

DRAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Monday 4 December 2023 in the Village Hall at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr R Binks - Chairman
Cllr B Davies
Cllr J Garnett (from item 8)
Cllr R Neale
Cllr S Petty
Cllr A Turner
Mrs J Markham – Clerk

In attendance: Ward Representative, North Yorkshire Council, Cllr R Foster

Public: 5

1. Apologies for Absence

Received from; reasons for absence approved.

2. Disclosure of Interests

Members were invited to disclose any interests (including any not already registered in the Register of Interests) relevant to the business of the meeting, and, in respect of a disclosable pecuniary interest (to be 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. Casual Vacancy

The resignation of Cllr Coupe, dated 26 September 2023, had been presented to the Council and was accepted.

The Clerk reported that the statutory period for local electors to request an election had expired in mid-October and that the casual vacancy could now be filled by the Council by co-option.

In line with the Council's Co-option Policy, notices had been published to invite expressions of interest in the role. It was noted that the Clerk, who was resigning from her position as an officer of the Council with

effect from 31 December, had expressed such an interest and that no other responses to the invitation had been received to date. After discussion, it was resolved to defer the decision to co-opt a member to the vacancy until the next meeting, being the first practicable opportunity, following the Clerk's vacation of her paid office.

4. Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 18 September 2023

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 September 2023 were taken as read, and the Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

5. Matters arising

The Clerk's report, for information, on matters arising from the meeting held on 18 September was received.

The Council's new computer had now been procured and was in use. It was noted that weed control treatment works to the side of the village green had now been completed, and contractors had also cleared bramble and weed growth within the wooded area and replanted. The contractor had commented, in response to a query raised by the Council at the last meeting, that the best way to repress future weed growth would be to mulch the site and encourage further re-planting as necessary. Members were also supplied with copies of further correspondence with Yorkshire Water concerning the disruptions caused by recent repair works to the road at the top of the village.

6. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's Report on ongoing items of business was discussed and noted.

Cllr Neale reported that work on the written chapters for the History Project was nearing completion. The focus would then move on to organising the archived photos. Villagers would need to be consulted in many cases, in order to identify people shown in older exhibits, and an open meeting could possibly be organised in the New Year to invite help for this process.

Cllr Foster reported that he would be looking further into the roll-out of rural broadband insofar as Draughton was concerned, and a report would be made to a future meeting.

7. 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 7 June 2021, as reported to Council and published on the Council’s website, be ratified.”
- (2) “THAT the Scheme of Delegation dated 7 June 2021 remain in force until such time as the Council should determine otherwise.”

8. Draughton Action to Zero (Climate Change Projects)

Cllr Neale and the Clerk updated members on progress being made on the village’s climate change projects, supported by the Parish Council.

Cllr Neale provided an update on the community project Draughton Action to Zero (DAZ). It was noted that consultants had started work on exploring options for connecting a local generator to Northern Powergrid’s networks. In this regard, Cllr Foster noted that North Yorkshire Council was engaging direct with senior contacts at National Powergrid and that support for the DAZ project would be specifically raised with them.

The church’s project was currently on hold, pending the outcome of work to install a new heating system at Holy Trinity. A grant application to the Shared Prosperity Fund to support further retrofitting works at the Village Hall was being pursued. If this proved to be unsuccessful, Cllr Foster offered to submit an application to the fund available to ward members to help take community projects forward. This was welcomed. The Clerk noted that North Yorkshire Council had launched its Nature Recovery Strategy for public consultation (in line with requirements introduced under the Environment Act 2021).

Actions taken by the Parish Council to date, including the replanting of the wooded area on the village green, the maintenance of the village verges, and recent discussions of tree planting options elsewhere in the parish, were relevant in terms of consideration of opportunities at the local level to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

9. Planning

The Clerk’s report on ongoing planning business was presented and noted.

The following matter was agreed as follows:

- Devonshire Estate – proposed spa extension– no comments to be made
- Leardene – proposed garden office – no objections to be recorded, but the observation, already made to the planning authority, as regards the visibility of the structure, to be re-emphasised.

10. Budget and Precept 2024/25

The draft Budget 2024/25 was received and discussed.

It was RESOLVED:

“THAT the draft Budget 2024/25, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes as an Appendix, be approved, and that it be used as the basis for setting the Parish Precept 2024/25 in order that sufficient funds be made available for budgeted expenditure, taking account of increased energy and salary costs, and also of the level of funds available as carried forward from previous financial years and with a view to managing any potential increase in local taxation, and that the Clerk be authorised to publicise the Budget and to complete and sign the precept form accordingly.”

11. Finance Matters

(i) The 2022/23 Salary Award for Local Council Clerks, as recommended by sector body NALC, had been circulated and was noted. The recommendations as regards the hourly rate due to the Clerk were accepted, and implementation of the award, with effect from 1 April 2023, was agreed.

It was RESOLVED:

1. “THAT the recommended NALC Salary Award for Local Council Clerks 2023/24 be adopted, that additional salary costs 2023/24 be included within the draft Budget 2023/24, and that any additional salary costs arising in respect of the current financial year be absorbed within existing budgetary provision.”

(ii) A request from the local branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau for an annual grant payment was received.

It was RESOLVED:

2. “THAT a donation of £50 be made to the North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre and that the Clerk be authorised to set up payment accordingly.”

(iii) The Clerk noted that an additional special edition of the village newsletter, to update residents on the DAZ project, could be required early in the New Year. The payment of printing costs for this were authorised.

12. Consultations, Correspondence and Members' Discussion Forum

Newsletters and emails circulated for information were noted, including a report from the Clerk on recent YLCA and JEB meetings. The next Craven branch meeting was to be held on 20 February on Zoom. The work of NALC in supporting the local council sector with net zero projects was also noted.

A revised timetable for the Sunday bus service through the village had been published, and was to be posted on the website and on the bus stop noticeboards.

13. Clerk to the Council

The resignation of the Clerk, dated 23 November 2023 and due to take effect from 31 December, had been presented to the Chairman on behalf of the Council and was accepted.

The Clerk referred to the decisions taken under the Scheme of Delegation, as ratified by the Council (Minute refers); it had been noted that a potential applicant for the role of Clerk to the Council had come forward in response to an informal notice inviting interest. Taking account of matters discussed at the informal members' briefing session held on 18 September, and at the discussion forum held on 3 October, Council considered proposals and recommendations for the appointment of a new Clerk.

Members agreed that there would be significant benefits for the Council in appointing a local candidate from the village, who would immediately bring to the role a detailed knowledge of both local issues and the local community. With this aim in mind as a preferred strategy for recruitment, it was agreed that a duly competitive and open process had been followed to date in advertising the post on an informal and local basis. It was accordingly RESOLVED:

1. "THAT the recruitment process (as initiated informally by the Clerk) for the appointment of a new clerk, resulting in the identification of a candidate from within the local community, be approved as an appropriate means of recruiting a suitable person to the role, and that

formal interview procedures be waived in respect of the known local applicant so identified.”

Reviewing the local applicant’s background and skills, Council decided that the applicant was suitably qualified by prior experience to discharge the authority’s functions as its Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer. The Clerk noted that the applicant was also prepared to train for the professional qualification as a local council clerk (CiLCA).

It was accordingly RESOLVED:

2. “THAT Mrs A Crewe be and she is hereby appointed as Clerk to the Council with effect from 2 January 2024.”
3. “THAT the costs incurred to date in setting up induction and professional training, and in acquiring other equipment and materials, as required in preparation for the effective date of appointment of the new clerk, be specifically ratified, and that the existing Clerk be authorised to draw up a new contract and set up handover arrangements as appropriate.”

14. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Council would be held in the Village Hall on: 15 January 2024 at 7pm

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Chairman