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Office opening hours.
Monday to Friday 0900-1200

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Heckington Parish Council held on Monday 2 September 2024 at 7.00pm in the Parish Council Chambers, St Andrews Street, Heckington.

1. To resolve to appoint an Acting Chair

Councillor Spencer proposed an amendment to the agenda, suggesting that an Acting Chair be elected before proceeding with the public forum. Members agreed.

Councillor Garlick proposed that Councillor Spencer stand as Acting Chair, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Atkinson and the proposal was passed by resolution of the council.

Public Forum

There were 19 parishioners present.

A parishioner said that she had spent over three hours reviewing the 23/24 accounts and she found a lot of spending that could not be justified. She has now sent her findings to the external auditor, and they have stated that they are prepared to accept her submission despite it being after the deadline for the public rights period. It will be added to her initial complaint relating to the purchase of the land at Star Fen. This has been circulated to members by the acting clerk.

She added that she is in disbelief at the wasteful nature of the spending of the Parish Council as a corporate body. She said that this rests with the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer; she should have ensured controls were in place.

She also wanted to add that the polling cards had been distributed by NK despite the number of candidates not having yet been determined.

Action: Acting Clerk to raise a query with Electoral Services at North Kesteven District Council

Another parishioner asked whether the Parish Council had given any thought to the production of a leaflet about the parish poll on 19 September 2024 relating to the purchase of the land at Star Fen. Members had already agreed to produce a leaflet.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that any associated costs could be ratified at the September Parish Council meeting.

Another parishioner added that a lot of people do not use Facebook and posting to noticeboards is insufficient; a parishioner added that you must be mobile to get to a noticeboard. He asked that the Parish Council do not fall short of communication.

Delivery of the leaflet was discussed, and it was suggested that Royal Mail or a distribution company is used along with a professional printing company.

A parishioner asked for the following information to be included in the leaflet; the exact location of the land, how much money has been spent and information about further spending.

A parishioner said that he had also reviewed the 23/24 accounts and was bewildered at the purchase of sundry items like tea, coffee and hand-cream and key-cutting in Sleaford, incurring mileage expenses, when Donaldsons offer this service in the village. He also queried the purchase of diesel and its use. Members suggested that 500 litres is perhaps the minimum order for delivery.

The same parishioner added that he would like the parish council to have an independent audit of the accounts. He also suggested a forensic/police audit of the accounts. The acting chair, Councillor Spencer said that an interim internal audit is on the draft agenda for the September Parish Council meeting.

A parishioner said that the chair received an allowance of £65 per month for expenses incurred in the role of chair. The chair does not need to submit expenses claims and it is tax free. This equates to £780 per year. Another parishioner added that she thought the roles were voluntary and the acting clerk explained that parish councillors are not volunteers per se but they are elected to a public office.

A parishioner added that the clerk may be wrongly being held responsible for mismanagement of finances as the parish council had previously agreed to give the chair and vice-chair delegated spending powers. A parishioner went on to explain the role of the clerk and responsible financial officer.

Councillor Bell added that she had discovered the delegation of those powers in historic minutes which is why the item had been added to the agenda for the extraordinary meeting in June 2024.

A parishioner added that the parish council should have a finance committee. The acting chair, Councillor Spencer said that this item is on the draft agenda for the September Parish Council meeting.

A parishioner noted an error on the agenda for the extraordinary meeting of the parish council. The Acting Clerk apologised for the error and thanked the parishioner for bringing this to her attention.

2. Councillors Present

Councillor Spencer, Acting Chair
Councillor Atkinson
Councillor Bell
Councillor Garlick
Councillor Thorpe
Councillor Stanley

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Wright. The reasons for her absence were noted and accepted.

4. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensation in accordance with the Localism Act 2011

None.

5. Staffing

i. To resolve to appoint a staffing committee

Councillor Garlick proposed **the appointment of a staffing committee on the understanding that membership of the committee can be changed, if required, after the upcoming by-election.** Councillor Spencer proposed an extension to state that **the item is added to the October meeting of the Parish Council for review of membership.** The extension was accepted, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and the proposal was passed by resolution of the council.

Staffing committee members appointed are Councillors Bell, Garlick, Spencer, Stanley and Thorpe.

ii. To resolve to approve term of reference for the staffing committee

Members went through the terms of reference point by point.

Purpose:

The purpose of the staffing committee is to oversee the organisation, employment, management and terms and conditions of employment of the council and to make appropriate recommendations to council for ratification.

Membership & Organisation:

- The committee's duties, as set out in these terms of reference, are defined and agreed at a ~~full~~ meeting of the parish council, which may vote, at any time, to modify, remove or increase the committee's terms of reference.
- The committee shall be comprised of at least three councillors to be considered quorate.
- The committee shall meet as and when required but at least twice a year as a minimum.
- Membership to the committee shall be open to all councillors and shall be agreed and approved at a ~~full~~ meeting of the parish council.

- ~~• There shall be two named councillors to act as substitutes to ensure all meetings are quorate.~~

Council members discussed the bullet point above. The acting chair, Councillor Spencer proposed that this remain unchanged to ensure staffing committee meetings are quorate, it was seconded by Councillor Atkinson, but the motion was not carried. The bullet point will be duly removed from the terms of reference.

- All members of the committee must agree to attend designated training sessions.
- Meetings will be open to the public (but due to the confidential nature of staffing matters, the meeting may be immediately moved into closed session).
- ~~• Annually, the staffing committee shall elect from its number a chair and vice-chair.~~

The acting chair, Councillor Spencer proposed that the bullet point above be changed to, '*The staffing committee shall elect a chair at each meeting.*' The proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and passed by resolution of the council.

- ~~• The Clerk will support meetings. In the absence of the Clerk, the committee may select from its number to support the meetings.~~

Councillor Spencer proposed that bullet point above is changed to, '*The clerk or locum clerk will support meetings and take the minutes.*' The proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and was passed by resolution of the council.

- Membership to the staffing committee shall be agreed in May of each year at the Annual Parish Council meeting.

Councillor Bell was concerned about blurring between an earlier resolution to review membership of the staffing committee at the October meeting of the Parish Council and the above bullet point.

The acting clerk explained that at the end of the financial year the committee will be essentially disbanded hence this need for this item and explained that there is no conflict with the earlier resolution to review membership in October.

Public Notice

- The agenda and notice of the meeting shall be posted at least three clear days in advance of the meeting.
- Full written minutes of the committee meeting shall be circulated to all members of the parish council. Written minutes, edited for confidentiality, to record the committee's decisions will be made available to the public and shall be signed by the chair of the staffing committee at the next meeting of the staffing committee.

Councillor Bell proposed that the words, '*within 48-hours or as soon as practicable*' is added to the bullet point above. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Garlick and passed by resolution of the council.

Function: The committee will be responsible, in conjunction with the clerk, or other professional advisors, for-

Councillors agreed to add the words 'or locum clerk' after clerk in the bullet point above.

- Developing and reviewing policies and procedures that relate to staff employment.
- Ensuring that a staffing framework and culture exists within the council which nurtures wellbeing, productivity and treats staff equally and with respect. Values diversity and inclusion and encourages staff to perform to the best of their ability by providing suitable training, development and management.

Councillor Bell proposed adding the words 'and support' after the final word 'management' in the bullet point above. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Stanley and passed by resolution of the council.

- Ensuring that the council complies with all legislative requirements relating to the employment of its staff.
- Reviewing staffing structures, contracts of employment, job descriptions and person specifications.
- Reviewing the NJC pay scale reference points and approving and implementing national pay awards and salary increments.
- Interviewing for staff recruitment.
- Annual staff review and appraisals
- Leave entitlement including annual holiday, sickness, statutory entitlements, and special leave
- Allowances, expenses, and subsistence within defined annual budgets
- Working hours

- Pension arrangements

Councillor Bell proposed that the above bullet point be amended to state, '*Pension arrangements in conjunction with the finance committee*' The proposal was seconded by Councillor Garlick and passed by resolution of the council.

- Sickness absence management
- Health, safety, and welfare including recommendations for staff training. The committee will recommend an annual figure for this budget head, to the finance committee.
- Any other matters delegated to the committee deemed to be relevant to these terms of reference
- The staffing committee shall appoint three members to function as a disciplinary panel.
- Appeals shall be conducted by a separate panel of three councillors drawn from the full council. The panel shall duly report their findings to the staffing committee/parish council.
- The staffing committee shall appoint three members to function as a complaints/grievance panel to hear staff complaints. It is taken that the council member or members implicated in the grievance/complaint shall not form part of the committee. If there are insufficient members who are independent of the committee, members may be substituted by other parish councillors. The panel shall duly report their findings to the staffing committee/parish council.

Delegated Powers

This committee does not have delegated powers in this instance. Decisions relating to 'appointment' and 'dismissal' must be approved by the Parish Council as a corporate body. This committee may provide recommendations.

Per Financial Regulations, the staffing committee **may have delegated powers to spend up to the budgeted amount** for staff related expenditure including advertising for recruitment, training, provision of PPE and clothing.

Other

Panel: a smaller panel may be set up to deal with confidential personnel matters.

Councillor Garlick proposed the above terms of reference as amended, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and passed by resolution of the council.

6. Date and time of the next meeting

Monday 30 September 2024. Location and time TBC.

7. Closed session

Councillor Garlick proposed that the meeting is moved into closed session to discuss confidential staffing matters, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and the proposal was passed by resolution of the council. Time 8pm.

Councillor Garlick proposed that the parish council seek employment advice in relation to the Clerk's sickness absence and return to work from Chris Moses, Personnel Advice and Solutions Inc up to the value of £200.00. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Bell and was passed by resolution of the council.

The closed session was closed at 8.42pm.