

Lartington Parish Council

Minutes of General Meeting held on January 8th 2019

Present

Mr. Campion, Mrs Parsons Munn, Mrs Cross, Mr Crawford, Mrs Stephenson. Mr Jerred (Clerk).

01. Recording of the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting by enquiring whether anyone present intended to make a recording of the meeting. No one had such an intention.

02. Apologies

The clerk reported that Mrs Hinchliffe had submitted an apology. It was unanimously resolved that this be accepted and approved.

03. Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

04. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on November 13th were read and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting.

05. Matters Arising

- a. Condition of B6277 in the area of Deepdale Bridge. The clerk reported that he had received a note from Cllr. Bell that this matter had been logged. It was noted that there was a sign up highlighting the "Temporary" road surface and it was hoped that this indicated that the area would be resurfaced at the conclusion of the present work.
- b. The Aqueduct. The clerk reported that Bryan Harris had arranged a meeting with representatives of the estate, to be held on January 16th, to which the Chair and himself had been invited. It appeared that the estate had accepted responsibility for the structure.
- c. Installation of Speedvisor. The Clerk reported that he had written to DCC asking when this was going to be used. He reported that the DCC Officer originally responsible for the project and changed roles and felt that this may explain the hiatus.
- d. Mounting Block at North Gill – the clerk reported that he had spoken to DCC Planning Dept. about this and the Planning Officer had agreed to check whether it needed either planning or highways permission.
- e. Lartington Hall Gates – the clerk reported that he had received a note from Stephen Reed and John Byers indicating their willingness to meet with us and requesting possible dates. The Chair briefly restated our concerns regarding rationale, colour, access issues for residents living within the curtilage of the gates and the attitude of a Council Officer and it was then agreed that we seek to arrange a meeting for a forthcoming Monday or Thursday, which appeared to be convenient for most members.
- f. Cotherstone Methodist Hall – the clerk reported that there was a new Treasurer, Jean Ambrose, who had made herself known to us. Arrangements appeared to be continuing largely as before.

06. Items of Urgent Business

There were no matters raised.

07. Principal Correspondence

- a. Various emails routinely circulated
- b. Bowes Museum – advertisement for current First World War Exhibition

08. Statement of Accounts

The clerk reported that there was £1412.13 in the current account and £368.81 in the Deposit Account.

09. Accounts to be paid

Hall Hire	£15
Stamps	£15.95

10. Precept for financial year beginning April 2019

The clerk reported that he had received the usual precept documentation from DCC. It appeared that our Tax Base had risen from 64.8 to 65.6. Our precept request of £1500 for the present year had resulted in a Council Tax Band D charge of £23.15 and a “standstill” charge would raise £1518 in the forthcoming year.

The clerk gave a presentation of the projected accounts for the current financial year, highlighting that income had exceeded expenditure by over £200 and that projected reserves of c £1700 were very comfortable and should not be allowed to increase further. The only items of expenditure exceeding £100 were insurance and the clerk’s salary. He reported that the latter had last been properly reviewed in 2015 and that there was a real danger that when the time came to appoint a new clerk, the Council could find itself facing a significant increase in salary expenditure whilst unable to raise the precept commensurately. He reminded members that the clerk’s contract was for 100 hours per annum at £8 per hour and that the minimum salary recommended by NALC would rise to £9.77 in April 2019, a figure that the Council would need to match or exceed when seeking to appoint a new clerk. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk’s salary be raised to £10 per hour, an annual salary of £1000

Other expenses were then reviewed and it was agreed that there were likely to be no exceptional expenses in the forthcoming year. It was also agreed that whilst no allowance was made for the replacement of the few items owned by the Council, the reserves were more than adequate to deal with any problems which might arise.

Further discussion centred on the Council Tax increases that were likely to be imposed by DCC and Durham Police. It was agreed that these were likely to be significant.

In closing discussion, the Chair noted a reluctance to impose any increase on residents and that outgoing figures for the present year and projections for the forthcoming one were such that we could raise the same precept demand as in the current year. This was unanimously agreed without the need for a vote.

11. Co-option of Councillor

It was again agreed to defer this to the next meeting. Mr Crawford reported that he believed that there was a resident who might be interested in joining the council and agreed to follow this up.

12. Adoption of Standing Orders

Mrs Cross pointed out that all members of the Council should be present for the discussion of this matter and it was agreed to defer this to the next meeting.

13. Footpath and Highway Issues

Mrs Parsons Munn commented on the condition of a small part of the footpath through Deepdale. It was agreed that this be referred to the DCC Footpaths Officer.

14. Planning Matters

North Gill – the clerk reported that there was an application to convert two redundant barns into three holiday cottages and for the change of use of another to equestrian purposes. It was felt that whilst the proposals were satisfactory, there was a potential hazard when horse-riders accessed the highway at a point where the traffic is generally light but often travelling quickly. It was agreed that the clerk be asked to arrange a site visit for the forthcoming weekend.

15. Date of Future Meetings

March 12th 2019 May 14th July 9th