

MINUTES OF WEST DEREHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD AT WEST DEREHAM VILLAGE HALL at 7.30 pm

THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2013

PRESENT (6 Councillors):- Mrs Pam Bullas (PB), Mrs Claire Cann (CC) – Chairman, Mr Tom Foy (TF), Mrs Lorraine Hunt (LH), Ms Paula Kellingray (PK), Mrs Pam Walker (PW)

Recorder: Nick Cann (NC) (present to record the meeting and to assist PK with IT finances)

5 members of the public were in attendance

Papers presented to Councillors: Financial Management Report (cash flow spread sheet and notes to the accounts), expenditure (for approval), Glazewing Report

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and opened the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence.** Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Claire Page, in Australia.

2. **Declarations of Interest.** There were no declarations of interest from Councillors relating to any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held 5 September 2013.** The Chairman confirmed that all Councillors had seen the minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Council held 5 September 2013. These were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Reports.**
 - 4.1 **Chairman's Report.** Due to the absence of a Clerk the Chairman said she was combining her report with the Clerk's report at item 4.2 on the agenda.
 - 4.1.1 **Appointment of New Clerk.** From advertisements placed in the Lynn News, 9 applications had been received to date and holding replies issued. Adverts had been placed in the Village Pump and on the NALC website and the Chairman agreed to speak to Jane Scarrott concerning the cost of advertising on the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) website. She was authorised to agree to a cost up to £200, which would be met from within the 'Clerk's Expenses' cost centre.
 - 4.1.2 **Allotments Inspection.** The Parish Council had carried out an allotments inspection on 28 September. Richard French reported that there were two new tenants with half plots. Plots 6A, 6B and 8D remained vacant.
 - 4.1.3 **BT Phone Boxes.** The adoption or removal of the two vandalised phone boxes in the village remained unresolved. Every household had been asked for two months running via the leaflet drop whether they wished to keep the Church Road phone box as a "working" card phone but no replies had been received. It was agreed by Councillors that the process for the adoption of these boxes should now commence with an approach to BT and/ or Norfolk Borough Council.

4.1.4 Pear Technology. In 2011, a presentation had been given to the Council by Pear Technology relating to the computer mapping of the village. At this presentation the performance capabilities of the software had been demonstrated and costs outlined. (Note: the costs are listed at serial 5.2 of these minutes.) It had been agreed that this technology would be purchased. An initial task was to have been the mapping of the cemetery. However, no purchase action had been taken to date because the PC was waiting for Ann Howarth to survey the cemetery first. The Chairman said she had now met with a representative from Pear Technology. The firm was willing to visit and install the software. No charges would be levied this financial year and the cost would need to be included in next year's precept (see serial 5.2 below).

4.1.5 Village Handyman. An advertisement to find a new Village Handyman had now been placed in the Village Pump and in every village household through the leaflet drop.

4.2 Clerk's Report. The Parish Clerk's report was included at Item 4.1.

4.3 Police report. The PCSO had apologised for her non-attendance at the meeting due to annual leave and PK reported on her behalf. There had been a spate of thefts and anti-social behaviour activities in and around Stoke Ferry including thefts from sheds. Those with sheds and garages were advised to keep them locked at all times. Battery operated shed alarms were available from either the PCSO or Downham Police Station at a cost of £10.75 each and all households had been advised of this through the leaflet drop. PK said she had not yet addressed the complaint to police made at the last meeting which related to residents parking on the pavement along Ryston Road (leading to The Row). This was causing problems for pedestrians, especially those disabled, who were being forced to walk in the road. Hard standing was available for parking in St Andrew's Close and Freebridge should be approached concerning use of this location.

4.4 Village Hall Report. PK reported that bookings for the hall were being received and the Village Hall bar continued to be popular. 'Jemma B' was performing on 12 October and a "Bake-off" coffee morning in aid of breast cancer research would be held on 19 October. Repairs to the compound door and dishwasher had been actioned and it was hoped that the faulty thermostat in the main hall would soon be replaced without charge. The final cut of the Village Hall hedge before the onset of winter would take place on 6 October. A table tennis table was now in situ.

4.5 Glazewing report. Glazewing had sent their October report by e-mail covering the period from 18 August to date. No complaints had been received from villagers and no planning applications had been submitted during this period. In a discussion which followed relating to heavy lorries using the village, the collection of contracted beet collection vehicles had caused some problems. Although collections this year had concluded, local restrictions governing the use of these vehicles on minor country roads needed examining.

4.6 Broadband Report. PW gave an update. Karen O'Kane from the 'Better Broadband for Norfolk' project had been unable to attend the last meeting due to a prior engagement. She had stated that implementation of superfast broadband covering West Dereham would be completed by 30 June 2014. The Chairman gave details of a BBC news report several days earlier. The relevant Parliamentary Committee had castigated the Government for allowing BT to renege on its original claim to provide Broadband to all rural areas. PW said

that a village as small as West Dereham was easily overlooked. Provision of a relay/ re-broadcast mast had already been considered and the idea dispensed with. Councillors held a short discussion on other broadband options which might be available but concluded that waiting for confirmation from Karen O’Kane appeared to be the only realistic one.

5. **Finance.**

5.1 Accounts. Accounts for approval were submitted by PK and NC. NC provided Councillors with the monthly financial management report. At 30 September the half-year point had been reached. He indicated cash flow, percentage spend year to date (49.95%) and the predicted outcome at the end of year. The accounts were solvent. HMRC had paid the VAT rebate and he recommended submissions for recoveries of VAT to be sent to HMRC quarterly. Savings were being made currently since there was no payment of a Clerk’s salary and there was no Village Handyman to pay. Advertising costs for a new Clerk were being subsumed within the ‘Clerk’s Expenses’ cost centre. Invoices for approval were:

Payee	Net	VAT	IRS (PO)	NICs	Gross
CGM (grass cutting)	89.92	17.98			107.90
Anglia Water (cemetery)	15.55				15.55
Johnston Publishing (Lynn News)	176.35	35.27			211.62
NALC photocopying	32.80				32.80
Total	314.62	53.25			367.87

The above payments requiring authorisation were considered. Payments to CGM for grass cutting, to Anglia Water for water provision at the cemetery and to Johnston Publishing for advertising in the Lynn News for a new Parish Clerk (on 3, 6, 10 and 13 September) were approved. The payment to NALC was not yet approved. The Chairman said she had spoken to Jane Scarrott who believed this item related to the copying of minutes when she was still clerking for the PC but had started work at NALC. She would obtain a more detailed invoice from NALC. NALC was seeking to remove the burden of Data Registration Fees from Parish and Town Councils and PK had been asked to withhold the cheque payment for registration with the Information Commissioner’s Office (£35.00 approved in May for payment of these fees). It was agreed that, in the absence of further information, this cheque should now be sent.

5.2 Precept. The Chairman explained that it was already known from year to year what the Council “must have” in its precept but each year additional items could be added to improve the village. It was essential therefore to formulate a “wish list”. There follows the suggestions put forward by Councillors:

Pear Technology. This was mentioned earlier in the Chairman's report (see item 4.1). £1,000 was the cost for the mapping service to cover the parish area. The cost could be spread over 5 years at £213 pa. The annual maintenance/ technical support charge was £200.

Telephone Boxes. Mentioned at item 4.1. Should the two telephone boxes be retained then provision would need to be made for their upkeep.

Dog Waste Bins. Additional bins in the village for dog waste were suggested at Station Road junction with Ryston Road, at the bottom of Lime Kiln Road and near the cemetery (St Andrew's Walk). PK pointed out that dog waste continued to be placed in the rubbish bin at the bus shelter. It was agreed that a notice be placed here stating "Not for Dog Waste".

Cemetery and its Extension. The idea of planting bulbs in the cemetery extension, ideally in October, was discussed. Planting bulbs in clumps was advised and some types of flowers were considered. Various outlets to make such a purchase were considered. It was recommended by PK that planting be actioned now for 2014 since funds from the unused portion of the Handyman's salary were available for immediate use. Gates and pillars were required for the entrance. Funds should be made available to improve and maintain the cemetery and its extension. Hedging (a mix including bare-root planting) needed to be supplied and planted. A quote had been received @ £22.30 per linear metre, including rabbit guards and mulching. A pathway cut through the grass should be provided in the extension. This would cost £20-25 per cut. The spraying of weeds along the fence lines would need doing 4 times annually and this cost would be £28 per spraying. Cutting the existing hedge was £125 per cut. All prices needed VAT added but this was recoverable.

Water. Water at the allotments would be a very helpful addition for allotment holders.

Playing Field Equipment. PW said provision of play equipment at the playing field for the younger members of the village should be considered.

Village Green. The Chairman said that funds should be set aside for the purchase of the parcel of additional land, to be used as the "Village Green". (Note: This item has been considered at previous Council meetings.)

Accounting Services. The Chairman pointed out that the Parish Clerk administered his/ her own salary. This was considered to be inappropriate and use of an accountancy firm which included a payroll service might resolve the issue. NALC considered this was a service it might provide for all Parish Councils, in the fullness of time. Councillors agreed that a payroll service for one employee, paid monthly and with issue of a form P60 at the end of each year should be quoted for. The Chairman agreed to obtain this information from a local firm.

Election Funding. The Chairman said ring-fenced contingency funds were required in the Parish accounts to meet any possible future in-year election costs. PK said in 2013-14, £1,000 was available for just such an occurrence. It was recommended that £600 from reserves at the end of the current year be brought forward into FY 2014-15 as contingency for election costs. NC said the end of year balance sheet should record 'reserved' (ring-fenced) funds and 'unreserved' funds (funds which were available for general use). Funds put aside for purchase of a 'Village Green' and cemetery maintenance should also be held within the 'Reserved Funding' area.

Professional Fees. The Chairman advised of the need to have funding available to pay for professional fees when required e.g. legal fees.

Training of Councillors. The current sum of £100 was considered to be too small. PK recommended that this be increased to £250.

Village Hall Grant. A £1,000 grant had been provided for the Village Hall for the last 2 years. It was recommended that this be increased to £1,250 for 2014-15.

There were no further suggestions from Councillors or from the public and the Chairman moved the meeting on to the next item on the agenda.

5.3 Responsible Finance Officer (RFO). The Chairman read out the relevant passage from Arnold Baker's 'Local Council Administration' concerning Responsible Finance Officers (RFO) in local Councils. Normally the RFO was the Clerk and one member of the Council "may be the Treasurer" (Local Government Act 1972 s.112 (5)). The authority to appoint was the Parish Council and, since there was no longer a RFO, this appointment should be filled. PK volunteered her services as RFO and her appointment was approved nem con.

6. Farm Business Tenancy. The Parish Council had received two tenders in sealed envelopes. Both parties had previously read the contract which now included the requirement for a 2 metre buffer zone. The sealed bids were opened at the meeting and made available to Councillors individually. The highest bid was accepted by Councillors and the Chairman agreed to speak to both parties the next morning, 4 October.

7. Business Continuity Plan (BCP). The Chairman thanked LH for the amendments she had provided for the BCP. She then briefed Councillors on additional amendments to be considered. All the suggested amendments were approved and the BCP would now be included as one of the parish Council's official policy documents.

8. Data Protection Plan (DPP). The Chairman recommended that NALC's model policy for a DPP should be adopted by West Dereham Parish Council, inserting the name 'West Dereham' where appropriate. This was agreed. PB undertook to customise the document and re-issue it to all Councillors.

9. Planning Matters: Wood store at Hill House Farm, Bath Road (13/00809/F) The Chairman said that in the absence of any response to the PC's second letter to the Borough Council, she had spoken to Chris Fry, the Planning Officer. He said that the application was being remade to Norfolk County Council (NCC) due to concerns over the extent of the proposed operations relating to wood processing and recycling transfer. The Environmental Health Officer had visited Hill House Farm/ CGM to discuss machinery noise levels but the application was then transferred to NCC where the contact for information was Mr Ralph Cox. Views on this new application from West Dereham would be required but he had not received any copies of historical correspondence that the Borough Council had received from the PC. Councillors agreed that copies of these letters should be sent to NCC directly without waiting to be asked for comments on a new application.

10. Correspondence.

- Mayoral Awards. The Chairman read out details of an email received concerning the Mayor's Civic Awards for Voluntary Service. Nominations were required by 17 January 2014. This would be followed up at the next Councillors' discussion group.
- NALC. NALC's annual report had been received. NALC would be holding its Autumn Seminar for 2013 on Wednesday 6 November from 10.00 am until 3.00 pm. PB agreed to attend. PK said she would confirm her own availability later.
- War Memorial Trust. A leaflet had been received concerning war memorials on their 100th anniversary from the War Memorial Trust. This would be passed to Graeme Pressley for his information and action.
- Swaffham Event for Town and County Councillors. An event was being held at Swaffham on 22 October relating to Town and County Councils. LH agreed to represent West Dereham PC at this event.

- Norfolk County Council - 'Putting People First'. LH outlined NCC's consultation – 'Putting People First' – which was aimed at making savings of £189 m over the next 3 years. The Chairman agreed to review the proposals on receipt of a hard copy and would report back to the PC.

11. **Further Reports and Items for Inclusion on Future Agenda.**

11.1 Allotment Gates. Replacement allotment gates should be placed on the next agenda.

11.2 Hilgay Road Property beside Allotments. Comments had been made to the PC concerning a large wooden structure which had been erected in the garden of a property beside the allotments. There were maximum height and proximity to boundary restrictions in force. It was agreed that criteria governing such structures should be confirmed with the Planning Department.

11.3 Pathways Meeting. PK said she had attended a Pathways meeting held at West Dereham Village Hall during the afternoon of Wednesday 18 September. This had been organised by NCC.

11.4 Walking Pathways. PB said that walking pathways had been mentioned at the last meeting. (Note: Volunteers to walk local footpaths and study maps held at the Norfolk Records Office were being sought for a University of East Anglia research project. The Parish Council and the Heritage Group had expressed interest in this project.) A date was still required when Councillors would walk the footpaths of the Parish.

11.5 Contract for the new Clerk. Thought should now be given to reviewing the contract for the Parish Clerk prior to his/ her appointment. The contract should include appraisal details.

11.6 Risk Assessment – Cemetery. Since the Parish Council was responsible for the cemetery, a risk assessment should be carried out.

11.7 Remembrance Day. The next village drop should include details of Remembrance Day and proposals for a West Dereham sub branch of the RBL.

12. **Open Forum**. The meeting was adjourned and opened to the floor for general comment.

12.1 Mary Darton of Willow Farm had reported a conversation she had with representatives from NCC who were present in the village earlier in the week (on 1 October) conducting checks on footpaths and their signage.

Closure. The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.25 pm.

Chairman's signature

Date