MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Merton Parish Council**

**held Tuesday 9th January 2024 at St Peter’s Church, Merton**.

**Present:** Cllr. Hyde, Chair, Cllr S Mouser, Cllr. Wesley-Smith, Cllr. de Grey and Jean Williams Parish Clerk/RFO.

There were no members of the public present.

**1 Welcome**.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

**2. To receive apologies and approve absences.**

None.

**3. To receive declarations of interest in any items to be discussed and grant any dispensation requests.**

None.

**4. Public Participation. Max 30 minutes.**

None

**5. To receive reports**

**Report of the County Councillor.**

County Councillor not present, no report received.

**Report of the District Councillor.**

District Councillor Cowen not present, no report received.

**Report of the Parish Clerk.**

The Parish Clerk stated that all relevant correspondence has been circulated to the Councillors as it arrived.

**6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 5th September 2023.**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed by all present with one amendment and signed by the Chairman.

**7. Matters arising from the Minutes**

Councillors requested that the village representative of Reclaim the Rain should be invited to send a report of the latest meeting and any relevant updates.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact resident representative.**

Councillor Mouser’s apologies for absence be noted in the minutes.

**ACTION: Clerk to note in the minutes.**

**8.To receive update on Reclaim the Rain.**

Village representative not present, see above item.

**9. To receive updates on Planning Matters.**

TRE/2024/0003/TCA. Pedlars, the Green, Merton. Councillors have no concerns about this application.

3PL/2023/1143/LB Merton Hall, Flat 2. Councillors have no concern about this application.

Anglian Water Services, Land Adjacent to the Pumping Station, Watton Road, Watton.

Councillors have no comments to make about this application

**ACTION: Clerk to respond to all Planning Comments**

**10. To discuss the Councillor Vacancy**

Councillors were disappointed that the current Councillor vacancy had not been publicised in the December issue of The Waylander.

Clerk agreed that this will be a permanent article each month until the vacancy is filled.

**ACTION: Clerk to include Councillor Vacancy in a monthly report in The Waylander**

**11. To discuss the Post Box**

This is still ongoing.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact Royal Mail again and write to Liz Truss**

**12. To discuss The Village Hall Bank Account.**

Barclays have recently closed the Village Hall bank account.

The clerk had received no notification that this would happen.

Bank statements are recording that post has been returned to the bank stating addressee is no longer at the address

After discussion, it was agreed that the bank should be contacted with a request that the account be reinstated.

It was also decided and agreed that the donors of the funds of the Village Hall would be contacted and offered the return of their donations.

Proposed by Cllr. Wesley-Smith, seconded by Cllr. Hyde, agreed by all.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact Barclays to arrange reinstatement of the Bank Account, and reinstate the address.**

**Donors will be contacted by letter to offer the return of their donations.**

**13. Barclays online Banking.**

Detailed discussion took place re: on line banking.

Cllr. Wesley-Smith is concerned that the Parish Clerk is not claiming her salary each month but allowing it to accumulate.

After a long discussion it was agreed that: the Clerk will forward her pay slips when she receives them.

When a salary payment is forwarded for approval the payment date will be 28th day of each month.

Emails requesting payment authorisation of, either salaries or invoices, will be headed with the amount and reason for payment, for ease of recognition by Councillors.

**ACTION: The Clerk to follow the requests of the authorising Councillors.**

**14. The Waylander and Parish Website**

Councillors voiced their discontent that there was no article from Merton Parish Council in the last issue of the Waylander and that the Councillor vacancy had not been advertised.

The Clerk explained that because there had not been a Parish Council Meeting that there were no recent events to report, and she was trying to avoid constant repetition.

Councillors felt that the repetition is needed and there should be an entry in the Waylander each month to keep residents involved with events.

Councillors are concerned that the village website is not being updated with information as required.

This is a training issue for the Clerk.

It was agreed that the website be handled by a webmaster for the next three months to end of March 2024.

The webmaster would be Kevin Bacon from Norfolk Association of Local Clerks. (NALC)

NALC will charge £41 for three months for their website services.

The Clerk will receive training from Kevin.

NALC offer a website service which costs £141.00 per year. If the Parish Council decided to use the services of a webmaster on a permanent basis, Cllr Wesley-Smith suggested that the clerk’s working hours could be reduced each month to fund the costs of a webmaster.

The Website situation would be reviewed in three months.

Proposed by Cllr Hyde, Seconded by Cllr. De Grey.

**ACTION: Clerk agreed to ensure that there is an inclusion is the Waylander magazine each month.**

**Clerk to contact Kevin Bacon of NALC and arrange for him to take over the website and request training.**

**15. To discuss and agree the Budget and Precept request for 2024/25**

The Clerk presented the Budget proposal for the forthcoming financial year and the suggested Precept request.

Councillors discussed the proposals and agreed the proposed Precept request of £3,500.00.

The rise of the Precept request is to ensure that there is a ringfenced contingency fund to make provision for the repair of the bus shelter roof.

Proposed by Cllr De Grey and seconded by Cllr Mouser, agreed by all.

**ACTION: Clerk to submit the precept request to the District Council.**

**16. To receive the Finance Report for September to January 2024**

The Clerk presented the finance report, which was agreed by all present.

Councillors agreed the recent pay claim awarded to all Parish Clerks.

 Opening Balance at 01/09/2023 £2,056.62

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| Payments made from September to November amounted to £ 322.00Income from the second tranche of the Precept £1,625.00Balance of the Account at 02/11/2023 £3,359.62**Outstanding payments not authorised to date**Clerks Salary June to October 2023 £ 647.45NALC £ 25.00Robert White £ 96.00 **Total £ 768.45****Payments due but not submitted for authorisation.**Nov 23 Salary Clerk £ 129.45Dec 23 Salary Clerk £ 129.45HMRC Nov 23 Clerk Tax £ 32.40HMRC Dec 23 Clerk Tax £ 32.40 **Total £ 323.70**  **Total Expenditure £1,092.15** **Total Balance remaining 9th January 2024 £2,267.74** **17. To agree the date of the next Parish Council Meeting.**The date of the next Parish Council Meeting was agreed by all present. It will be held on Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 6pm.**18. Any other relevant business not included in this Agenda**Cllr de Grey informed the Parish Council that there is a person sleeping in a tent by Sparrow Hill. Concerns were voiced for the safety of the person.**ACTION: Clerk will notify NCC & Breckland to ask for help.**The Clerk informed the Councillors that despite writing to WAVE giving them the historical information, she had received a letter stating that a debt management company would be employed to claim the debt. WAVE keep reiterating that the forms were never completed correctly.Cllrs advised the Clerk to respond asking WAVE to look at their correspondence, and inform then that this had been dealt with by a previous Chairman of the Parish Council.The meeting closed at 8:30pm    |  |
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**Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Chairperson**