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

FULL PARISH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

02 October 2023 – 7pm

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors: Cllr. Buckenham (Chair), Cllr. Gallop (V/Chair) Cllr. Snell, Cllr. Howard, Cllr. Jones, Cllr. Spence, Cllr. Marshall

Clerk and RFO: Mr S Baxter **Members of the public (MOP):** 20

Meeting commenced at 7pm. Meeting 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 whole community for attending.

2. Members of the Public Participation - *questions from the public at the discretion of the Chair*

(i) A question from a member of the public who is local:

There is a lot of speeding down Ludborough Road which may be caused by the fact that the speed signs are often obscured by hedges or because they have been placed in inconvenient spaces. This means that often the 30mph is not adhered to and as a result cars often drive at 40mp+. This was very different to Station Road which has a lot more speed signage and is more clear.

The Chair stated that he appreciates that the the road signage on Ludborough Road is not as clear as hoped but the hedges may be from private gardens which means that cutting back these plants is more difficult. The Clerk stated that the responsibility lies with the ELDC Highways Team.

The Clerk confirmed that he would write to the Highways Team to ask that the signage is made clearer and that there are no obstructions by hedges or trees.

(ii) A question from a member of the public (who refused to give her name or say if she is local):

What is going on with the way the Council is operating and references to the 'former administration' and the social media attention ?

The Chair and members of the Council stated that the Councillors and staff had suffered horrendous abuse from a very small minority of the community and that no councillor or staff had joined the PC to receive the abuse they were receiving. The Council continued by stating that the abuse is uncalled for, for no reason and may be an attempt to dislodge the Council. Certain members of the previous administration had not helped in this issue and had published incorrect items on social media. As to the current administration, no social media updates have

been made as it was agreed that this administration would follow proper rules and debate issues in proper ways; they are bound by guidance and the law.

The council also stated that they are obliged to review the records and documents from the previous administration to ensure that everything is as it should be. It is very disappointing that the amount of abuse since this administration took office has been disgusting and must stop. It was stated that at the height of the abuse the Council received 14 emails from a singular member of the community mostly giving abuse and this person's communication is now treated as vexatious.

The Councillors state that they joined the PC to serve their community, to help the local members and to represent their views - but unfortunately they have faced threats and complaints, with abuse aimed at individuals. They will not comment on social media, they will issue Council approved statements to clarify or provide information - and the most important aspect is that the Council acts as one, and not as individuals.

(iii A statement from a member of the public who confirmed she was local:

The person stated that she had been in the village for over 40 years and in all her time she has never seen the vitriol from a small amount of the community and feels that a lot of the issues has stemmed from the previous clerk being antagonistic and disrespectful to the community. She stated that the previous administration was a complete disgrace and should be held accountable, that some previous Councillors are spitting their dummies out and not ensuring the Parish Council could continue.

She contnued that the community needs a strong, well run Parish Council that needs to be left alone to do their job for the benefit of all - and not to have to face social media comments.

Members of the public applauded the statement and there was strong consensus of agreement.

The Chair thanked the member of the public for their comments and stated their appreciation for the support of the vast percentage of the local community.

(iv) A question from a member of the public who is local: What are the Council going to do about the hedge around the play park and the school as it is not maintained any longer?

The Chair thanked the member of the community. The Council stated that they were aware that a local farmer used to cut the hedge but were unaware why it wasn't happening any longer - they would review the issue.

No further questions.

3. Proposal to exclude members of the public from participation - but can observe

For the following agenda points members of the public can observe the meeting but cannot take part in any debate. Any persons not Councillors or the Clerk will be asked to remain silent

- ***Motion to exclude members of the public from participation was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

4. Apologies from Councillors for any absence

The Clerk confirmed that he had received apologies from Cllr. Gale and Cllr. Berryman who had given their reasons for absence to the Clerk who wished to advise the Council it was proper but it was for the councillors to agree or not. The Councillors were invited to make any responses to the apologies and if there was no objection, for the apologies to be accepted by way of a proposer, seconder and vote.

There were no objections by the Councillors to the absence of both Councillors.

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

5. To grant dispensations to Councillors in regard to declarations of interest: *To receive any declarations of interest in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and to consider any 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.

6. To approve the minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 11 September 2023 as a true record

The minutes of the previous Parish Council Meeting had been distributed to the Councillors prior to the Meeting to allow for any inaccuracies to be brought to the attention of the Clerk.

Cllr Snell stated that there was a paragraph in section 12 that had been duplicated. The Chair noted this and made an amendment on the minutes by hand.

No further notes or inaccuracies were stated by any Councillor and thus the Clerk offered the minutes to be formally accepted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting on the 11 September 2023.

- ***Motion to accept that the minutes of the Full PC Meeting on the 11 September 2023 were an accurate record of the meeting was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

7. Report of the closed session of the last Full Parish Council Meeting – agree report is accurate

The report on the closed session of the previous Parish Council Meeting had been distributed to the Councillors prior to the Meeting to allow for any inaccuracies to be brought to the attention of the Clerk.

Cllr Howard stated that she wished to note that she abstained from the vote. This was noted by the Chair and he made an amendment on the record.

No further notes or inaccuracies were stated by any Councillor and thus the Clerk offered the report and record to be formally accepted as a true and accurate record of the Meeting on the 11 September 2023.

- ***Motion to accept that the recorded report of the closed session of the Full Parish Council Meeting on the 11 September 2023 was an accurate record of the meeting was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

8. Updates from Clerk - from previous meetings

a) Financial Transparency

The clerk stated that following the decision at the last Full PC Meeting to be more financially transparent for the benefit of the community, he can confirm that the three types of report (Bank Reconciliation, Budget Monitor and Expenditure) for August 2023 have now been published on the website. It is the intention for these details to be published on a quarterly basis - and thus the next publication will be in January 2024 for the 3rd quarter financial data.

b) Complaints to the External Auditor

The clerk stated that the complaints that were submitted to the External Auditor have now been fully concluded to the satisfaction of the External Auditor. The complaints submitted actually highlighted significant and multiple issues with the data for the 2022/23 left by the previous administration which has now allowed the Parish to investigate further the records left by the previous administration.

The PC now awaits the final report from the External Auditor in due course.

The cost of the Clerk's time managing the complaints to the External Auditor have been substantial and unfortunately that cost falls on the Community.

c) Displaying and distribution of Minutes

Following the decision by the Council at the last PC Meeting, the Council has now been able to start investigating the various places where the minutes of the Council could be left for the benefit of the community. The Council has now agreed to leave some copies of minutes at the local Morrisons store in the Square, as well as in the telephone box - and are also planning to discuss having the minutes displayed in the noticeboard of the local pub.

This will help to meet the community interactions and the transparency goals of the Council.

d) Policies: Email Policy, Security and Key Policy, LGA Code of Conduct

As per the update from the Clerk at the last Meeting, several policies have been written for the benefit of the efficient and proper operation of the Council. The Policy for discussions and proposal for the Council are included in the agenda for this Meeting. The Email Policy will ensure proper email management and controls, the Security and Key Policy will ensure the Village Hall security and access is properly managed.

The one area that has become apparent, and from discussions with the Chair, is that the NALC Code of Conduct is not as clear, effective or proper that the community should expect. The clerk, in discussion with the Chair, has looked at the Local Government Association Code of Conduct - this is far more detailed but more clear of the expectations of the Councillors who represent the Community.

e) Training for Councillors

The training for Councillors that was agreed at a previous Council Meeting has begun and the Chair has already undertaken a few sessions of training - which he has confirmed were very worthwhile. Several other councillors have booked training in a range of operational and governance procedures to ensure their knowledge and experience for the good of the Council.

The Clerk would encourage any councillor who feels training would benefit their role to review what is available at ERNLLCA and contact the Clerk to book the courses.

f) Clerk and Councillor surgery at the Thursday Lunches at the Village Hall

Following a very enjoyable time helping Cllr Howard in the Lunchtime Soup event, and Meeting some many members of the local community, it was quite evident that the community would like to discuss various council issues with the Clerk and Councillors but in a more relaxed format. The community members that the Clerk and Cllrs' Gallop and Howard met were very welcoming, and quite interested in what the Council was doing, how they were rebuilding the reputation - most crucial they had great admiration for the way the Council was ensuring that things done by this administration were now being done properly.

The recommendation going forward is that the Clerk and some Councillors will try to attend the fortnightly lunch events that Cllr Howard runs for the community to allow a more face to face interaction with the community and allow any members of the community to ask any questions. It will be part of the Council's community interaction and ensure that anyone can speak to the Clerk or Councillors or who can't attend the PC Meetings.

9. HR Committee - review of purpose and dissolution - motion to close the committee

The Chair stated that every Parish Council has procedures and policies which must remain 'live' to ensure that they keep up to date with what is needed for the Council and the community. In a recent training programme he attended, he stated that this Parish Council was commended for ensuring adaptability and flexibility, constantly ensuring that these are kept within the law. In addition a function of the Council doesn't stop for

absence of a Councillor for whatever reason.

As the Parish Council only has two staff, and that we have no specific Committee coverage for the facilities and buildings of the Parish Council, upon review it was considered that it may be appropriate to have a Committee that covers both these remits - this will both allow the Village Hall fire exit and safety element to be thoroughly reviewed, but also to monitor the various safety reports.

As the current HR Committee doesn't have the remit to look at any other areas other than HR, it was felt that the Council may consider the dissolution of the committee, and then to create a new one with the facilities element.

MOTION: Cllr Howard put forward a motion to delay the consideration of the original motion until the next meeting to allow further review with any absent Councillors.

The Clerk stated that Cllr Howard was entitled to ask the Chair to consider a motion but that for the motion to be considered by the Council, it would need the motion to be seconded. He invited the Councillors to offer any second support.

The Council discussed the motion from Cllr Howard and there was a majority consensus viewpoint that matters needed to be considered without delay to stop the next Meeting becoming cumbersome with the agenda points.

No Councillor seconded the motion and thus the motion was not put to a vote. The Clerk confirmed that upon the motion not being seconded, it automatically fails and the original motion discussion and vote will continue.

There was continued discussion on the motion and the merits of the dissolution of the HR Committee with the aim of creating a new committee with a remit to allow better oversight for the HR and facilities elements.

The Clerk stated that if the dissolution was agreed by the Council, then the Council should consider a new Committee with a varied function remit including HR and the Facilities Management, and then this committee would need new membership and a Chair agreed by the council.

The Council discussed the recommendation and the proposal and placed their votes which were:

> **Four in favour** > **Three abstain** > **Nil opposed**

- ***Motion to agree to the dissolution of the Human Resources Committee was proposed, seconded and agreed by majority of the Councillors present. Motion carried.***

10. **Formation of the HR & Facilities Committee** - discussion and agreement

The Clerk stated that following the dissolution of the HR Committee, it was now recommended that a new HR & Facilities Committee be agreed and adopted. This committee would have a wider purview and would ensure that not only the HR element of the Council is managed effectively and properly, but that it would also be able to manage the facilities issues specifically the Village Hall and the other areas of the Parish the Council is responsible for. The committee would have a dual function to ensure that it can make a proper recommendation to the Council for any related issues.

The Chair stated that the HR and Facilities Committee would have a full remit to review all the facilities of the Parish Council, not only the Village Hall but the play park and the memorial garden. It would allow a closer examination of the necessary safety reviews and reports.

The Council discussed the motion put forward to create a HR and Facilities Committee and the merits of this committee to the Parish Council and community and placed their votes when requested. The Votes were:

> **Four in favour** > **Three abstain** > **Nil opposed**

- *Motion to agree to the formation of the Human Resources & Facilities Committee was proposed, seconded and agreed by majority of the Councillors present. Motion carried.*

11. **HR & Facilities Committee Terms of Reference (ToR)**- discussion and agreement to adopt

The Clerk stated that as per the council's decision to cease the functions of the HR Committee, and then form and create a HR & Facilities Committee, in order for the new committee to be properly functional and operate with an accepted boundary and format, it was proper that the Committee operated with a specific set of rules - the ToR.

In anticipation of the formation of the HR & Facilities Committee, the Clerk stated that he had sent the proposed ToR to the Councillors to ensure they could properly review the terms recommended, and make any decisions with the proper information. The recommended ToR allowed a better operation of the committee (than the HR Committee) and allowed the committee to review the functions of the Facilities of the Parish Council. It was recommended to the Council for their approval.

The Council discussed the proposed ToR and the details of the reference for the newly formed HR & Facilities Committee. They agree that the safety element of what the new committee will fulfil is of merit but they felt that the safety overview of the play park should be included in more detail.

The Chair agreed that it was prudent to ensure that any ToR agreed, should have the full detail of what it can, should and will do. He thus asked for the agenda item to be moved to the next Meeting to be discussed and voted once the play park safety element is included in the ToR.

12. **HR & Facilities Committee membership and Chair** - discussion and agreement

The Clerk stated that although the terms of reference for the HR & F committee has not been agreed, it was still appropriate to ensure that the Committee can start considering issues, using the draft ToR.

The Committee would require a membership of three Councillors, with a Chair appointed. This would ensure the Committee was quorate as the draft ToR stated. The Clerk continued that it was appropriate to ensure that the Council has confidence in the membership of the Committee and thus each member should be separately voted by the Council - and the Committee votes one member to be Chair of that Committee.

The Clerk stated that he had been made aware that Cllr Spence has put his name forward for consideration of being a member and the Chair of the HR & F Committee. He was also aware that Cllr Snell and Cllr Buckenham had put their names forward as members of the Committee.

All other Councillors present were invited if they wished to nominate or be nominated for the committee. No other names were forthcoming.

The Council discussed the nominations and agreed they should be selected.

- ***Motion to agree to the appointment of Cllr Spence, Cllr Snell and Cllr Buckenham to the HR & Facilities Committee was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

The Clerk asked if there were any other nominations for Chair. None were forthcoming.

The Council discussed the nomination of Cllr. Spence as the Chair of the HR & F committee and agreed he was a suitable nomination.

- ***Motion to agree to the appointment of Cllr Spence as Chair of the HR & Facilities Committee was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

13. Access and Key Management of the Village Hall Policy - discussion and agreement to adopt

The Clerk stated that following a review of the security and access of the Village Hall, it was felt that currently the arrangements and decision on who had key access was not properly organised and agreed and thus a proper procedure and policy was needed. This would allow the Council and community to ensure that the asset of the community was properly secured and managed. The overall basis is that the persons with the responsibility of

being key holders were persons who understood the responsibility and had access because of specifics of their role, not just because they wanted access.

The Access and Key Management of the Village Hall Policy would ensure that the council and the community were clear on who had access, how the access was managed and that all persons with access to the Village Hall took their responsibility seriously.

The Council discussed the Policy as proposed by the Clerk and agreed it was appropriate, necessary and would ensure that all users of the Village Hall were aware of the security and key access procedures.

- ***Motion to agree to the adoption of the Access and Key Management of the Village Hall Policy was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

The Clerk confirmed that the document would be published on the PC website within a few days.

14. Adoption of Local Government Association Code of Conduct - recommendation by Clerk

The Clerk stated that following various reviews of the NALC recommended Code of Conduct, the Chair and himself felt that the NALC Code of Conduct was not fit for purpose and that they needed to ensure that all Councillors met a higher standard of conduct and integrity. The Local Government Association Code of Conduct met this standard that was felt was needed and while it was quite detailed, it ensured that all elected officials of the Council acted with the highest of honesty, principles and trust and had the interests of the community at heart in all actions.

The LGA Code of Conduct had been sent to Councillors for their perusal to ensure that they were able to digest the standards that this code would require would be met by all Councillors.

The Chair stated that this Code of Conduct was very comprehensive and would be the basis of all that the Council do and to ensure that all Councillors act with integrity and with the highest standards. The Code of Conduct would also have a degree of adaptability to ensure it meets what is needed by the Council.

- ***Motion to accept that the Local Government Association Code of Conduct in full was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

The Clerk confirmed that the document would be published on the PC website within a few days.

15. Email Management Policy - discussion and agreement to adopt

The Chair stated that it is imperative that the Council operates within all laws and guidelines - and crucially that the Council must be able to control all email accounts of all users (Councillors or staff) to protect the personal data and communication that these email accounts hold. This is both to manage any FoI and data protection responsibilities but also that the Council meet any GDPR requirements. The Policy would also ensure that should any councillor or staff member leave the Council, then the Council would be able to suspend the account/s of the person to ensure that the information is protected but also that no emails purporting to be from the Council could be sent. The policy is designed to protect the Council and the email account users.

The Clerk confirmed that the draft policy had been circulated to the Councillors for their consideration.

The Council discussed the proposed policy and agreed that it was necessary to ensure the email accounts had a degree of control, that any data was protected and that the council was not put in a position of being accused of sending emails that weren't from the Council.

- ***Motion to agree to the adoption of the Email Management Policy was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

16. Update and formal confirmation of resubmission of end of year documents - update and agreement

The RFO stated that following complaints to the External Auditor by a member of the community, the Council have been in detailed discussions with the External Auditor on the incorrect data left by the previous administration which the council used in their end of year submissions, including the AGAR. Following the investigation by the Clerk and the External Auditor, updated documents have been resubmitted to the External Auditor (with no assumptions the previous administration data was correct). As the resubmission is the formal declaration of the state and governance of the Parish Council, it is required that the Council formally approve the submission albeit retrospectively.

The Council stated that the resubmission was required because of what was found and now the Council have the confidence in the submitted documents and data.

- ***Motion to agree retrospectively the detail and re-submission of the 2022/23 financial end year documentation including the AGAR was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

17. Internal Auditor appointment for 2023/24 - recommendation from the Clerk and decision

The Clerk stated that following the clerk updates at the last Meeting, he has now provisionally agreed with Mr Anthony Whitley to undertake the IA for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 years. He stated that Mr Whitley comes with the recommendation of ERNLLCA and is qualified in both accountancy and clerking - and has extensive experience of the sector. The clerk stated that the due diligence he has undertaken has come back positive and the samples of audit work will mean that his IA work will ensure that the Parish Council's governance and finance operation meets the necessary guidelines and statute, and will give confidence to the community. The recommended contract is for two years for a frozen price of £330 per year.

The Council discussed the recommendation and felt that as the previous IA report was in their viewpoint insufficient and not as credible as it should have been, a new IA will ensure the PC does what they should be doing to an high standard and meets the necessary statutory requirements.

Question: The Chair permitted the following question from a member of the public:

What is the reason for the IA and how does the Council choose who they appoint to the role?

The Clerk stated that the reason for the appointment of the Internal Auditor was a statutory one and all Councils (that use public funds such as the precept) are required to appoint a suitable experienced and qualified IA to undertake a full audit on the council's finances, governance and overall operations. This is to ensure that the council operates within the law and the guidelines stated by NALC and that all the funds are used effectively, appropriately and carefully. The IA should be confident through inspection of all records and accounts that as far as they can see the council is managing the community funds as well as possible, using them for the benefit of the community and that everything is accounted for.

The IA should give confidence that everything is run properly. In regard to appointing an IA, advice is sought from ERNLLCA and due diligence is done, it cannot be a person working for the Council or a Councillor - and ideally would not be from the local community to ensure independence.

The only question that was raised from the Council, was if his work for the first year is not acceptable (in mindset of the IA report from the previous auditor) how would the PC ensure that they could walk away. The Clerk confirmed that he would ensure that this provision for cancellation would be included.

- ***Motion to agree to the appointment of MR ANTHONY WHITLEY as the Internal Auditor for the financial years of 2023/24 and 2024/25 on the agreed rate of £330 per year was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

18. Finance Committee and Banking - update from the Clerk on the Committees

19. informal view

The Clerk stated that the first Finance Committee Meeting had been held just before the Full Parish Council Meeting (of which the minutes will be published in due course) was that the council had an obligation to be as transparent with all its finances, to be accountable for every penny spent and to ensure that the resources of the Council are used as carefully and wisely as possible. The Clerk confirmed that the first part of the transparency had already started as the main parts of the financial reports had been published on the website.

19. Financial Update from the Clerk (including bank reconciliations)

The Clerk (and as the RFO) confirmed that the financial reports for September 2023 had been emailed to the Council for their review. This would ensure that the Councillors had an opportunity to review the details to satisfy themselves. These reports were on the agreed format of the internally designed composition which would allow as much scrutiny as the Councillors needed. Overall the Clerk stated that the financial position of the Council was looking quite solid but still recommends caution for the financial management of the resources of Council.

The main points of the financial update (as at the 30 September 2023):

- The total in the bank accounts was £43,264.17 - this included all reserves in all bank accounts
- From the overall expenditure budget of £43,842 - savings of £5,807 have been earmarked.
- It is anticipated that from an agreed deficit budget of £1,042 a surplus actual budget of circa. £2-£2.5k.
- No budget for HMRC and pension payments - unsure the reason why this was not considered
- Staff salaries has been forecast to be on budget
- Village Grass CuNng contract was under budgeted by previous administraFon
- VAT to be reclaimed of £298.23
- Possible significant reclaims from previous transactions

- ***Motion to agree to the financial update report as the true record of the financial picture of the Parish Council was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried***

20. General expenditure for approval

PAYEE	EXPENDITURE REASON	AMOUNT
Clerk salary & allowance	Contractual for October 2023	Withheld - confidentiality
Clerk overtime	Overtime for October 2023	Withheld - confidentiality
Village Hall Manager salary	Contractual for October 2023	Withheld - confidentiality
HMRC	Payment of deductions and statutory liabilities	Withheld - confidentiality
Lincolnshire County Council	Payment of pension deductions and PC liability	Withheld - confidentiality
Clerk's Travel Expenses	Travel for Meetings - Sept to Oct 2023	£127.80
Clerk expense claims	Office items	£25.99
Duncan & Topliss	Balance on previous payroll bureau	£0.30
ROSPA Play safety	Safety inspection of playground	£111.00
Wave Water	Water supply for Village Hall	£87.98
ERNLLCA	Training for Councillors	£96.00

The Councillors discussed the financial detail and the financial report presented to them and agreed that it was great to see the proper organisation and oversight was in place - and crucially that all spend was carefully monitored as it was community funds. They thanked the Clerk for the significant hard work to restore and create

proper financial reports which the Council could rely on to make financial decisions.

- ***Motion to agree the financial report and financial points of note from the Clerk was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

21. Planning Applications and results

Planning Permission Granted:

Application Number 21/07/2023 N/133/01473/23

Particulars and location of the development proposal: Listed Building Consent - Internal alterations to first floor stairwell balustrade to provide additional guarding and enclose existing stair spindles at existing children's care home. LOCATION: WESTBROOK FARM, STATION ROAD, NORTH THORESBY, GRIMSBY, DN36 5QS

Cllr Snell, as the Chair of the Planning Committee, stated that there was no planning applications for the Council to consider. The only detail received was the update on the successful planning applications on the stated building.

22. Playground safety report

The Clerk stated that the full safety inspections of the Playground was undertaken by a RoSPA accredited safety inspector on the 04 September 2023. They were asked to inspect the whole playground to ensure that it was safe for community users. The safety report would be based on the likelihood of any risk, and the severity if the risk happened. The Clerk stated that from the 16 areas that were inspected across the whole playground area and particularly the equipment, there were eleven items that were marked as low risk and severity and five were marked as a medium risk. None were marked as needing urgent or immediate work. He continued that the work highlighted in the report will now be managed with the medium risk works being undertaken first, followed by the lower risk items. But it is hoped that all items highlighted will be managed and undertaken before Spring 2024 when it was likely that the playground would be used extensively again.

The Clerk stated that the work will be undertaken by the Village Hall Manager initially and then quotes will be sought for the works that are more specialist. The Clerk confirmed that the report had been sent to the Councillors and would be published in due course.

The Council discussed the report and agreed that it was the responsibility of the Council to ensure the Play Park was safe. The Chair stated that the HR & Facilities Committee would manage the work recommended on the safety report and report back to the council.

- ***Motion to agree to the recommendation of the Clerk from the recommended work as detailed in the Playground Safety Report was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

23. Asbestos Survey report - update from the Clerk on the report's findings

As detailed in the Clerk's updates at the last PC Meeting, the Clerk stated that the Asbestos survey was carried out at the end of August 2023. The Clerk stated that the report details that there was asbestos found in the roof sheets and rainwater pipes in the lean to next to the Village Hall building; it was confirmed that both were in good condition although the roof was covered in moss. It was stated in the report that as long as the items are not interfered with, or tampered, then the risk of any issue with the asbestos was small and only if the items are needed to be actively maintained would specialist teams be needed.

The Chair stated the report showed the asbestos issue was managed as well as could be expected and that it was crucial that it was left untouched to stop any chance of the asbestos causing ill health.

The Clerk concluded that while the report is technically valid for only one year, as it's normally practiced, he would recommend that the survey be repeated in five years - but with regular visual reviews by the Village Hall Manager. Should anything change significantly with the items, then the Council would need to consider more significant work or asbestos removal.

The Clerk concluded that in the medium term, no action is needed; just regular review.

The Council discussed the report and the recommendation and felt it was good news that the issue is being managed as needed.

The Chair stated that the HR & Facilities Committee would manage the work recommended on the asbestos report and report back to the council as needed.

- ***Motion to agree to the recommendation of the Clerk for the recommended work as detailed in the Asbestos Survey report was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

24. Telephone connection coverage for the Parish Council - update from the Clerk and decision

The Clerk stated that the issue of the lack of telephone connection for the Village Hall and to ensure the contact for the hiring was suitable, had resulted in a necessary review of the needs for the Council. Although there was an older mobile phone, it was felt that a more permanent solution was found - although the lack of a proper telephone socket meant that alternative solutions would be needed.

The Clerk stated that a suitable alternative had been investigated and a wi-fi enabled landline style would allow a normal mobile number but would be used as both the booking number, as well as the Parish emergency number should anything catastrophic or major happen in the village. The cost of the telephone would be in the region of £40-£50 and would require some sim card talk time allowance be purchased.

The Council discussed the recommendation and felt they were concerned that it may be better if the phone was wi-fi connected or to review mobile options. They asked the Clerk that this issue be reviewed further and brought back to the Council for further consideration.

25. Tree survey - recommendation from the Clerk and decision

The Clerk stated that following complaints about the conditions of the trees next to the Village Hall he has provisionally sourced an expert tree surgeon and assessor to ascertain the health of trees and to make any recommendations on any work that is needed - with the knowledge of the tree protection orders on each tree due to the conservation area. The Clerk stated that the survey would then allow the Council to decide the necessary actions, and what submission needs to be made to the ELDC for any work on trees with TPOs.

The Clerk stated the contractor was from WATSON LINDSEY ARBORICULTURAL LTD of whom the Clerk had worked with previously on other contracts in other professional capacities. The consultant was a Arboricultural Association Member, who was also a qualified Tree Risk Assessor and had many years of experience in the sector and was fully insured. The Contract quote was for £350 + VAT and included all travel and time costs.

The Council discussed the recommendation and stated that they wanted to ensure that the trees at the play park and the memorial garden be reviewed as well to ensure that the report is comprehensive.

- ***Motion to agree to the Clerk's recommendation to appoint WATSON LINDSEY ARBORICULTURAL LTD as the Tree Survey Contractor to undertake the survey on the trees at the Village Hall, play ground and memorial garden was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

26. Christmas working group - agreement to what can be organised and costs

The Chair asked Cllrs Howard and Marshall if they wish to update the Council on any plans and arrangement for the Christmas period.

Cllr Marshall stated that this Christmas will be a '**Community Christmas promoting coming together**'. The idea that is being proposed is that the Parish Council will hold a community Christmas function at which all the community groups in the village and beyond will be invited to have a table to promote their groups or sell any of

their produced items. This crucially will be **FREE to the community groups** and will be a chance for all the community groups and members to come together with the full community of the Parish, and the groups would hopefully raise some funds for themselves. Community cohesion will be at the heart of the event.

It would allow the Parish Council to also offer teas and coffees, and possibly small food items to raise money for the Parish Council. But crucially it will simply be a Community Christmas and **bring everyone together** after a very turbulent year in the community. The date suggested was Sunday 03 December 2023.

- ***Motion to agree to the Christmas Working Group plan and for it to be on the 03 December 2023 was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

Cllr Howard gave detail on the Tractor Run for the community and the background. She stated that upon a conversation with the Tractor Run organiser, he was very reluctant to come through the village and was initially going to go straight up Ludborough road due to the no money being collected by the village for the LRSN – Farmer’s mental health charity, as promised.

Question: The Chair permitted the following question from a member of the public:

What happened to the Tractor Run money collected from last year and how much was raised?

Cllr Howard confirmed that the money had been used to buy a new water heater for the village hall kitchen. Cllr Gallop stated that it was published on social media that £479 had been raised by the Parish Council at this event.

Cllr Marshall stated that from a review of the bank accounts of the PC and only £23.60 was paid into the PC account after the event that was labelled 'Tractor run' on the statements.

The organiser stated to Cllr Howard that he felt the previous administration was disingenuous and the charity function was used to buy items for the village hall - not the Farmers Mental Health Charity as expected and is why he was very hesitant to agreeing to go through North Thoresby again.

Cllr Howard gave detail on the Tractor Run for the community and the background. She stated that upon a conversation with the Tractor Run organiser, he was very reluctant to come through the village and was initially going to go straight up Ludborough road due to the no money being collected by the village for the LRSN – Farmer’s mental health charity, as promised.

Cllr Howard did say that she had assured the organiser that this year it would be different and this administration could give full support to Cancer Research UK. He was very relieved and agreed on these assurances that he would agree to North Thoresby being included.

The Chair thanked Cllr Howard for her great work in getting the Tractor Run back into North Thoresby and the assurance given. The Council agreed and wish to give their sincere thanks for her hard work.

The Council discussed the issue of the amount raised last year by the previous administration and it was agreed that all money raised for the Tractor Run would be for the Cancer Research UK - date agreed would be 17 December 2023.

- ***Motion to agree to the Tractor Run for 17 December 2023 and all funds raised for Cancer Research UK was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

27. Fencing discussion and fire risk assessment - update and possible decisions on how to proceed

The Chair stated that he has completed the Fire Risk Assessment with the support of Mr Berryman and the Village Hall Manager. This showed that the VH was safe to use, but that the committee room because of the lack of fire extinguisher and fire escape would have to be carefully managed. The Council has started to look at the

costs of having a fire exit installed in the window area and have already ensured a fire extinguisher has been installed in the committee room in which there would have to be a limit of 40 people to ensure safety.

The main issue highlighted in the safety report is the fire exit at the front door and the drop from the wall which has been highlighted as in need of review. The issue is the fact that if the fire exit is used for a quick evacuation, there is significant chance of people falling off the wall as people push forward. This means that as a significant problem has been identified (in this report) and the application for funding earlier this year, action will need to be initiated. The funds received from the Community Fund application dictated 'heritage fencing' but the council if they agree that fencing or railing is needed, but ensure safety.

The short term solution may be the moving of some large flower tubs to stop any accidental falling off the wall but this may not be suitable for the long term. In regard to a previous question about lining paths or reinstalling the steps, this has been reviewed but that current safety and planning permission requirements may prevent both.

Could the Council consider having gates in the fence for easier access of loading items into the VH and does the fence or railings have to be right across the front?

The Chair stated that while a gate could be considered for access into the VH, it could be used for exiting as this would lead straight onto the road - this would create a safety hazard. But in regard to railings or fence size, if the Council agree they are needed, then the fence or railings would only have to be sufficient to stop the safety exit issue.

Could the Council consider using the side exit as the main fire exit and blocking the front exit?

The Chair stated that the side exit is not wide enough for wheelchairs and that they would also have to ensure that wheelchairs are able to be pushed at the side of the VH and not get stuck.

The Chair continued that the design of the fence or railings could be similar to the railings nearby which would meet with heritage requirement as well as stopping the railings being an invitation for children to climb.

The Chair stated that the decision is now: does the Council use the grant received and install the fence and noticeboard or do they return the funds to the Community Fund at the National Lottery?

The Clerk stated that the deadline for a decision is needed quite urgently as the deadline of the use of the grant is in December 2023.

The Chair asked that the item be moved to the next Meeting but has stressed that time for a decision on how the Parish Council manage the grant and fence will be for the Meeting in November.

28. Bench relocation and cost of maintenance

The Chair stated that he had received a request from the team who volunteer to look after the bench and surrounding area in the memorial garden. They had asked if the bench could be moved back as the current location means the bench is covered in bird mess and the time taken to clean the bench is increasing - but by moving it back a small margin it would hopefully reduce the bird mess as it would be away from some tree branches that attract birds. The bench is currently concreted in and thus would need careful consideration and cost.

The Clerk asked that the safety of individuals be considered as the bench will be heavy, also the cost of the moving of the bench as it would need funding.

The Council agreed to allow the Chair to speak to the interested parties in more detail as well as speaking to the Village Hall Manager who has knowledge of the initial bench basing. It was felt that through careful management the various volunteers would be able to move the bench to a more suitable location.

In regard to the a question about pruning the trees, the Clerk stated that as the trees are covered by TPOs no work could be undertaken on the trees unless it was deemed for urgent safety - any work and the Council may risk a substantial fine from the District Council.

The Chair stated he would ask the item be brought back to the next PC Meeting at which he would hopefully have more information to provide to the Council.

29. Correspondence

The Clerk stated that no other urgent or important correspondence was received other than that which has been discussed previously in the Meeting .

30. To agree the date of the next PC Meeting - Monday 13 November 2023 at 7pm

The Clerk stated that due to his annual leave, it was recommended that the next PC Meeting be moved to Monday 13 November 2023 at 7pm.

The Council discussed that it was preferable for the Clerk to be in attendance for the PC Meeting in November 2023 and thus they were happy to reschedule the Meeting to the 13 November 2023.

- ***Motion to agree to the next Full Parish Council Meeting on Monday 13 November 2023 at 7pm was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

31. To resolve: Whether the Council will move into closed session to consider the following confidential and legal matters in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

The Clerk recommended that due to the following agenda point being confidential, that a motion was agreed to put the Council into a closed session.

- ***Motion to agree to the Parish Council going into a closed session due to the confidential nature of the discussion was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

For the following points members of the public left the meeting as the meeting was a closed session.

32. Staffing matter - for discussion and agreement

The details of the discussion were confidential and thus not included in these minutes. A separate report of the discussion will be noted for the Councillors only.

- ***Motion to confirm the formal and full appointment of Mr Simon Baxter to the role of the Proper Officer, Clerk and RFO of North Thoresby, Grainsby and Waithe Parish Council as of the 02 October 2023 was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously. Motion carried.***

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm.
