by Zoom.

The Chair proposed that the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council could be held on Tuesday 04 May 2021 at 7pm by Zoom and that the Full Parish Council meeting would be held at 7.30pm on the same night. The Council discussed the proposal and felt that it was suitable to ensure it could go ahead before the current statutory permission for remote meetings ended.

- Motion to agree the Chair's recommendation of holding the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 04 May 2021 at 7pm was proposed by Cllr. Wilson, seconded by Cllr. Johnston-Davis and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- **23.** Permission for Local Councils to meet remotely update from the Clerk on the recent decision by the Government not to continue the permission for Full Council Meetings to be held remotely

The Chair stated that the Government had recently announced that they would not extending the statutory permission to allow for remote Council Meetings and while there was a legal challenge to the decision there was no indication when, or if, this decision would be made.

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24. Delegated scheme of authority for the Clerk – to consider the recommendation to approve the delegation of all permissible Council powers for decision making to the Clerk

The Chair asked the Clerk to go through his proposition of using a delegation of responsibility to the Clerk (as the Proper Officer of the Council) to allow the meeting of the Council to continue remotely.

The Clerk stated that recommendation is that the all the powers permitted to be delegated to the officer of the Council, would be delegated for a period of sixth months of until the Council meets face to face (whichever is sooner). The Council would then continue to meet on a monthly basis but the meeting would be 'Clerk Advisory Council Meetings'; rather than decisions being made by the Council, the Clerk would make the decisions but based wholly on the advice of the Council. The decisions that could not be delegated include (but not exclusive to) the Precept decision, hiring and firing of permanent staff, making any loan applications etc.

The Clerk stated that as long as the Council met three times face to face in the next twelve months then it would have met it's legal obligation under the Local Government Act.

The Council felt it was the best way forward and while it was a compromise to get around legislation, it would allow the Councillors and the members of the public to still participate in a safe manner while the Covid health issues are still apparent.

- Motion to agree the Clerk's recommendation to delegate all powers that the Council can delegate for a period of sixth months or until the Council meet face to face (whichever is sooner) was proposed by Cllr. McDonnell, seconded by Cllr. Faulkner and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.
- **25. Next Full Parish Meeting** to agree that the next Full Parish Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday 04 May 2021 at 7.30pm.

26. Questions from the Members of the Community:

Q - There was a question about the previously compiled and distributed Welcome Pack. They felt it was a very useful document for new residents and that they felt it was the responsibility of the Parish Council.

A – The Chair stated that she felt it was not the responsibility of the Parish Council as it was very difficult to ensure all the details were up to date, for it to be produced and distributed. She also felt that the detail in the packs was available through other sources.

Some residents stated that they would discuss the issue between themselves and then present options to the Council at the next meeting.

Q – There was a question to the RFO about the proposed new bank account and if the bank accepted cash.

A – The RFO stated that there was provision for cash to be deposited at a designated Post Office and that cheques could be sent to the Bank processing centre with a FREEPOST.

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Q – There was a question if the volunteer organising the new planters could use the cones in the Hub car park?

A – The Chair stated that the cones did not belong to the Council but she would ask if the cones in the Church garden could be used.

CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 20.45PM.

