



MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Louise Hyde Vice Chairman: Stephen Mouser



Minutes of Merton Parish Council meeting held at 6.00pm on Tuesday 7th September 2021 at Thompson Village Hall.

Present: Cllr De Grey, Cllr Hyde (chair), Cllr Mouser (vice-chair), Cllr Roat and Cllr Wesley-Smith

Claire Prentice (clerk/RFO)

Cllr Cowen (District council)

4 members of public

26/21 Chairman's opening remarks

27/21 Elect village hall management committee members

Jayne Wesley-Smith and Stephen Mouser elected

Clerk to contact parishioner who previously applied for role of councillor. (Committee to co-opt)

28/21 To receive apologies and approve absences

Cllr Eagle (County Councillor)

29/21 To receive declarations of interest in any items to be discussed and grant any dispensation requests.

None, however clerk re-iterated that dispensation has been granted for Cllr De Grey in regard to ditches. This dispensation remains in place until May 2023. This in inline with the councils standing orders.

30/21 Public Participation. (max. 30 minutes)

Chair with council agreement moved public participation on flooding to item 33/21

Soggy notice on board was queried regarding a public enquiry for Pockthorpe Lane date 22nd-24th Feb. 2022.

Cllr Wesley-Smith responded to parishioner and will place a new laminated poster on the board.

Resident queried an issue regarding a gate near to where one councillor lives. They have seen a very large 4x4 going through there. They are also aware of motorbikes going through there as well.

Cllr De Grey made everyone aware that the Peddars Way Association erected that particular gate. Cllr De Grey has also seen that particular 4x4 with a young couple in as they were on private land and when someone went to stop them they drove around them and then went off. However they are having a number of issues with people picnicking etc. Cllr De Grey will put some signage up.

Cllr Wesley-Smith also commented that she has seen that vehicle. In January the gate had come off the hinges and she reported the issue to Norfolk County Council, which anyone can do.

Clerk received and circulated to councillors four queries from a resident not in attendance:-

1. One person has cleared his ditch by the bus shelter but he has NOT cleared the pipe that runs under the field entrance.
2. It goes without saying that the boards in the Hassock sluice need to be taken out now, before the bad weather starts, to prevent similar flooding to that which we saw last year.
3. There are two completely dead trees on the Green. One is an Oak tree and the other is the large Ash tree which as I pointed out a few years ago has fungus at the base. I would think, given its position and the possibility of Ash Dieback, it is in a dangerous condition.



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4. Finally, is it possible to prompt Highways to come back and re-sweep the roads to clear the numerous drifts of loose road chippings left after their resurfacing works.

Cllr De Grey responded in regard to item 3. With reference to the Oak tree she thought this had been addressed previously and was highways responsibility. In regard to the Ash tree it had been inspected with no need for further action.

31/21 To receive reports

Clerk report – circulated to councillors prior to meeting.

Cllr Cowen report – received by clerk prior to meeting

Breckland Council is starting to get back to a more normal way of working following the revamp of the offices in Dereham to facilitate an agile working environment whilst at the same time releasing accommodation that can be let to other public sector bodies such as the DWP who already occupy part of Elizabeth House thereby providing more of a one stop shop for residents who have a need to access council and related services

The past 15 months has been an unprecedented time for all concerned and I am delighted to report that unlike many local authorities across the country Breckland has been able to provide all front line services without a break, except for one or two local instances where covid infection caused a blip, and in fact we were able to enhance our range of services and provide additional help to residents and businesses alike through, for example, our market towns initiative, additional spring back grants and the green grants programme.

Looking ahead, we are trying to prepare budgets for the coming year but as of today we have just heard that the spending review is not due to be published until the end of October when the autumn budget is announced and thereafter there will be a few weeks of activity so that local authorities can assess the implications of the review. This is a very tight timeframe within which any local authority can finalise its own budget for agreement in February next year and I suspect that the proverbial candles will be burning at both ends to get us to a point that provides certainty for all.

32/21 To approve minutes of the meeting of council held on 4th May 2021

Approved

33/21 Flooding

Resident reported she still has concerns regarding flooding. The main issue she has is regarding the landowner not taking responsibility for his ditches. Foliage has been cleared but further work is required. The resident has now taken the issue to arbitration.

Another resident reported regarding workmen for a farmer who caused damage to the ditch outside their property and their hedge. The ditch has now been dug not as low as they like, however they have an issue as their neighbour has not addressed their ditch.

It was raised about Norfolk County Council being responsible for half the ditch under riparian law.

It was suggested that Cllr Eagle be contacted over the matter, being linked to Norfolk County Council.

a) Receive update and decide on any further action regarding the ditches located at Home Farm

Clerk to send letter to one landowner as only one item addressed on the previous list.

Chair to contact specified landowner and Cllr Eagle

b) Receive update and decide on any further action regarding the ditches located at Tottington Terrace

Cllr Wesley-Smith to contact flagship housing and copy in Cllr Eagle.



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- c) Receive update and decide on any further action regarding the ditches located at the green**
Cllr Wesley-Smith to contact flagship housing and copy in Cllr Eagle.
Situation to be monitored.
Clerk to request copy from Breckland council of correspondence.
- d) To discuss and decide on further action to be taken regarding flooding i.e. a review document, action plan etc.**
Flooding document to be posted online and reviewed regularly.

34/21 Highways

- a) To receive updates regarding potholes awaiting repairs and decide on any further action**
Chair to chase and forward list of outstanding issues to clerk.
- b) To receive updates regarding verges to be repaired and decide on any further action**
Chair to chase and forward list of outstanding issues to clerk.

35/21 Planning Matters

- a) To consider councils approach to planning applications**
No further action.
- b) To consider any planning applications**
None

36/21 Village Hall

- a) To discuss on action to be taken if unable to obtain 6 members**
No action taken as 6 members elected.
- b) To discuss and decide on access, risk assessments and safety of the hall**
No further action taken

37/21 Post box closure, to receive updates and decide on any further action

Clerk to send correspondence.

38/21 Bins, to discuss and decide on installation of bins within the village.

No further action to be taken.

39/21 ICO registration, to discuss and approve payment for registration.

To discuss at next meeting to allow councillors further time to familiarise themselves with ICO.

40/21 Mobile library, additional stop request to discuss and decide on any further action.

No further action.

41/21 Grass cutting maintenance, to discuss and decide on any further action.

Current invoice approved.

Clerk to obtain quotes for six cuts March-Oct and remove cuttings and present at next meeting.

42/21 Policies and procedures, to consider, review and adopt accordingly, as well as set next review dates.

- a) Training Policy**
- b) Grant Policy**
- c) Decision Policy**



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d) Complaints Policy

Approved

43/21 Finance: -

- a) **Appoint a councillor to check and sign reconciliations to bank statements at each meeting**
Cllr Mouser appointed
- b) **Agree bank reconciliations**

PC Current Account

Closing Balance as per bank statement 5 th August 2021		£2334.75
<u>Less</u> unrepresented cheques:		
100271 – Clerk salary and expenses		£174.23
Net Balance as at 5 th Aug. 2021:		£2160.52
The net balance reconciles to the receipts and payments account for the year as follows:-		
Opening Balance 1st April 2021:		£1618.77
Add receipts in year		£1100.00
Less payments in year		£558.25
Closing balance as at 5 th Aug 2021:		£2160.52

PC Reserve Account

Closing Balance as per bank statement 5 th Aug. 2021		£1683.26
<u>Less</u> unrepresented cheques:		
Net Balance as at 5 th Aug. 2021:		£1683.26
The net balance reconciles to the receipts and payments account for the year as follows:-		
Opening Balance 1st April 2021:		1683.22
Add receipts in year		£0.04
Less payments in year		£0.00
Closing balance as at 5 th Aug 2021:		£1683.26

Village Hall Project

Closing Balance as per bank statement 5 th August 2021		£3231.11
<u>Less</u> unrepresented cheques:		
Net Balance as at 5 th Aug. 2021:		£3231.11
The net balance reconciles to the receipts and payments account for the year as follows:-		
Opening Balance 1st April 2021:		£3231.11
Add receipts in year		£0.00
Less payments in year		£0.00



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	Closing balance as at 5 th Aug 2021:	£3231.11
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All approved, specified Cllr to sign at next meeting.

c) Payments since last meeting, to approve accordingly

PC Current Account

Date	Payee/Reason	Cheque No.	Amount	Signatories	Approval
29.05.21	Hall hire	BACS	10.00	C.Prentice J. Wesley-Smith	Approved

d) Outstanding payments, to approve accordingly

PC Current Account

Date	Payee/ Reason	Cheque No.	Amount	Signatories	Approval
07.09.21	Grass cutting	BACS	120.00	C.Prentice J. Wesley-Smith	Approved
07.09.21	Clerk salary + expenses	BACS	569.78	C.Prentice J. Wesley-Smith	Approved

e) Receipts since last meeting, to approve accordingly

PC Current Account

Date	Payee/ Reason	Cheque No.	Amount	Approval
	None			N/A

PC Reserve Account

Date	Payee/ Reason	Cheque No.	Amount	Approval
07.06.21	Interest	DC	0.04	Approved

Village Hall Project

Date	Payee/ Reason	Cheque No.	Amount	Approval
	None			N/A

- f) **Budget monitoring 1st and 2nd quarter, to discuss and decide on any action to be taken**
No action taken
- g) **Draft precept, to discuss and decide on any action to be taken**
Clerk to enquire about average costs for parishes.
Precept agreed of £2750 for 2022/23
- h) **Appointment of internal auditor for year end 2021/22**
Specified auditor appointed for virtual audit at a cost of £30

43/21 To discuss and confirm the meeting dates for 2022

- Tuesday 4th Jan
- Tuesday 8th March
- Tuesday 3rd May
- Tuesday 6th Sept.

Approved



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44/21 Employee Matters

- a) **To consider the passing of a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for item 44/21c-f on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of private and confidential information.**

Council resolved to close meeting as above at 8.17pm.

- b) **Probation period, to discuss and decide on action to be taken.**

Current clerk to remain in role

- c) **Contract review, to discuss and decide on action to be taken.**

Pay rise approved, to commence after probationary period at SCP 17.

- d) **Holiday request, to discuss and decide on action to be taken.**

Approved. Out of office response to go on emails with chair as contact for urgent enquiries as before.

- e) **Training request, to discuss and decide on action to be taken.**

Training approved at a cost of £25+VAT

- f) **SLCC request, to discuss and decide on action to be taken.**

Council resolved to pay a third of cost.

No public to admit.

Meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed by chair: _____

Date: _____