

Hooe Parish Council

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Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Meeting of the 25th May 2023

Attendees: Cllr S. Crawhurst (SC), Cllr G. Kirk (GK), Cllr. D Carey, Cllr P. Yeeles (PY), Cllr. R. Clifton
B. Leonard (BL)

In attendance: Paul Frostick St Oswald's Church (PF)

28 members of the public present. Meeting opened at 6 pm

Public participation on matters on the agenda at the chairman's discretion. In accordance with Standing Orders 3(e-k), the session will last for no longer than 10 minutes with a person speaking for no longer than 2 minutes.

PF asked whether item 3 on the agenda is going to remain?. The Clerk informed the meeting the question cannot be legally answered until the formal Council meeting has been opened.

PF said that if it is still on the agenda then shame on the Council. PF said that Jack spoke to the Council previously as a parishioner and not as a church warden when he spoke, only when he made a report on behalf of the church.

PF stated as Parish Councillors you are in public office and as such should be able to take such questions and criticisms, it goes with the territory. If criticism is not allowed, democracy goes out the window. PF would ask the two members of the Council who put this item on the agenda to consider their position on the Council. PF stated that by placing this item on the agenda it has brought the whole Council into disrepute.

PF explained if this discussion does take place, and a letter is sent to me, then I will not answer it as Jack has my full backing. PF stated if a letter is indeed to be written, it should be an apology to Jack, myself and the whole of St. Oswald's congregation for bringing Jack's integrity into dispute.

A church warden reported they fully supported what Paul had said.

A resident asked when this item comes up, they would like to hear from each member of the Parish Council to hear their views.

End of public participation.

Business Transacted

1. **To receive apologies and reasons for absence** in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 S85 (3)

Apologies received from the chairman Ann Loyd. SC reported that he would be chairing the meeting in her absence.

2. **Disclosure of Interests**

Interests in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Parish Council code of conduct.
To receive councillors' declarations of interest regarding matters on the agenda and consider any written requests or dispensation as a result. Any changes to register of interests should be notified to the clerk.

None

Matters for Consideration and Resolution

3. To receive a motion from two councillors that the Parish Council shall write to Paul Frostick from St. Oswald's Church to request a replacement representative due to the existing representative failing to meet the acceptable levels of conduct required at a Parish Council meeting.

Statement made by Cllr Steve Crawhurst

I wish to inform the meeting that I put forward the motion and it was seconded by Cllr Paul Yeeles.

I have decided on this occasion to withdraw the motion and would like to explain briefly why the motion was put forward and why it is being withdrawn.

The motion was raised because over the last 15 months the behaviour at some of the Council meetings has been unacceptable and the approach of certain people has been impolite, intemperate and intimidatory, especially towards the Clerk and Chairman of the Parish. An instance of serious verbal abuse occurred last year, and a formal complaint was made to the church. No response was received from the church and no apology.

With this lack of action in mind, I was concerned that unless the matter regarding aggressive and intimidatory behaviour is not brought to the church's attention, the behaviour will not be moderated. The Parish Council has a Code of Conduct, rules and standards set out in both Standing Orders and other documentation and the Parish Council will enforce the rules if poor conduct occurs at future Council meetings.

By withdrawing the motion, I believe that the issue has been sufficiently aired as to the conduct expected at a Council meeting and we trust that in the future the conduct and discourse of all will be polite, less confrontational and follow Parish procedures and common courtesy.

4. To receive the Financial Report for the year end 31st March 2023.

SC reported the balance on the bank account for the year end 2022/23 was £74,326.96.

5. To receive the Internal Audit report and agree any actions required.

The Clerk reported the summary of the findings of the internal audit report that took place on Tuesday 23rd May 2023.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council did not display the elector's rights legal notice on a Parish Council's website for the 2021/22 accounts so there was a statutory breach. The Parish Council did not have a website at that time so was unable to comply with this statutory requirement.

The Clerk explained she was unable to put the last five years accounts on to the Parish Council's website as not all the information was available to the Clerk. The Clerk indicated she would need to contact the government external auditors to obtain copies of the accounts so they can be posted on the Parish Council's website before the next internal audit.

The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had been in breach of the law by issuing funding from a grants budget over a number of years without a due process in place that included an application form, setting criteria for selection, fairness and open for anyone to apply. The Clerk reported that a Grant's Policy must be in place before the next interim audit.

The Clerk is to update the risk assessments prior to the next internal audit.

The Clerk is to amend the figures to the asset register to submit to the external auditor.

Proposed by BL and seconded by PY. All agreed.

Resolved that the internal auditor's report be accepted, and the findings be implemented.

6. To consider and to approve the Annual governance statement for 2022/23.

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had met its statutory requirements under the Annual Governance Statement except for the failure to post the elector's rights legal notice on a website for the 2021/22 accounts.

Proposed by PY and seconded by GK. All agreed.

Resolved that the Parish Council accepts the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 as written.

7. To consider and approve the Accounting Statement for the year ending 31st March 2023 in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

The Clerk read out the figures stated in the Accounting Statement for the year ending 2022/23 and confirmed the figures had been checked and approved by the internal auditor on 23rd May 2023.

Proposed by BL and seconded by RC. All agreed.

Resolved that the Annual Accounting Statement be approved for 2022/23.

8. To review the Earmark Reserves and agree any actions required.

The Clerk reported to the meeting the position on the earmark funds known as projects at the year end 2022/23.

£14,762.64 is the figure held for the village hall donations and this amount must remain and be brought forward to the 2023/24 financial year.

£30,436.00 is the village hall fund project. The Parish Council agreed in January 2023 that £6,500 to be taken from this earmark budget to support the annual budget for 2023/24. The figure remaining is £23,936.00 to be carried forward to 2023/24 financial year.

£1,555.10 is the youth budget and must be brought forward to 2023/24 as this was a donation.

£295.84 is the remaining sum from the unpaid water bills earmark budget. All previous year's water bills are now paid, and the Clerk recommends the remaining figure is returned to the general reserves.

The new water supply installation earmark budget has insufficient funds to complete the project due to the high cost by Southeast Water to install a new water meter. The Clerk recommends the funds remaining in the pavilion refurbishment funds of £2,396.81 are transferred to the new water supply installation earmark budget for 2023/24 to cover the remaining costs.

£1,876.67 is allocated to the allotments earmark budget and the Clerk recommends this figure is brought forward to the 2023/24 to cover further work required to the allotments.

£1,025 remains allocated to the recreation ground's gates. All works agreed have been completed and the Clerk recommends the figure remaining is returned to the general reserves.

£286.73 is allocated for signage. The Clerk recommends the figure is brought forward to 2023/24.

Proposed by GK. Seconded by RC. All agreed.

Resolved that the earmark funds reported above be implemented for the financial year 2023/24.

The parish council meeting finished at 6.20pm

In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 all attendees of the meeting are hereby notified that the meeting will be recorded as an aide memoire for the clerk when compiling the minutes. The recordings are held securely and are deleted after the resolution that the minutes are a true and correct record. Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its committees or sub-committees will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present. A person or persons recording the parish meeting are reminded that the "Public Session" period may not be part of the formal meeting and that they should take legal advice for themselves as to their rights to make any recording during that period.