

SCARISBRICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held at Bescar Lane Methodist Church at 7.30pm on Monday 5th June 2023.

PRESENT:

Councillor A Blundell (in the Chair)
Councillor N Makin
Councillor C Marshall
Councillor J Marshall
Councillor A Pickersgill
Councillor G Pratt (arrived 7:40pm)
Councillor S Roberts
Councillor M Wood

Mrs J Smith (Clerk) in attendance

10 members of the public were in attendance.

23/099 APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Cllr C Berks.

23/100 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Cllr C Marshall and Cllr J Marshall declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application 2023/0355/FUL.

23/101 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 9th May 2023 were a true record and should be signed by the Chairman.

23/102 ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32pm.

Members of the public spoke about issues affecting residents of Hillock Lane and Hillock Close in relation to the residential care/crisis centre facility located on Hillock Close. Residents are allegedly subjected to shouting, verbal abuse and threats, loud music, and damage to property/cars at all times of the day and night. Some vulnerable residents, who are in sheltered accommodation, are afraid to leave their homes or to walk around the area.

The Police have been called on numerous occasions and have advised residents to keep their doors and windows closed, which is not an acceptable solution particularly during the summer months.

Concerns were also raised regarding the safeguarding of clients in the care facility in terms of the standard of care that is being provided when they are seen to be escaping and vaping.

Residents also informed the Council of speeding issues in Hillock Lane and of the problems caused by resident parking in the turning area.

Councillors agreed to highlight the issues raised to WLBC and Lancashire County Council from an environmental health perspective. There will be a future SPC agenda item to provide an update.

The meeting was re convened at 8:00pm.

23/103 PLANNING:

- a) The following application was considered, and the decision taken as shown:

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Reference	Details	Applicant	Address	Resolution
2023/0235/FUL Response Date: 09/06/23	Erection of gateposts, gates and railings to front of Holly House.	Mr Jordan Goldie	Holly House, Southport Road, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire.	No objection
2023/0355/FUL Response Date: None given	First floor rear extension	Mr and Mrs Kenyon	Greenfield Cottage, Drummersdale Lane, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire.	No comment

23/104 FLOOD EQUIPMENT:

It was noted that the flood equipment is now in the cabinets.

The expenditure to date was noted and the arrangements to provide access to residents was confirmed.

It was resolved that:

A further 20 Hydrosacks be purchased.

The cabinet access arrangements be shared with local clergy and further details be provided to residents in the SPC July Newsletter

23/105 FINANCE:

It was resolved to approve the following accounts for payment:

	Payee	Detail	Amount Payable £ (inc VAT where applicable)	Authority	Payment Type
1	J Smith	The scheduled payment of the Clerk's salary as per contract of employment for June 23.		LGA 1972, s112 (2)	Electronic (due 29 th June 2023)
2	Microsoft	MS365 2 nd May to 1st June. Due 2 nd June. Inv E0200NHP43	19.92	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Credit Card
3	J Smith	2 padlocks for Southport Rd SPIDS (B & Q receipt attached)	28.00	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Electronic
4 – See Note 1	CSI Products	Hydrosack 10 packs (2 per pack)	234.60	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Credit Card
5	Bescar Lane Methodist Church	Meeting room hire (pro-forma invoice)	30.00	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Electronic
6	HMRC	PAYE/NI payment for Apr 23 to June 23	588.84	LGA 1972, s112 (2)	Electronic

Note 1: This item is included subject to approval at agenda item 23/103

Remittances Received - NONE

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23/106 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT (YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2023):

There was a discussion regarding the issues raised in the internal audit report and it was noted that the auditor was of the overall opinion that, in the areas examined, the Council has effective systems of financial control in place with no major issues have been identified.

Compliments were given to the Clerk/RFO on maintaining detailed transparent systems and documentation.

There was further discussion on the other recommendations/findings included in the report as follows:

It was resolved to provide the following responses to the issues raised by the auditor:

AREAS EXAMINED

Minutes, invoices and the cashbook; original invoices were not examined with reliance being placed on electronic copies; no issues arose from this. Council is requested to advise if the sight of electronic copies only is satisfactory.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: Council is satisfied with electronic copies. The concept of paper invoices is out-dated, as they are received electronically. In any case, there is only ever one "original" copy of a paper invoice. Once it is copied to distribute around councillors it then becomes electronic. Regulation 113A of the Public Contracts Regulations deals with the issue in more depth.

Agenda items (and any associated papers referred to) should contain as much information and detail as possible. I urge the Council (especially in the interests of transparency) not to use the phrase "To consider" in isolation and to ensure that Resolutions taken are based on specific detail within the Agenda item.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: This was addressed at the interim report with advice sought from LALC. The Council will continue to use the phrase 'to consider' in common with most other Councils.

On receipt by the Chairman of the resignation of a Councillor, a Proposition should be placed on the next available Agenda for the Council to formally 'Declare a Vacancy' and instruct the Clerk to institute the relevant statutory procedure in respect of publishing a public notice to test for the possibility of an election. The Council's own Co-Option Policy Document can then be followed.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: The Council follows the procedure as stated in section 6.12 of "Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration".

RECOMMENDATIONS/FINDINGS

- 1) The present draft "Statement of Financial Accounts" for the year requires both the Clerk and the Chairman to sign confirming "a true and complete record". Whilst clearly the Clerk/RFO must make this assertion, it is unreasonable to ask the Chairman (either personally or on behalf of the Council) to similarly confirm. The Council should pass a motion "Noting" the report which permits the Chairman to then sign in acknowledgement of this.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: It is the RFO who is responsible for the accounts. The council has a role in noting the accounts which is subsequently minuted. The accounts are usually presented in May and are "approved for signature by the Chair". Provided the process is minuted the signature of the Chair is not formally required. This will be further considered during the 2023/24 accounts preparation.

- 2) Opening Balances on Financial Statements and Budgets should always be shown in order that the Income & Expenditure can be balanced against the Bank Statement. A New Year budget should itemise all expenditure and any allocated Reserves against the Council's total liquid assets including the brought forward balance from the previous year.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: The budget is set in January for the following financial year (as required) which means that the opening balance for that financial year won't be known until the end of March by definition.

- 3) VAT numbers should be shown in the standard format 3-4-2 (xxx xxxx xx).

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COUNCIL RESPONSE: HMRC website allows entry of numbers with or without spaces, there is no "standard format".

- 4) An up-to-date Land Registry search was carried out (with the agreement of the Clerk) to confirm rightful ownership of the land asset (Millennium Wood). It was noted that the Council's address for this purpose was noted as that of a previous incumbent Clerk who left the Council's employ approx. 8 years ago; it is recommended that this is now updated. As a restrictive covenant on this land prevents all but Agricultural of Forestry use, it is suggested that Council may wish to review its value to the community.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: The Council will conduct enquiries with Land Registry.

- 5) As previously advised, the law requires that Loose-leaf Minutes should be consecutively numbered as if in a folio book; I have only had sight of Minutes as published on the Council's website which are not 'page numbered'.

COUNCIL RESPONSE: Minutes are consecutively numbered which should suffice. However, LGA 1972, Sch12, para 41 (2) requires that the pages in the book held carry consecutive page numbers. Relevant legislation has not been updated in the last 50 years. To comply with this the Council will consecutively number the pages from April 2023.

23/107 INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24:

To comply with Financial Regulations 4 quotes had been obtained for the provision of internal audit services for 2023/24. Auditors were advised that the audits would be conducted completely remotely and were also requested to provide details of their proposed workplan covering 2 audits for the year (interim and final), their hourly rate, and the expected length of time they would expect their work to take.

The quotes were all reviewed against these requirements.

The quote received from Mulberry & Co provided all required information and proposed workplan as follows: The first (interim audit) would concentrate on the governance and accountability functions of the council and deal with the non-financial aspects of the audit. (Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, risk assessments, internal control systems, processes, policies, etc.).

The second (final audit) would focus on the financial aspects, checking of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and the supporting information being submitted to the external auditors.

The hourly rate is quoted at £65 per hour with the expectation that total audit time for the year would be a total of 4 to 5 hours. In the event that the Council were to appoint for a 3-year period the fee would be fixed at £65 per hour for the duration.

It was resolved to:

Appoint Mulberry and Co as the SPC Internal Auditor for a 3- year period (2023 to 2026). Clerk to complete formalities

Agree the interim and final proposed workplans, which are a departure from previous SPC internal audit work.

23/108 VANDALISED WOODEN BUS SHELTER, SOUTHPORT RD:

This wooden bus shelter has been vandalised on a few occasions and has again been damaged. The back panel has been kicked out and a number of the wooden slats are no longer re-fixable.

The bus shelter is located in the hedge and is difficult to access for maintenance and/or cleaning.

A quote to repair the damage, by fixing a galvanised corrugated metal sheet, has been obtained. This is for £285 (supply and installation) and is expected to be more vandal proof.

The cost of a new Perspex bus shelter (which would be difficult to install and maintain due to the adjacent hedge) is £3,295.

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It was resolved to:

Accept the quote for repairs to the bus shelter and request the contractor to also apply wood treatment to the accessible areas.

23/109 CORONATION PROJECT:

Cllr J Marshall provided a price list of bare rooted trees that could either be planted in MillenniumWood or made available to residents. However, these could not be planted until October/November.

It was resolved to:

Defer this item for further discussion at the SPC September meeting.

Request Clerk to contact the Millennium Wood volunteer tree wardens regarding potential locations for planting trees or a single specimen tree.

23/110 MORRIS DANCERS RED TELEPHONE BOX:

Cllr N Makin provided details of the suggestions received and concerns were raised regarding potential vandalism issues around the potential use as a book and/or seed swap.

There was some discussion regarding use as a Scarisbrick heritage display of images, diorama, artwork etc. However, the telephone box requires specialist restoration and costs need to be determined before any progress can be made.

It was resolved to:

Obtain quotes for repair and restoration of the phone box -Clerk to action.

Request local artists and historians (via the newsletter) if they would like to submit images etc for display- Clerk to action.

23/111 SCARISBRICK GARDENING COMPETITION 2023 AND PROPOSED SCARECROW COMPETITION 2023:

Information for both competitions will be provided on SPC website and noticeboards and also included in the SPC July Newsletter.

A best Vegetable Plot category will be added to the garden competition and a trophy will be sponsored.

23/112 COMMUNITY HUB WORKING GROUP:

It was resolved to:

Approve the Terms of Reference for the Group.

23/113 MS365 SUBSCRIPTION: t

It was resolved to:

Approve the renewal of the subscription for 12 months commencing 9th June 2023.

23/114 CHANGES TO BANK MANDATE/SIGNATORIES:

It was resolved to:

Approve the required changes.

23/115 COUNCILLOR VACANCY:

It was resolved to:

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Advertise the vacancy for co-option (if no petition for election is received by 20th June 2023) in accordance with the SPC Councillor Co-option Policy and Procedure.

23/116 SPC NEWSLETTER:

The SPC July Newsletter will be produced towards the end of June for distribution in early July. The printing cost quoted is the same as for the March Newsletter.

It was resolved to:

Accept the quote for printing the July Newsletter.

23/117 MILLENNIUM WOOD OWL AND BIRD BOXES:

It was resolved to:

Accept the quote for installation of the owl and bird boxes.

23/118 CLERKS REPORT:

The Clerk's report was noted.

23/119 COUNCILLORS REPORTS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:

Cllr J Marshall requested that Hillock Lane issues be included on SPC July agenda.

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:45pm