

**Minutes of the Meeting of Freethorpe Parish Council held on Monday 15th June
2020 at 7.45pm remotely on Zoom**

Present: Nick Spencer (Chairman)
Paul Bacon
Michael Blake
Janet Church
David Lake
Linda Turner
Catherine Moore, Interim Parish Clerk

Also present: District Councillor Grant Nurden, County Councillor Brian Iles and five members of the public

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence. The Chairman introduced Catherine Moore, Interim Parish Clerk, who was working with the Council to bring the administration up to date as well as assisting with recruitment.

2. Public Forum

a) Public

John Fleetwood, Tree Warden, reported that most tree wardens were staying at home at present. There would be three big projects for next year, including the Old Airfield at Rackheath. The Junior Tree Wardens had a 'Plant Freethorpe' scheme where each household would be offered a tree, which would be planted by the children if they wished. John noted that he was getting a lot of referrals on matters which should sit with Broadland District Council. He noted that he had not heard from the church about their issue, Janet noted that this related to a copper beech which needed inspecting – John agreed to take a look.

ACTION: JF / JC

The funding for the Junior Tree Wardens had not yet been received, Grant Nurden agreed to look into the reason for the delay.

ACTION: GN

A member of the public reported that the Methodist Church had requested a highways road sign pointing to the church. Brian Iles agreed to look into this at the County Council.

ACTION: BI

b) County Councillor

Brian Iles reported that the world was in an unprecedented situation where very different working methods were being used. Staff at County and District councils were overstretched. There were issues with County Farms which were being dealt with at the moment, and work on the roads continued. Brian asked that people get in touch if they needed assistance. There was a £13M deficit in the budget for next year, and it was not yet clear how this would be resolved – it was like to have an impact on precepts.

District Councillor

Grant Nurden reported that Broadland District Council had set up an Emergency Committee to deal with delegated roles of other decision making committees. However this had not been required, and successful virtual meetings had been held. Charging for pre-application advice had been put on hold until April 2021. The website contained information for businesses and residents regarding support during Covid-19. The Early Help Hub was also available for assistance. A Community Heroes scheme had been set up to recognise people who had gone above and beyond during Covid-19, and nominations were welcomed. Information would continue to be forwarded to the Parish Council.

3. Declaration of Interest for items on the agenda

There were none. The Chairman reminded Councillors that they needed to submit their Register of Interests forms to Broadland District Council as soon as possible.

ACTION: ALL

4. Adopt Model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The latest model Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were presented and it was **agreed** to adopt these.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 20th January and 12th February 2020

The minutes of the meetings were **agreed** as an accurate record and would be signed by the Chairman.

6. Matters Arising

a) Wickhampton Sign

David Lake reported that the sign was still up but was rotting badly, although it was not an immediate danger. It looked to be beyond repair. The cost of replacement had been estimated at £3K - £4K, and the Council had wished to look at other companies for competitive prices. The Clerk was asked to contact Cantley Parish Council to check who worked on theirs.

ACTION: Clerk

b) Second SAM2 Sign

The Clerk reported that 50% funding to the value of £1,708.50 had been awarded by the Parish Partnership Scheme, and NCC had confirmed that this could be drawn down still. The Clerk was asked to check whether there was any time limit on this.

ACTION: Clerk

It was **agreed** to go ahead with this purchase once the financial matters had been concluded.

7. Clerks Report

The Clerk's report was presented. It was noted that there had been a historic practice of the Village Hall giving funds to the Council to make a purchase, so that the Council could reclaim the VAT. The Clerk noted that this was not legal and should not continue.

It was noted that the play equipment installed at the village hall had been partly funded (£3,902) by the village hall to purchase the Rota Glide, although the remaining equipment had been purchased by grant funding or Section 106 money. The Council and Village Hall needed to determine who would retain ownership of the play equipment for the purposes of insurance, maintenance and inspection (with an operational inspection by a trained individual required every month for insurance purposes). It was **agreed** that this needed further thought on the financial implications before either party agreed, however the Clerk did note that the VAT claim could not be submitted until this had been settled, as £780.40 could not be reclaimed if the remaining equipment was gifted to the Village Hall by the Council. If the Council retained the equipment, the money from the Village Hall could be treated as a grant and the full £3,869.14 of VAT could be reclaimed.

ACTION: NS/DL

It was noted that a picnic bench had been purchased for £706.80 including VAT, with a reimbursement of £589 from the Village Hall on the assumption that the Parish Council could reclaim the VAT at £117.80. This was not legal. It was **agreed** not to ask the Village Hall to repay the VAT sum.

The Council noted that it had £4,301.19 of Community Infrastructure Levy money which had to be spent on infrastructure projects. The first tranche would expire in October 2022.

It was noted that there was £4,100.82 of VAT to be reclaimed across three financial years, although depending on the decision on ownership of the play equipment, there was potentially another £780.40 to reclaim. The Clerk would make the claim for 2017/18 as soon as possible, with the remainder waiting for the resolution of the play equipment issue. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was noted that the Clerk was working with David Lake to register the Council for recycling credits, which had never been claimed, and that the tonnages had been collated. The registration application was with Norfolk County Council, and the Clerk was waiting for confirmation of how many years they would allow a claim for. It was noted that Whites were not collecting paper banks at the moment. **ACTION: Clerk**

A question was asked about whether a replacement cheque should be raised for the Royal British Legion, it was confirmed that this had been covered by the Chairman so was not required.

The Clerk noted that the Council was required to register with the Information Commissioner Office at a cost of £35 per year. **ACTION: Clerk**

8. Finance

a) Payments

It was **agreed** to pay the following:-

Community Action Suffolk	Insurance	£444.36
PKF Littlejohn	Audit Fee 2018/19	£576.00
Norfolk ALC	Subscription	£194.45
Indigo Waste	Glass Recycling	£32.40
Norse Commercial Services	Grounds Maintenance 2019 (2nd payment)	£993.22
Norse Commercial Services	Grounds Maintenance 2020 (1 st payment)	£1,042.87

b) Status of 2018/19 and 2019/20 Accounts

The Clerk reported that she had brought three years worth of accounts up to date, and presented the accounting statements. It was **agreed** to have both 2018/19 and 2019/20 internal audited, due to the Public Interest Report on the Council. The Clerk noted that due to this, the Council would be subject to external audit, when under normal circumstances it would have been exempt. **ACTION: Clerk**

c) Appointment of Internal Auditor

The Clerk noted that due to the likelihood of greater scrutiny by the external auditors, as well as the complicated VAT situation, she recommended a full policy and process audit rather than just the finances, from an experienced Clerk. It was **agreed** to appoint Pauline James to carry out the two years of audits.

d) Update on Reclaim for VAT, S106 and Recycling Credits

The application for the Section 106 money had been submitted to Broadland and was in process. The VAT and recycling credits had been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

9. Correspondence

a) Street Naming

Broadland District Council had invited the Parish Council to submit suggestions for the naming of the new development off Palmers Lane. Councillors were asked to submit their suggestions to the Clerk by Friday 19th June, and it was **agreed** that the final decision would be delegated to the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

ACTION: NS/DL

10. Planning

None.

11. Other Matters

a) Recruitment of Parish Clerk

A draft advert and job description was circulated. It was **agreed** to adopt the job description, and **agreed** to advertise for a Clerk for 4 hours per week on SCP13 to SCP17. The Clerk suggested that applications could be received until Friday 17th July 2020, with sifting at the meeting on Monday 20th July 2020, interviews to take place, recommendations from the interview panel at the August meeting, with a view to the new Clerk beginning on 1st September 2020. This timeline was **agreed**. The Clerk noted that those who had expressed an interest would be sent a copy of the advert, and it would be advertised locally, on the website, at Norfolk ALC and Norfolk PTS, and through any other appropriate mediums. The Clerk was asked to circulate a copy of the advert to Councillors. **ACTION: Clerk**

b) Website and Web Address

The Clerk noted that it had been a requirement since 2015 for the Council to publish certain data on a website, which had not been done for some time. The Clerk had set up a simple website on HugoFox, which was a free content management system, however the Council would need to purchase a web address. It was **agreed** to purchase www.freethorpeparishcouncil.org at a cost of around £80 for 5 years. The website would be published as soon as possible. **ACTION: Clerk**

12. Reports from Parish Councillors

It was confirmed that crime statistics could now be accessed online.

It was noted that the phone box was filling up with books, and a notice had been put up asking for a hold on donations.

It was **agreed** to publicly acknowledge the hard work of Hannah at the shop during Covid-19, and suggested that she should be nominated for the Broadland Community Heroes awards.

It was reported that the notice board had been removed, it was due to be relocated onto a wall but this had not been done. It was **agreed** that Nick Spencer and Linda Turner would discuss this with the householder. **ACTION: NS/LT**

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be Monday 20th July 2020, 7.45pm at Freethorpe Village Hall or via Zoom, depending on government guidance at the time.

14. Exclusion of the Press and Public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to consider the following item of business:

It was **agreed** to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting due to sensitive staffing matters to be discussed.

It was **agreed** to write to the previous Clerk asking him to reimburse the Council for two Standing Orders paid after he had left the Council. Further action points, including councillor training, were agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

CHAIRMAN