

MINUTES OF THE HOGSTHORPE PARISH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11th MAY 2023

Present: Cllrs Les Wildman (Chairman) Mary Banks, Clerk: K Hayes

1. APOLOGIES – An apology received from Cllr Chris Rolph was accepted

2. CONFIRMATION OF ELECTED COUNCILLORS

The following Councillors were re-elected uncontested:

Les Wildman, Chris Rolph, Mary Banks, Ellen Smith and Stephen Day. Cllr George Green had resigned during the week and ELDC would be informed. There are now three vacancies for councillors.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Banks proposed, seconded by Cllr Smith and unanimously agreed that Cllr Les Wildman be re-elected as Chairman and he duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Cllr Banks, seconded by Cllr Smith and unanimously agreed that Cllr Chris Rolph be re-elected as Vice Chairman. He was absent from this meeting but had indicated that he was willing to stand as Vice Chairman and he would be asked to sign the Declaration of Acceptance.

5. APPROVAL OF NOTES OF MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the 6th April and Confidential Notes from 3rd May 2023 (having been circulated) were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.

6. CONFIRMATION OF INTERIM CLERK POSITION

The appointment of Interim Clerk at a LALC rate of 11 for 10 hours per week from 3rd March 2023 was confirmed by Resolution of the whole council.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

The clerk read out her report mainly noting that the web site is still being updated, that VAT schedule for the last 3 years is being put together, PAYE has been set up but that there are difficulties in submitting this information to HMRC as the Gateway Unique number, and ID sign in and passwords are not known. Bank account difficulties are reported under Item 9 financial matters.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Jen Cooper BSc, the appointed Internal Auditor had now completed her report, a copy of which had been studied by the Councillors, and this, together with other AGAR information had been sent to PKF, the External Auditor. Her report showed that the information presented in schedules to the Councillors and referred to by a member of the public at the meeting under item 3 of the Minutes of the 2nd February regarding various discrepancies and the findings of the Parish Council was substantiated. Of note were several payments which had not been agreed and authorised by the council, mis-entered payments, payments which did not have supporting invoices, VAT had not been claimed and a receipt for Xmas raffle takings of £50 had been given but not banked. Her conclusion was that Minutes and decisions taken by the council need to be carefully monitored and cheque signatories must be vigilant in ensuring that invoices correspond to the payments, VAT needs to be re-claimed, the HSBC Playpark bank account which had been closed needs further investigation and councillors need to be clear as to their financial responsibilities for the management of public funds. Councillors have taken note of all the recommendations and will apply them in future.

A previous auditor recommended by LALC who did the interim report in January had sent in a year end internal report stating that everything was correct without seeing any documents. This had been reported to LALC who agreed that no proper audit had been done. They would take this up with him and agreed to credit the Parish Council account.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) Payment of accounts were agreed of £95 to Jen Cooper for Internal Audit, £22.66 to Sis Dennis for waste removal £433.46 to K Hayes for salary and £72.66 to K Hayes for expenses which included £26 for homeworking allowance, £108.20 to HMRC for PAYE on salary and £88.04 to Anglian Water for Playpark water rates.
- b) Barclays Bank Business were holders of the Parish Council account. Despite the form requested having been signed and returned to them on the 7th April and the Chairman and Clerk phoning them several times they still had not got the mandate updated with the new signatories. It is still being chased up after over two months from first handing in the mandate change and this length of time would appear to be sheer incompetency on the bank's Business Banking part. I
- c) The Playpark Account is still proving very difficult to resolve. The missing funds from the HSBC account has been reported to their complaints department but no reply has yet been received. The account which we are trying to open with Lloyds is still not completed. It had been thought that this was near completion but the last phone call made this week stated that 'the system' has rejected this account as the Charity Commission only states Hogsthorpe Parish Council as a corporate body as trustees. They now require further paperwork to complete which should be received within the next couple of days. Again, the bank do not reply and the information has to be sought during lengthy phone calls. The clerk is currently holding £176 on behalf of the Playpark chairman which will be banked as soon as possible.

10. CHURCHYARD WALL COLLAPSE

Members of the public were invited to give their comments as this was a very contentious issue. A contractor had been approached with regard to how to proceed and the cemetery had been closed off as the wall was considered a danger to the public. It is thought that the cemetery belongs to the Parish Council but the wall was erected some 100 years ago by the church authorities and would be listed. A member of the public said he was prepared to clear the bricks and stack them but this could not be agreed by the Parish Council as that would make it their responsibility. It was agreed that the situation of the cemetery being closed was unacceptable for the general public but the diocese could not be contacted as yet to find a way forward. After much discussion, it was agreed that the contractor would meet again with the Chairman and contact the diocese to ask their opinion. It was agreed that should they not provide an urgent solution, a Section 78 under the dangerous building Regulations should be served and the whole wall would be fenced off until a satisfactory answer could be found.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 1st June 2023 time to be confirmed.

18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further business to report.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm