

DRAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Monday 12 April 2021 **via a remote meeting platform at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllr A Mole - Chairman
Cllr M Billing
Cllr R Neale
Cllr A Turner
Mrs J Markham – Clerk
Absent: Cllr J Garnett

In attendance:
Cty Cllr R Heseltine

Public: 9

Before commencement of the formal business, the Chairman opened the meeting with a short silence to remember HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who died on 9 April 2021

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from Cllr Garnett; reasons for absence approved

2. Disclosure of Interests

Members were invited to disclose any interests (including any not already listed in the Register of Interests) relevant to the business of the meeting, and, in respect of a disclosable pecuniary interest (previously registered or not), to request dispensation pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct to participate in the business under discussion and vote on the matter.

Relevant Interests disclosed: None

Additional Interests disclosed: None.

3. Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 March 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 March 2021, together with the Clerk's report, for information, on matters arising, were taken as read, and the Minutes were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Scheme of Delegation

It was RESOLVED:

- (1) “THAT decisions taken by the Clerk since the date of the last meeting under the Scheme of Delegation dated 16 March 2020, as reported to Council and published on the Council’s website, be ratified.”
- (2) “THAT the Scheme of Delegation dated 16 March 2020 remain in force until such time as the Council should determine otherwise.”

5. Clerk’s Report

The Clerk’s Report on ongoing items of business was presented to the meeting.

The following matters were discussed and agreed:

- (i) Local Govt reorganisation – the two bids for new unitary authorities in North Yorkshire had been considered in detail outside the meeting. After discussion, the Clerk was asked to complete the online consultation expressing the Council’s support for the model proposed by the district councils on the basis that this potentially offered a closer democratic relationship with local communities and a more credible geographic division of the county area.
- (ii) As noted in the Scheme of Delegation, with the improved layout and bulb planting of the “memorial garden” on the village green, some additional planting was to be introduced near the bus stop during the coming season. Costed options for a replacement Jubilee Bench, to be funded with grant support received from the District Council’s Ward Representatives Scheme, were discussed. It was agreed to widen the options by researching comparable quotes for a stone-built bench, and in the meantime, to invite comments from residents by email. The item was deferred for decision to the next meeting.
- (iii) Dog waste bin on Roman road – the Clerk reported that a new dog bin on Height Lane could only be provided by the District Council in locations where need could be fully evidenced, following a month’s public signage and audit process. A local resident, present at the meeting, agreed to carry out the audit, and the Clerk was asked to consult further with the landowner accordingly.

6. Annual Parish Meeting 29 March 2021

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 29 March 2021 were received and noted.

7. Planning

- (i) The following matters were reported, for information:
- East Berwick House – application approved
 - Field House Farm - planning authority’s decision awaited
 - Croft House Farm - planning authority’s decision awaited
 - Railway site at Draughton Bottom - application refused under planning officers’ delegated powers
 - Housing development opposite Old Post Office – Inspector’s decision (on Appeal) awaited.
- (ii) 3 The Croft (Ref. 2021/22558/HH)
The planning application for a side extension to the property had been considered initially by online consultation. After discussion, it was agreed to make no comments to the planning authority.
- (iii) Land at Draughton Heights (Ref 2019/20400/FUL)
Cllr Neale reported that the application, deferred from the Planning Committee meeting held in March, had now been reconsidered at the meeting held that afternoon.
The Committee had been addressed by Cllr Neale on behalf of the Parish Council, and the Council’s continuing concerns had been highlighted. However, it seemed that the opportunity had not been taken to investigate the issues thoroughly, and the Committee had granted consent, with conditions, in line with officers’ recommendations.

The Council was not satisfied that the planning relationship between the parish and the District Council had functioned effectively in this instance, and it was agreed to send a complaint to the planning authority to pursue this within the context of the new planning protocol.

8. Renewable Energy Proposals

At the invitation of the Chairman, a local resident reported on next steps for the renewable energy project, following the church’s success in securing grant support for the costs of a feasibility study. When available for public consultation later in the year, this would be publicised in the village, possibly by means of a questionnaire and launch event. Regular progress reports would be made to the Parish Council as the project developed so that the Council could offer support where appropriate.

9. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21

The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had conducted his annual audit of the Council's financial records and procedures. It was reported that he had no matters to raise with the Council, that, in his view, the records and systems of internal control were adequate and effective, and that accounting information shown in the Annual Return had been correctly stated.

The Statement of Receipts and Payments 2020/21, as circulated to Members, was noted.

Taking the assurances of the Internal Auditor into account, it was RESOLVED:

- (1) "THAT the Annual Governance Statement in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21 be approved for signature by the Chairman and Clerk."
- (2) "THAT the Accounting Statements 2020/21, as signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, be approved for signature by the Chairman."
- (3) "THAT the Clerk be authorised to set the period for the exercise of public rights, and to publish information on the website, as required under the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities."

10. External Audit 2020/2021

The Clerk noted that, pursuant to s.9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, since neither gross income nor gross expenditure for the year of account ending 31 March 2020 exceeded £25000, the Council was eligible to certify itself as exempt from limited assurance review by external auditors. It was accordingly RESOLVED:

"THAT a Certificate of Exemption be completed, notifying the external auditor that during the financial year 2020/2021 the higher of the authority's gross income for the year or gross annual expenditure for the year did not exceed £25,000."

11. Register of Assets

The updated register of the Council's asset holdings, as circulated to Members, was reviewed and noted.

12.Risk Policy

The updated Risk Policy, as circulated to Members, was reviewed and confirmed.

13.Council IT Systems

The Clerk introduced proposals to improve the resilience and cost-effectiveness of IT systems for the Council.

It was RESOLVED:

“1. THAT a maintenance contract, costing £420 pa, be set up for the Council’s hardware and software accounts with Microworld Yorkshire Ltd and that the Clerk be authorised to sign documentation and arrange payment as necessary.”

“2. THAT a dedicated printer/scanner be procured for the Council, at a recommended cost of £149, that the Clerk be authorised to order the item for home installation and that the item be included within the annual maintenance contract for the Council’s IT systems.”

14.Code of Conduct

A new model Code of Conduct, as recommended by the Local Government Association and by the National Association of Local Councils, was received. The Clerk was asked to present the document for adoption at the next (Annual) meeting of the Council.

15.Consultations, Correspondence and Members’ Discussion Forum

Newsletters and emails circulated for information were noted, including a notice from bus operators concerning the summer season resumption of a limited Sunday bus service through the village.

16.Arrangements for next Meetings

It was agreed that the next (Annual) meeting would be held in the Village Hall on 17 May 2021, and meetings would continue to be held physically thereafter, subject to any further Government guidance and changes in legislation.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Chairman