**Downham West Parish Council**

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held Monday, 23rd October 2023 at 7.00pm in Room 3, Methodist Church,**

**Paradise Road**

Present: Chairman Cllr R Pegg

Vice Chairman Cllr C Swaine

Councillors Cllr F Daymond

Cllr J Fox

Borough Councillors Cllr C Rose

Cllr V Spikings

Parish Clerk Mrs S Porter

Member(s) of Public 0

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from County Cllr C Dawson (prior commitment).

Cllr J Doyle did not attend the meeting.

1. **Declarations of interest and requests for dispensation**

**69.1. Request for dispensation**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, had submitted a Dispensation under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 to the Clerk to speak on Item 74.4.1 in regards to the planning application 23/00879/F, Appletree Cottage, The Lane, Salters Lode, as the applicants were friends of his. This would enable him to participate in discussions, but not vote, appertaining to the letter received from their Agent, William H Brown. This was put to the Council.

**Proposed – Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine Seconded – Cllr Fox**

**That the Council delegates the power to the Parish Clerk to grant a dispensation to Cllr Pegg in order to allow him to participate in the discussion of the business in Item 74.4.1. The power rests with the relevant authority under section 33(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and the basis is set out under section 33(2)(a).**

**For – 3 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1 (Dispensation Request)**

There were no declarations of interest and no further requests for dispensation.

1. **Approval of the minutes of the Council meeting**

**Proposed – Chairman, Cllr Pegg Seconded – Cllr Daymond**

**That the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday, 11th September 2023 (Items 58-67) are approved and signed as a true and accurate record.**

**All in favour**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, duly signed and dated the minutes of the meeting.

**PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, adjourned the meeting at 7.06pm.

**Reports**

**County Councillor**

County Cllr Dawson had reported items to the Council by email since the last Parish Council meeting as follows:

*14.09.2023 RNAA Norfolk Farming Scholars Competition*

*25.09.2023 Verges & Hedges update*

*29.09.2023 County Deal key points*

*30.09.2023 Norfolk County Council Cabinet budget papers & Government update UK net zero*

*02.10.2023 New Task & Finish Group Highways – Clerks to attend meeting*

*13.10.2023 Household Support Fund winter support*

*18.10.2023 £2,500 grants available for community tree projects*

**Borough Councillors**

Borough Cllr Rose had submitted a written report prior to the meeting as follows:

*The BCKL&WN discussed, at last Thursday’s Full Council meeting, various current issues, the main being the forward plan. What received most discussion was the proposal to have a separate Town Council, with the BCKL&WN becoming a district, with no cost implications being outlined. The other main issue was the Guildhall refurbishment which had uncovered medieval floor boards, together with the Town’s deal board.*

*Another issue which came up, but at the Regeneration and Development Panel meeting, was that of traffic congestion and the need for adequate roads and transport infrastructure due to the forthcoming developments around the A10 and other places.*

*I have been elected to the Police Scrutiny Sub Panel that meets at County Hall. The next Police Priority Setting Panel meeting was taking place on Tuesday, 19th October 2023 at 7.00pm in the Downham Market Town Hall. A Vice Chair for this Panel had now been elected.*

*Provision and lack of dentistry was now to be taken into serious consideration to see what can be done and perhaps introduce a local training centre.*

*I attended a recent meeting of Friends of the Earth, by invitation, which was to discuss keeping warm this winter. A BCKL&WN Officer attended and had been most helpful. The BCKL&WN has various help mechanisms to assist the disadvantaged this winter and help with the cost of living. There is to be a ‘beat your bills’ roadshow and anyone interested in hosting should contact Jacob.Medlock@west-norfolk.gov.uk. There is a benefits calculator which residents can use to ensure they are getting benefits that they are entitled to. The warm spaces initiative is to be reinstated, although few took advantage of it previously, possibly because of personal reasons or because some village halls didn’t have enough volunteers or funding to take part.*

Borough Cllr Spikings reported that the BCKL&WN was currently dealing with flooding issues, following the recent flash floods throughout West Norfolk.

**Public Participation**

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

The Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine, wished to speak as a resident concerning the loss of broadband for several days due to the green cabinet on the A1122 recently being hit and damaged by a vehicle. He confirmed this was a frequent occurrence, and added protection for the cabinet should be considered by Openreach to avoid the loss of broadband in the future when it was hit again. He had contacted County Cllr Dawson regarding this matter who confirmed that Openreach was treating this as an urgent case but advised that the delay was due to a Traffic Management Order needing to be obtained and approved by Highways.

A short discussion took place and Councillors agreed that delays of over a week without internet access was unacceptable, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable people whose digital devices were a lifeline.

It was agreed for the Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine, to contact Ofcom regarding this matter.

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, resumed the meeting at 7.16pm.

1. **Finance**
   1. **Bank Reconciliation**

The Clerk had circulated the bank reconciliations, period ending September 2023, current bank account statements and finance summary with the agenda. The bank balances were as follows:

**September 2023**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Bank Reconciliation** | **Community Account (£)** | **Business Account (£)** |  | Reconciliation **Community Account (£)** | |  | Reconciliation **Business Account (£)** | |
| Bank Statement Start Balances | 302.88 | 6,395.74 |  | Bank Statement **01.09.2023** | 302.88 |  | Bank Statement **01.09.2023** | 6,395.74 |
| **Total Opening Bank Balances** |  | **6,698.62** |  | Receipts | 500.00 |  | Receipts | 18.03 |
|  |  |  |  | Payments Cleared | - 384.84 |  | Payments Cleared | - 500.00 |
| Unpresented Payments B/F | - | - |  | Bank Statement **30.09.2023** | 418.04 |  | Bank Statement **30.09.2023** | 5,913.77 |
| Unpresented Receipts B/F | - | - |  | Unpresented Payments |  |  | Unpresented Payments |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Opening Balances** | **302.88** | **6,395.74** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Total Opening Balances** |  | **6,698.62** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Receipts | 500.00 | 18.03 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Payments | - 384.84 | - 500.00 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bank Statement Close Balances | 418.04 | 5,913.77 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Closing Bank Balances** |  | **6,331.81** |  |  | - |  |  | - |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unpresented Payments | - | - |  | Unpresented Receipts |  |  | Unpresented Receipts |  |
| Unpresented Receipts | - | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | - |  |  | - |
| **Council Closing Balances** | **418.04** | **5,913.77** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Council Total Closing Balances** |  | **6,331.81** |  | **Council Closing Balance** | **418.04** |  | **Council Closing Balance** | **5,913.77** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Council Total Closing Balances** | **6,331.81** |
|  | | |
| **Earmarked Funds** | | |
| Operating Costs (2 Months) | | 1,750.00 |
| Election Costs | | 1,000.00 |
| Speed Sign Maintenance | | 500.00 |
| Bus Shelter (fund building for new structure) | | - |
| Transparency Fund Grant | | 112.24 |
| S137 Grants | | 100.00 |
| CIL | | 228.00 |
|  | |  |
|  | |  |  | Council Total Closing Balances | **6,331.81** |  | |  |
| **Total Earmarked Reserves** | | **3,690.24** |  | Council Total Earmarked Reserves | **3,690.24** | Council Remaining Available Precept | | **2,641.57** |

* 1. **Section 137 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972**
     1. **Royal British Legion Remembrance Wreath**

A short discussion took place and Councillors agreed a donation of £25.00 should be made, with the possibility of increasing the donation by £5.00 next year.

**Proposed – Cllr Fox Seconded – Chairman, Cllr Pegg**

**That the Council purchases a poppy wreath for £25.00 from the Downham Market & District Branch Royal British Legion under S137(1) LGA 1972 and that Cllr Swaine lays the wreath at the Salter’s Lode War Memorial on behalf of the Council.**

**All in favour**

The Chairman would purchase a poppy wreath from the Royal British Legion Downham branch and the Clerk would forward payment to them.

* 1. **Approval of finances and payments to be made**

The Clerk had circulated the payments and receipts made since the last meeting and presented the late bills to the meeting:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Payee** | **Description** | **Transaction** | **Net £** | **VAT £** | **Gross £** | **Receipt £** |
| 19.09.2023 | N Power | Street Lighting Supply Aug 2023 | DD | 16.60 | 0.83 | 17.43 | 0.00 |
| 18.10.2023 | N Power | Street Lighting Supply Aug 2023 | DD | 24.54 | 1.23 | 25.77 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | Holly Landscapes | War Mem/Bus Shelter Clean Aug | BACS | 44.56 | 8.91 | 53.47 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | K&M Lighting Services | Street Lighting Maintenance Sep | BACS | 5.13 | 1.03 | 6.16 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | DM Methodist Church | Room Hire 11.09.2023 | BACS | 14.00 | 0.00 | 14.00 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | Clerk | Salary Sep 2023 | BACS | 200.88 | 0.00 | 200.88 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | HMRC | Employer PAYE/NI Sep 2023 | BACS | 50.20 | 0.00 | 50.20 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | Holly Landscapes | War Mem/Bus Shelter Clean Sep | BACS | 44.56 | 8.91 | 53.47 | 0.00 |
| To be paid | K&M Lighting Services | Street Lighting Maintenance Oct | BACS | 5.13 | 1.03 | 6.16 | 0.00 |
| **Totals** | | | | **405.60** | **21.93** | **427.53** | **0.00** |

**Proposed – Vice Chairman, Cllr Swaine Seconded – Cllr Fox**

**That the payment of bills are approved in accordance with the schedule and the receipts are noted.**

**All in favour**

1. **2024 meeting dates**

The meeting dates were agreed as follows:

January 22

February -

March 18 Annual Parish Meeting & Ordinary Council Meeting

April -

May 20 Annual Meeting (must be held within 14 days of elections)

June -

July 22

August -

September 30

October -

November 18 (Includes Budget Meeting)

December -

The Clerk reported that she had already sought prior confirmation from the Methodist Church that these dates were available. A copy of the meeting dates would be placed on the website.

1. **Written reports (as listed on the agenda) regarding Councillor issues and village matters**
   1. **BCKL&WN funding scheme for defibrillators (closing date 31st October 2023)**

The Clerk reported that an application for £1,000 funding towards a defibrillator at the Salter’s Lode Lock enclosure had been submitted to the Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) and this had been circulated to Councillors prior to the agenda. However, NCF had since responded to confirm that written permission would be required from the Middle Level Commissioners to place the unit on their land.

The Clerk would email the Navigation Officer as a matter of urgency to obtain this.

The Clerk further reported that the Council was not permitted to apply for a second defibrillator and plans to place one on the Factory Shop would need to be deferred at this time. It was hoped that this funding scheme would take place again in the future, when the Clerk could then apply for that one.

* 1. **Damage to bus shelter window pane**

The Chairman reported that the side window pane of the bus shelter opposite Waterman’s Way, A1122, had been completely smashed through, although it was felt this was likely to have been caused by a large stone hitting it from a passing vehicle as opposed to vandalism.

It was unknown which company had supplied the bus shelter.

The Clerk would contact the Highways Engineer, Mr A Wallace, to investigate whether he knew which company to contact for a replacement pane.

1. **Planning Applications and Notices of Decision**
   1. **Planning applications**
      1. **23/01622/AG – Poplar Farm, Lady Drove, Barroway Drove – Prior Notification: Erection of Grain Store**

Information only – comments cannot be made.

* 1. **Planning decisions**

No planning decisions had been received from the BCKL&WN.

* 1. **Late planning applications and notices of decision**

No late planning applications or decisions had been received from the BCKL&WN.

* 1. **Planning enforcements, appeals and other notifications**
     1. **Letter from William H Brown, Planning Consultant, regarding an update on the planning application 23/00879/F – Appletree Cottage, The Lane, Salters Lode – Retrospective change of use of annexe to create independent new home and associated works to create residential curtilage (part retrospective)**

The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, had received a resolution for a dispensation to speak on this item.

A letter from William H Brown had been submitted to the Clerk and this had been circulated prior to and with the agenda. The Chairman, Cllr Pegg, reported that the planning application had been refused by the BCKL&WN, despite the Parish Council’s recommendation to approve it.

William H Brown reported that because the Council had supported the application, but not provided any planning reasons to accompany this, the BCKL&WN had not been obligated to take the views of the Parish Council. In light of this, William H Brown was requesting that the Parish Council submit its reasons of support.

A discussion took place and Councillors felt that whilst there was no objection to the planning application, no accompanying comments should be made.

The Clerk would inform William H Brown of the Council’s decision.

1. **General correspondence**
   1. **For Action/Information**
      1. **Norfolk D-Day 80th Anniversary beacons event**

Norfolk ALC had sent information regarding the Norfolk D-Day 80th Anniversary in June 2024 enquiring that Councils give consideration to lighting a beacon to commemorate this historic event. This had been circulated by the Clerk prior to the agenda.

A short discussion took place and it was felt that as the Council had no land to place a beacon on and insufficient finances to carry this out, it could not be approved. It was felt that Downham Market Town Council would likely be celebrating this event and that residents of this parish could attend theirs.

* 1. **Late correspondence**

No late correspondence had been received.

1. **Reports from Outside Bodies**
   1. **Downham Market & Downham West Joint Burial Board**
      1. **Meeting held with Mr P Farrow, Mapus-Smith & Lemmon LLP**

Cllr Fox reported that he, Cllr Pegg and the Clerk had held an informal meeting on Wednesday, 13th September 2023 to discuss the administration and loan requirements for the restoration of Cemetery House. The Clerk had since visited the site with Mr Farrow to establish the refurbishment necessities.

Cllr Fox, Chairman of the Downham Market & Downham West Joint Burial Board, provided the following Board report:

The Joint Burial Board met on Wednesday, 18th October 2023. The meeting started at Rouses Lane Cemetery. The Rouses Lane Cemetery was inspected:

* Two lifeless trees have been removed from the non-conformist side of the Rouses Lane Cemetery and will be replaced by a single oak tree.
* It appears that some horses have again broken through the fence to the west of the Cemetery. The fence will be repaired.
* It was felt that the grass needs only to be cut on a fortnightly (rather than weekly) schedule during the spring/summer. This should reduce the maintenance costs and will be trialled.

The meeting moved to King’s Walk and Churchside Cemeteries, which were inspected:

* The “Conservation” areas in both cemeteries are in need of checking by the contractor as some parts are becoming excessively overgrown. This should be cut on a biannual basis.
* Again, it was felt that the grass areas on these two cemeteries need only be cut fortnightly during the spring/summer.
* There is now a sign on the entrance to Churchside Cemetery informing the public that there are War Graves within this area.

The remainder of the meeting was held at the Administrators office:

* Burial Fees: We set our fees following the lead from the Borough Council. For the 2024-25 year the Borough will retain their current fees. It was therefore agreed that the Joint Burial Board will also retain the current fees for the coming year.
* The accounts for 2022-23 were presented and accepted.
* The precepts for 2024-25 will also remain as for 2023-24.
* It was agreed, following an enquiry from a third party, that the approved minutes and account return of the Burial Board will be published on the Board’s website.
* The Cemetery House renovation plans are moving forward with quotations being received so that the application for a loan from the Levelling Up Department at the Treasury can be progressed. It has been realised that if the renovations are simply to bring the property up to the current energy efficiency requirements these requirements are likely to change within a few years and therefore more will have to be spent to attain the new requirements. If, however, a fuller renovation is done then the requirements will be met for a greater period of time. This would mean that rather than a £30,000 loan over a 5 year repayment plan, a £50,000 loan over 10 years would be more beneficial.
  1. **Hundred Acre Charity**

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

1. **To record the date and time of the next Full Council meeting**

The next meeting of the Council would be taking place on Monday, 27th November 2023 at 7.00pm in Room 3, Methodist Church, Paradise Road.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.09pm.