



North Thoresby, Grainsby & Waithe Parish Council

North Thoresby Village Hall, The Square, North Thoresby, DN36 5QL

Minutes of the Extrordinary Meeting held

20 July 2023

at 7pm

Statement May 2024

The minutes of the meeting held 20 July 2023, contained erroneous information. This could be attributed to the knowledge of the, then, inexperience and new Parish Council. Despite the Internal Auditor contacting the council to finish off the reports, no one responded to his emails. When the new clerk was employed, he did not contact the internal auditor for assistance. Consequently, mistakes were made.

The Parish Council would like to apologise to people who were wrongly accused of shortfalls in the professional services received. We recognise that more detailed investigation should have been taken at the time by the Clerk and councillors in office.

The originally posted documents follow as previously published



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Address: North Thoresby Village Hall, The Square, North Thoresby, DN36 5QL

For the community...by the community...

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

20 July 2023 – 7pm

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Cllr. Buckenham (Chair), Cllr. Gallop (Vice Chair), Cllr. Gale, Cllr. Marshall, Cllr. Jones, Cllr. Snell, Cllr Berryman.

Clerk and RFO: Mr S Baxter **Members of the public (MOP):** 0

MeeRng commenced at 7pm.

MeeRng was held at the North Thoresby Village Hall, North Thoresby.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the councillors for stepping in during his absence.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk confirmed that he had received apologies from Cllr. Howard who not available due to commitments of work. The councillors were invited to make any responses to the apology and if there was no objection, for the apologies to be accepted by way of a proposer, seconder and vote.

There was no objections by the Councillors to the absence of Cllr. Howard.

- ***Motion to accept the apologies of Cllr. Howard was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

3. TO GRANT DISPENSATION TO COUNCILLORS: To receive any declarations of interest in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and to consider any requests for dispensations

The Clerk confirmed that no declarations have been received from any Councillors prior to the meeting - he asked all Councillors if they wish to offer any declarations for any subject of the Parish Council Meeting. The Clerk confirmed that none were offered and thus it can be considered that there is no pecuniary interest of any Councillors which would affect their voting of any motion on the agenda.

4. TO PROPOSE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM PARTICIPATION

The Clerk stated that as there was no members of the public there was no need for a motion to exclude.

5. TO APPROVE THE 2022/23 END OF YEAR FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS AND AUDIT REPORT

The Clerk stated that he had previously sent copies of the necessary documents for the councillor's perusal. He concluded that these documents are required to be submitted to the External Auditor (usually by the 30 June but an extension was given to the 31 July) for them to review and offer opinions.

The formal documents to be approved are:

- Presentation of Internal Report for 2022/3
- Agreement of AGAR documents for 2022/23
- Agreement to send documents to the External Auditor - as required by statute

The Council fully discussed the Internal Auditor Report and the details attached. There was a consensus that the Internal Audit Report was not the standard that they expected. The Chair, with the agreement of the Council stated as follows:

The Council was disappointed in both the quality and timeliness of the Internal Audit Report, especially the fact the report states the audit was undertaken on the 23 April 2023 when the council was not in full operation, and with no interaction with the Council or acting clerk. The Council believe that it is in the best interest of the Council and community to accept the report with reluctance.

The Councillors discussed the significant issues and felt that they were very surprised that this Internal Audit Report could be completed with no interaction from the Councillor or staff and that it failed to identify significant issues subsequently found. But agreed that they need to concentrate on moving forward.

- ***Motion to accept the formal end of financial documents including the AGAR forms and reports, accept the Internal Audit Report (with the afore mentioned reservations stated) as well as to approve the submission of the necessary documents to the External Auditor was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

6. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CLERK'S MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

The Clerk stated that following a review of the operational processes and effectiveness of the Parish Council, several issues and concerns were found which are possibly inhibiting a professional and efficient service to the community. Following these concerns, a Modernisation Programme with various recommendations was submitted to the Council for their consideration. The main elements are:

Local council and clerk association provider

The Council discussed the service they received from Lincolnshire Association Local Councils over the last year, but specifically over the last six months and the consensus across the Council was that the service was poor with often the lack of communication, advice which had a lack of clarity and the failure to provide help when specifically requested. The Councillors gave various examples of the issues they faced

and they stated they felt that the significant problems that the Council has gone through over the last few months was exasperated by the service provided by LALC. The Councillors were also very concerned that a previous staff member of the Parish Council had significant links to LALC and that may cause issues going forward.

The Clerk discussed that there was another local council organisation near to the geographical area which would accept the membership of this Parish Council who would then provide all the advice and service that the Parish Council need.

The Councillors discussed the requirement of having professional advice, and wanted to ensure that the Parish Council staff got access to National Association of Local Councils. This was confirmed by the Clerk. Overall the Councillors felt that it was a good opportunity to start afresh with the providers of advice.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the resignation of the member ship of Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils and to submit an application for membership to the East Riding North Lincolnshire Local Council Association was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Office and procedures modernisation

The Clerk stated that he had reviewed the current equipment that the Parish Council office uses and if it met the current modern needs of a professional office. He stated that the office equipment, while had some uses, was not sufficient to ensure the Office could meet it's staff's needs, both from a statutory requirement of security of data, to the overall efficient working. The two elements was the ability to scan documents into a digital storage, and shred documents that were no longer needed and had personal data. The Clerk accepted the cost impact of the provision of a new scanner/printer and a shredder but described the cost saving, security of data issues and the efficient working.

The Councillors reviewed the proposals and the continued need of the equipment and agreed that while the Parish Council office was not used on a full time daily basis, they did need to ensure that the office equipment was suitable and appropriate for what the office and staff needed. They also state that it would help promote a paperless council operation and a good working environment for the staff of the Parish Council.

The Councillors discussed that the cost saving (in the payroll bureau changes) would pay for the equipment cost of the equipment of circa £280.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the purchase of a new office printer / scanner and a new shredder (at a combined cost of around £280) was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Banking provider

The Councillors discussed the significant issues they had with the current banking provider in that they did not understand, appreciate or know what a Parish Council or Clerks roles were, and the unique issues they face. They concluded that recently, due to previous Councillors leaving and the previous clerk suddenly leaving, it left the Parish Council bank account not accessible and caused significant delays in

payment. They also felt that the bank did not appreciate the effect the lack of access had, and the pressure it was placing in the Councillors, acting clerk and staff. The lack of proper levels of suitable security access to the bank account and payment also caused significant issues. All of which contributed to decision of the Council to seek alternative services.

The Clerk made the Council aware that through other roles, he had recommended moving to UNITY BANK Ltd which was a digital bank set up to promote community needs and local councils. They crucially appreciated what a Parish Council was and what a clerk was - and the needs. The Clerk stated that this bank offered a two or three level authorisation process - the Clerk submitted payments and then the Councillors approved them - which would provide the necessary confidence to the Council and community for protection of the funds of the Parish Council.

The Councillors discussed the proposal and agreed that although it was a paid for bank account, it would provider far better service to the Council. They asked the Clerk to check to see if there was a back up imputter (in case of the absence of the Clerk).

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the moving of the banking provider from Lloyds Bank Plc to Unity Trust Bank Ltd was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Payroll Bureau

The Council discussed the use of the current provider of the payroll bureau and whilst they acknowledged that they provided a good service, they acknowledged that the cost was quite exorbitant to what they received. A Councillor stated that they had undertaken various due diligence on other possible providers but none had been located.

The Clerk submitted details of the payroll bureau service he uses for other roles and the cost (and service) is received. He stated that GMB Accountants Ltd in Doncaster provided an excellent service to his knowledge and he had undertaken the necessary checks. The cost of this service would save the Council in the region of £400.

The Councillors wanted to state that while they have no issue with the service being provided by the current provider, they felt that the cost saving from moving to another provider could not be ignored and thus through the assurance of the Clerk, and the due diligence undertaken, they felt comfortable moving to the suggested provider.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the moving of the payroll bureau from the current provider to the recommended provider was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Email provider

The Clerk submitted to the Council that the current email provider was far from sufficient and quite archaic in what it can deliver. The review of the email system highlighted the lack of any modern tools in the email system, and actually was a barrier for a change in regard to the use of email and digital working for the Council and staff.

The Councillors agreed that the current email system was not efficient and hard a to use for modern working.

The Clerk made a recommendation that the Parish Council consider using the Google Business Platform which is not only renowned for the security, but offered a plethora of digital tools to aid the over digital communication. It was recommended that the Council adopt the paid for service at £10 a month which not only provided a very large amount of cloud storage, but also opened up the various tools that Google offer in regard to online and digital operations. It was acknowledged that while it was a cost that was currently free, the time resource saved, and the more coherent working would actually save money and promote a more efficient working.

The Councillors agreed that the service offered by Google was the best option and accepted that the cost was not initially planned, but would actually save time and resources through the additional business resources available by Google.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the moving of the current email provider to a Google provided Gmail Business suite for emails and electronic storage was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Documents storage and use of the digital cloud

The Clerk reviewed the current document storage of the Council and was alarmed to see that documents were being stored in hard copies (possible unsecured as needed) as well as documents that the Council had no legal need for. It was also a risk of damage by fire etc. and didn't fit in with modern working off site. The Clerk stated that the modern approach now was that very little paper copies were kept - records and documents were scanned and stored in a digital cloud storage. This ensured that not only the records were secure, but could be accessed by a host of people off site and could be easily shared. It also stopped the need for physical storage which took up space in the Parish Council Office.

The councillors agreed that the need for proper digital scanning and storage was required to ensure that the documents held, especially with personal data, were secure and only accessed by authorised persons. They also agreed that the documents held would be more accessible if they were available to all Councillor thorough access of the Cloud. They felt that as long as the access was limited to who needs full access and who needs a read only access, the recommendation was the best way forward for the Council.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the commencement of storing all Parish Council records (unless specific reason provided) to a cloud based storage and to destroy hard copy paper versions was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Financial software

The Clerk stated that he reviewed the current uses of how the Parish Council manages the financial data and recording and how this is works for the Council. It was confirmed that the Council currently use SCRIBE which is a market leader but is quite expensive for the Parish Council need. The clerk recommended that the Parish Council can mange with a detailed, yet straightforward excel design which

not only allows a summary for some and a more detailed report for others, but it means there is no running costs or licenses to buy. It can also allow the format to be tweaked to what the Councillors wish to see, and the PC has total control of what it delivers.

The Council discussed the format proposed by the Clerk and the flexibility offered by the in house built process. It also could be secure by the storage on the agreed cloud platform and be adapted as needed.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the adoption of the in house built system and to remove the licence for SCRIBE was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Use of cash in bookings of the Village Hall

The clerk confirmed that as a result of various banking access issues and the general cash basis of bookings, there was a larger amount of cash on hand than should be used. The issue identified that this put an unfair risk on the staff and also was not an appropriate manner of managing resources of the Parish Council. The main issue was that most bookings were paid for by the use of physical cash. The Clerk concluded that while the Parish Council must show flexibility and approachability to all community groups who may not be as IT able, the Council does need to move to a lesser cash dominated process. The main element is the management of the actual cash and the risk associated.

The Clerk recommended that the Council need to move a position where the use of electronic payments are encouraged (for the benefit of all) and provide help to those groups who may be slightly concerned on how electronic payments are made.

The Councillors discussed the issue that both elements - the cash storage and the effect on the community groups. All users of the Village Hall would be encouraged to use on line payments but that at the moment the situation would be kept under review.

Paying of Staff

It was noted that a previous clerk had allegedly told the Council that employees of the Parish Council could don't be paid by standing order and that they could only be paid after a Parish Council meeting. The Clerk stated that there was nothing in law that supported that and that actually the requirement to pay staff is contractual - with the risk that if the payment wasn't made on the contracted date it could be considered a breach of contract. He firmly recommended that the payment of staff for the Parish Council would be made by standing order at the end of the month.

The Councillors discussed dates issue and agreed that staff had a right to expect payment on a specific day every month.

- ***Motion to accept the recommendation of the Clerk for the payment to staff to be paid by standing order on a specific day every month was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Meeting was closed by the Chair at 8.30pm.
