

**Lartington Parish Council**  
**Minutes of Meeting held on January 13th 2015**

**Present**

Mrs. Parsons Munn, Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Stephenson, Mr. Whetstone, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Campion and Mrs. Hinchliffe. Mr Jerred (Clerk).

The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to Mrs Hinchliffe, who signed her acceptance of office on joining the council.

**01. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on November 11th were read and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting.

**02. Matters Arising**

**Heart of Teesdale – A Green Heart for Lartington**

The Clerk reported that, after careful consideration of our request to find an alternative venue for the summative talk, Archeoenvironment had reluctantly decided to withdraw from the project. In the absence of alternative tenders, the project has been cancelled.

**03. Items of Urgent Business**

Safer Homes Awareness Training – the clerk explained that this was a joint Police/Fire Brigade initiative that might prove worthwhile. It was agreed that we invite the Co-ordinator to the Annual Parish Meeting.

**04. Principal Correspondence**

**a. Newsletters** received from CPRE and War Memorials Trust

**b. Flytipping** – a major initiative is being launched. A poster and press campaign is being launched and there are proposals for Parish Council's to work with DCC on joint funding of cameras, although this is likely to be too expensive.

**c. Alcohol Strategy Refresh Event, February 6<sup>th</sup>** – received

**d. Various emails** – routinely circulated.

**05. Statement of Accounts/Precept**

The clerk reported presented a detailed statement of the current financial situation. He reported that there was £485.17 in the Current Account with a VAT reclaim for £380.63 submitted and £367.55 in the Deposit Account.

He presented a detailed statement of the accounts to date with a sensible projection for the forthcoming year. A small variation in the tax base indicated that a “stand still” Band D Council Tax Charge of £20.07 would result in a precept income of £1274.15, sufficient to cover known expenses for the forthcoming year. He explained, however, that members needed to bear in mind recurring and unpredictable costs such as the replenishment of defibrillator accessories and election expenses.

After a careful discussion which took into consideration the substantial increase demanded of Council Tax payers last year and the possibility of a government imposed cap on future increases, it was decided that the Band D Council Tax charge should

remain at £20.07 but that the financial pressures facing the council be clearly articulated in a future newsletter.

#### **06. Accounts to be paid**

Hall Hire        £15

HMRC            £40    (Carried forward from previous meeting)

#### **07. Review of Standing Orders and Recording of Meetings**

The Chair opened discussion by raising her concerns regarding the new rules and regulations that freely permitted the recording of meeting and subsequent dissemination via social media. Such dissemination lay outside our control and could be subject to editing and omissions that might misrepresent the true course of the meeting. She questioned whether the council should have a policy whereby meetings should be recorded in order to ensure that an accurate record of verbal proceedings was kept. A careful discussion then took place and it was agreed that the standing orders be amended to reflect the new regulations but stating that the council was under no obligation to provide either power or equipment to anyone exercising the right to record. It was agreed that the recording of meetings might be desirable in certain situations but that there might be issues of cost and the long-term storage of any recordings. It was also recognized that a smartphone or tablet computer may be able to make a simple recording at little cost and the clerk was instructed to research this further.

The Clerk then explained that there were other changes needed to our Standing Orders and which needed considering:

##### a. Electronic Communication of Meeting Notices

He explained that the law was changing to reflect the reality that many councils routinely circulated information by email. Although the absolute right to a physical notice of meeting, minutes and other papers remained in place, those members who wished to receive such information by email could do so – although this request needed to be made in writing! It was agreed that the Standing Orders be amended to reflect this and that forms were to be completed by those members who wished to receive email communications.

##### b. Electronic Payment of Bills

The clerk explained that it was now lawful for councils to pay bills by internet banking rather than a cheque authorized by two signatories. As Responsible Financial Officer he outlined the checks and balances inherent in the current system and asked that payment by cheque be continued. This was agreed.

##### c. Acceptance of Apologies and recording in minutes

The clerk outlined his concerns that our current method of recording absences in meetings was inadequate. Continuous absence from meetings for six months should automatically lead to disqualification **unless those absences were properly explained, accepted and approved by resolution of the council.** It was agreed that this procedure be followed in the future.

The clerk agreed to amend the Standing Orders in the light of these decisions and to agenda them for approval at the next meeting.

### **08. Footpath Issues**

The clerk reported that the P3Grant for work at Cat castle had now been received and paid.

He reported that he had contacted Elaine Crow regarding our concerns for footpaths in Deepdale and Pecknall. Unfortunately, Elaine is currently absent from work on compassionate grounds but Emma Ashton Wickes had offered to meet with us to discuss a possible P3 application. It was agreed that this be pursued.

### **09. Speedwatch**

The clerk reported that another Speedwatch exercise had been held last month, with 3 advisory letters being issued to offending drivers. He had emphasized to the PCSO that these exercises need to be conducted at peak times and that this is something we would wish to pursue in coming months.

It was agreed the situation be monitored.

### **10. Proposed Cotherstone Neighbourhood Area**

The clerk reported that Cotherstone PC had formally applied to be designated a Neighbourhood Area but that he had no further information.

Mr. Hammond commented on the challenges, particularly of cost and time, presented by Neighbourhood Planning and emphasized that a Neighbourhood Plan was not appropriate for a council as small as ours.

### **11. Dates of forthcoming meetings**

March 10th

May 5th

July 14th

Sept 8th

Nov. 10th

Mr. Whetstone left the meeting.

### **12. Planning Matters**

Gresham Cottage – the clerk reported that an application had been made for the erection of a simple wooden shed to the front of this property. It was agreed that no objection be raised to this.