

Minutes of the meeting of Welney Parish Council

held on Tuesday 5th November 2019 at 7.30 pm

in the William Martshall Centre, Hurn Drove, Welney PE14 9SD

Present: Cllr LOVEDAY – Chair
Cllr A Giles – Vice Chair (apologies)
Cllr M BARKER
Cllr D LOWRY
Cllr D HARVEY (apologies)
Cllr K GOODGER
Cllr B STEELE

Also present: Nichola Cowell (minutes)
Peter Cox
3 members of the public

Requests by public:

- Improved lighting in the car park
- Removal of bollards in car park that are causing an obstruction to people trying to park

19/20.64 CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting.

The Chair proposed that in the absence of the Temporary Clerk the minutes were taken by Nichola Cowell. This was agreed unanimously.

19/20.65 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from:

Cllr Adam Giles

Cllr D Harvey

19/20.66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

19/20.67 TO RECEIVE VERBAL (OR WRITTEN) REPORTS FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

As the District Councillor did not attend the meeting no report was received.

19/20.68 TO RECEIVE VERBAL (OR WRITTEN) REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

As the County Councillor did not attend the meeting no report was received.

**19/20.69 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF WELNEY PARTISH COUNCIL MEETING DATED
8TH OCTOBER 2019**

As the Chair had received the minutes of the previous meeting 30 mins before the start of this meeting and the Councillors had not received their minutes this point was deferred to the next meeting of Welney Parish Council on Tuesday 3rd December 2019.

Action: Agenda item for 3rd December 2019.

19/20.70 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS –MATTERS ARISING

Chair's Announcements

19/20.70.1 The Chair confirmed that he had a meeting with the EA responsible for the work being done to the Bedford Barrier Bank who had informed him that the project would now take 6 years in total and cost a revised amount of £35m. The scheme has been redesigned as it is now necessary to install concrete and aluminium flood barriers on the bridge which would mean the bridge closing for 6 weeks in Summer 2020. The Chair registered that the residents of Welney would not be happy with this proposal. There will be an open meeting to discuss this in January 2020 as the government agencies are now in purdah prior to the election. Cllr Goodger suggested that Welney Parish Council have a meeting with the Environment Agency & Local Authority to discuss emerging issues. This was agreed unanimously. The Chair confirmed he had spoken to the EA and the contractor who had agreed to put in steps and rail so residents could access the River Delph Bank.

Action: Clerk to arrange meeting with Environment Agency and Local Authority

19/20.70.2 The Chair informed Councillors that he had donated the large poppy to be used at the Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service and suggested that Councillors make a private donation to the British Legion if they wished to do so.

Matters Arising

19/20.70.3 The Chair confirmed that at present the William Marshall Centre does not have a management committee but despite this there was a need to address the outstanding Health and Safety issues and create a Health and Safety Management protocol. The Chair proposed that Cllr Barker and Cllr Lowry develop and manage the Health and Safety Monitoring Plan. This was agreed by Councillors. It was also agreed that Councillors would meet at the William Marshall Centre on a Sunday to go through the action plan.

Action: Cllr Barker and Cllr Lowry to develop Health and Safety Monitoring Plan.

Councillors to meet at William Marshall Centre to discuss

19/20.70.4 The Chair confirmed that the mandates for the new cheque signing signatories have been completed. There was discussion about future electronic v manual cheque signing procedures.

It was unanimously agreed that this should be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Cheque signing procedures as agenda item for next Parish Council meeting on 3rd December

19/20.70.5 There had been one application received for the caretaker role.

19/20.70.6 There was discussion about the role of Bookings Clerk for the William Marshall Centre as currently Cllr Roger Giles was dealing with bookings informally and issued receipts but was concerned as previously there had been no booking forms or procedure. Cllrs Lowry and Steele volunteered to jointly take over this role . Councillors agreed to this proposal.

19/20.70.7 The Chair confirmed that the latest quote for the cost of the street light upgrade was £2096.20 excl VAT. A copy of the quotation was circulated.

19/20.70.8 Cllr Goodger proposed that Chair's Announcements be removed from future agenda. The Chair confirmed that Cllr Adam Giles had a meeting with the Clerk to discuss a revision to the format of the Parish Council Agenda and had proposed that the Parish Council adopt a format similar to the agenda used by Somersham Parish Council. (Copy of Somersham Parish Council Agenda circulated). There was also concern that certain items requested by the Chair had not been included in the current agenda and there was confusion over which version of the agenda should be used at the meeting as there were at least 2 circulating. It was agreed that the matter of agenda and minutes should be resolved and improved working practices put into place.

Action: Chair to discuss agenda and working practices with Clerk

19/20/71 Councillor Training

Councillors who had attended the New Councillor Training session said how useful they had found it. One of the things that came out of the training was the usefulness of the 10 minute public participation slot at the start of Parish Council meetings. Councillors thought this should continue as it gave the public an opportunity to feel included by the Parish Council and also kept councillors up to date with arising issues as they could be flagged up by the public and dealt with quickly or placed on the agenda for future Parish Council meetings. There was concern at the small number of public attending the meetings and it was felt that the Parish Council should encourage better participation.

Action: Allow public to ask questions in the 10 minute slot without pre-booking

19/20.72 Finance

As the minutes of the meeting dated 9th October 2019 had not been received by the Chair in a timely manner and had not been received by any of the Councillors this item could not go ahead .

19/20.73 Planning Matters

There was concern that a number of planning notifications had been missed as they had not been brought to the attention of Parish Councillors through Parish Council Meetings. It was agreed that this should be resolved. There was general concern that the local authority would register "no response from Welney Parish Council" as Councillors had not had the opportunity to provide any feedback on at least 3 recent applications.

Action: Clerk to ensure all current planning applications are included on meeting agenda.

19/20.74 CORRESPONDENCE – LETTER FROM MR A. CARTER.

A copy of Mr Alan Carter's letter was circulated. The Chair was concerned that the letter had not been responded to in a timely manner as it had been received some 3-4 months previously. Mr Carter was concerned about trees on the Parish Council side of the playing field adjoining his land

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which he considered to be a hazard and needed to be removed. The Chair proposed that he have a meeting on site with Mr Carter and that the Parish Council should seek 3 quotations for the removal of the trees.

**Action: Clerk to write to Mr Carter in response to his letter and give an update of actions taken
Chair to meet with Mr Carter on site;
Parish Council to request 3 quotations from various local companies for tree removal.**

There being no further business the public meeting closed at 8.25

Private and Confidential – for the attention of the Parish Councillors and Clerk only

Report from Financial Investigation Team

Team members:

Peter Cox

Peter Gardiner

Cllr Adam Giles

Peter Cox was in attendance and brought Councillors up to date with recent activities. The team:

- Wrote to the Police Officer leading the police investigation on 18/9 requesting the documents that were required to the meeting with the Kings Lynn police;
- Have still not received the AGARs held by the external auditor;
- Are missing bank statements, cheque book records and booking records;
- Are in possession of fraudulent invoices and cheques (a copy of a fraudulent invoice was circulated);
- Have been informed by the investigating Police Officer that theft can only be proven if money leaves the Parish Council's bank account and can be traced to the offender's bank account but there was evidence of forged signatures and of transactions not being recorded in meeting minutes which contravenes Financial Standing Orders;
- Need to read the Welney Parish Council slot meters at the old Village Hall and were trying to get permission from the environment Agency to enter the building;
- Confirmed that there were a lot of issues in the accounts that needed attention. An example of this is that the monies embezzled had not been included in the annual accounts which is incorrect;
- Are concerned that Clerks are regularly appointing external auditors and feel that this should be done by the Parish Council;
- Recommend that the Parish Council and the William Marshall Trustees have separate and dedicated bank accounts and that there should not be a crossover of financial payments from one to the other. There needed to be an agreed protocol for Parish Council and Trustee transactions. An example of this is where 2 different utility bills have been paid, one by the Trustees and the other by the Parish council;
- Confirmed that Cllr Adam Giles will be copied on all written communications

Recommendations

- There is a need for the Councillors to attend a session on financial management
- All Parish Councillors should have private email addresses

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Action: All Parish Councillors to ensure they had their own private email address registered before the next meeting