

## SCARISBRICK PARISH COUNCIL

### **Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held at St Marks Parish Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 6th November 2023.**

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#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor A Blundell (in the Chair)  
Councillor C Berks  
Councillor N Makin  
Councillor J Marshall  
Councillor A Pickersgill (arrived 7:35pm)  
Councillor G Pratt  
Councillor S Roberts

Mrs J Smith (Clerk) in attendance

There were 3 members of the public in attendance.

#### **23/170 APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from Cllr C Marshall and County Cllr D O'Toole.

#### **23/171 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Cllr J Marshall declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application 2023/0872/FUL.

#### **23/172 MINUTES:**

*It was resolved that:*

*The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 were a true record and should be signed by the Chairman.*

#### **23/173 ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37pm.

- a) The Millennium Wood volunteer warden gave an interesting presentation on Millennium Wood and also provided a display of the history of the Wood. He is happy to continue to maintain the archive but would prefer to see it on display for the residents of Scarisbrick. He advised that the plaque on the Millennium Oak requires attention and that a further plaque would be needed for the Coronation tree. He suggested that a natural cut stone plaque could be fixed to the ground at the bottom of the trees. He also advised that there are several ash trees in the Wood that are suffering from ash dieback and, although this does not affect the surrounding trees, the Council may want to consider removing them and replanting with another variety of tree.  
The Chair thanked the tree warden for his presentation and also for the 25 years of hard work that both tree wardens had put into Millennium Wood for which the Parish Council is very grateful.
- b) The public member of the Community Hub Working Group gave an update on the current position reached by the working group, as shown in the discussion document that had been circulated to Councillors. A point has been reached where dialogue and consultation with other parties is needed to establish whether the formation of a Community Hub is a viable project, and expenditure, for Scarisbrick. The Working Group therefore requires the consideration of the Parish Council regarding the most appropriate way forward and a continued mandate to continue with the project.  
The Chair thanked the member of the public for the information provided and advised that further consideration by the Council would be during agenda item 23/175 later in the meeting.
- c) There were no other matters raised by members of the public.
- d) There were no Borough or County Councillor reports.

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The meeting was re-convened at 8.26pm.

### 23/174 PLANNING (CLLR BERKS TOOK THE CHAIR):

Councillor Blundell did listen to the planning deliberations but did not vote on any planning application due to his membership of the WLBC Planning Committee. Cllr J Marshall left the meeting whilst planning application 2023/0872 FUL was discussed.

a) The following applications were considered, and resolutions taken as shown:

Reference	Details	Applicant	Address	Resolution
2023/0872/FUL Response date: 03/11/23 Extension granted to after 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov SPC meeting	Proposed side extension above garage	Ms M Smith	44 Drummersdale Lane, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 9RB	<i>No Comment</i>
2023/0873/FUL Response date: 03/11/23 Extension granted to after 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov SPC meeting	Erection of gateposts, gates and railings to front of Holly House	Mr Jordan Goldie	Holly House, Southport Road, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire	<i>No Comment</i>
2023/0837/FUL Response date: 10/11/23	Proposed two storey side extension	Ms Armstrong	115 Hall Road, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 9QD	<i>No Comment</i>
2023/0840/FUL Response date: 10/11/23	Retrospective application for Hay store to replace an existing lean-to building and new stable located adjoining two existing stables.	Mr John Gordon Culshaw	Pool Hey Farm, Pool Hey Lane, Scarisbrick, Southport, Lancashire	<i>No Comment</i>
2023/0848/FUL Response date: 10/11/23	Replacement windows, Infill and new door	Brake	Home Farm Cottage, 4 Scarisbrick Park, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire.	<i>No Comment</i>
2023/0958/FUL Response date: 24/11/23	Single storey rear extension and first floor side extension.	Mr & Mrs Kenningley	198 Southport Road, Scarisbrick, Southport, Lancashire, PR8 5LF	<i>Objection: The Council objects to this application due to there being insufficient information available on the WLBC planning portal to enable an informed decision to be made.</i>

b) The planning appeals submitted to the Secretary of State relating to 92 Jacksmere Lane and 20 Snape Green were considered.

*It was resolved that:*

*The Council would submit comments in support of those made by WLBC to the Planning Inspectorate by the deadline date of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Clerk to action.*

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### 23/175 COMMUNITY HUB WORKING GROUP:

The discussion document presented earlier was discussed.

***It was resolved that:***

***The Community Hub Working group should proceed to consultation with other parties and consider the outcomes from this as part of their mandate from the Council. When this has been completed a report should be presented to a future Council meeting.***

### 23/176 FINANCE:

***a) 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 November 23.		LGA 1972, s112 (2)	Electronic (due 30th Nov 2023)
2	J Smith	Travel Claim 29 <sup>th</sup> July to 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2023	31.05	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Electronic
3	St Marks	Hire of Parish Hall for SPC November meeting	30.00	LGA 1972,s111 (1)	Electronic
4	Microsoft	MS365 2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct to 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov Due 2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	21.72	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Credit Card
5	Yates Playgrounds	SPID moving July 2023. Inv 2202	265.00	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Electronic
6	Mulberry & Co	Interim Internal Audit Fee. Inv 2202	214.50	LGA 1972, s111 (1)	Electronic

***b) Income received during October 2023 was noted.***

### 23/177 BANK RECONCILIATION JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2023:

The verified bank reconciliation was noted.

### 23/178 FINANCE REPORT JULY 2023 TO SEPTEMBER 2023:

The finance report was discussed and it was noted that expenditure to 30/09/23 comprised 36% of budget. Some invoices for the period are awaited and the NJC pay award for 23/24 has not yet been agreed.

***It was resolved that:***

***The Finance Report be approved.***

### 23/179 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/24:

This is the first report produced by the new internal auditors Mulberry & Co. Overall the report confirms that no errors or misstatements were identified, and testing did not identify any significant weaknesses in SPC internal controls. The report recognises that SPC take governance, policies, and procedures seriously and the auditors have stated that the systems and procedures in place are fit for purpose and there are no significant failings. This means that the recommendations made are intended to serve as pointers to improve upon an already well-ordered system.

The recommendations made are as follows and the Council's responses are also shown:

Audit Finding/Recommendation	Responses & Proposed Actions
The Council is required to post supporting documentation with the agendas, on its website, as outlined by the Information Commissioners Office	<i>During discussions the auditor advised the RFO that about 50% of parish councils do not do this. The ICO guidance does state that 'any background documents which are referred to in the agenda or minutes, or that were circulated in preparation for the meeting. These are</i>

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	<p><i>considered part of the agenda'. However, ICO guidance also states that an authority would not be expected to include personal information, information that would breach DP Act, or information that would be impractical or labour intensive to publish.</i></p> <p><b>Actions: Include message on agenda page of SPC website that non-confidential meeting papers are available on request to the Clerk. This can also be considered further as part of decisions made regarding the website (see final point in table).</b></p>
As at September 2023 balances totalled £103k and the Council should consider increasing the Fidelity Insurance guarantee to cover the maximum balance held at any point during the year.	<p><b>Actions: The 5yr SPC insurance arrangement with Zurich comes to an end in 2024 and a quote for a higher level of fidelity insurance cover can be requested as part of the quotation exercise that will need to be undertaken. The auditor has confirmed the strength of SPC internal controls – all bank transactions require 2 signatories, and the Clerk is not a signatory.</b></p>
As at September 2023 £82k was held in total reserves. This is split between earmarked and general reserves. Some amounts designated as general reserves are for specific items and would be better represented as earmarked in the Council's accounts.	<p><b>Actions: Historically the Council has included reserves for operating costs, locum clerk, election, and maintenance as general reserves. This recommendation would mean that the only general reserve would be the operating costs reserve as it is not for a specific purpose. The RFO will investigate this further along with any effect on the AGAR at year end.</b></p>
The Council holds 3 accounts at Unity Trust bank. Balances at the end of September 2023 totalled £103k. The Council benefits from the £85k protection offered by the financial Services Compensation Scheme and may wish to consider a further bank account with another provider to maximise this protection.	<p><b>Actions: September 2023 is half-way through the financial year and further expenditure of approx. £20k is expected by year end which will reduce the bank balance nearer to £85k. However, receipts for items such as CIL are not known. In general, high street banks are not keen on providing accounts for Parish Councils especially where they will not be used for transactions. RFO will investigate further.</b></p>
The Council's website does not include an accessibility statement and may not meet require accessibility standards.	<p><i>This was raised during discussions with the Clerk and does not appear in the report. However, it does require consideration as the Council should be compliant with Accessibility best practice.</i></p> <p><b>Actions: The maintenance and updating of the Council's current website needs to be considered further. RFO will contact current webmaster and establish whether this task needs to be outsourced elsewhere so that the website can be either brought up to the required accessibility standards or replaced.</b></p>

***It was resolved that:***

- a) ***The Internal Audit Report be approved.***
- b) ***The RFO should make further investigations as shown above and report back to January SPC meeting so that budgetary implications can be considered for 2024/25 budget setting.***

**23/180 MEMORIAL BENCHES:**

The estimated costs of the benches for Millennium Wood are £1,215 and a Parish Champion Grant has been received for £800 towards this.

***It was resolved that:***

***The Council will progress with the purchase and installation of the benches during December/January. Clerk to action.***

**23/181 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY ARRANGEMENTS:**

The Clerk advised that the Village Hall had been booked since January 2023 for the service. However, the Village Hall were unable to provide details of access arrangements to the Hall until w/c 6<sup>th</sup> November. She advised that she would be contacting Village Hall on 7<sup>th</sup> November for an update, and would inform Councillors as soon as possible.

Lists of the Fallen were handed out and poppy wreaths have been prepared.

Cllr Makin and Cllr J Marshall will be providing refreshments at the end of the Service.

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### **23/182 CLERKS REPORT: FOR INFORMATION**

The Clerk's report was noted.

### **23/183 COUNCILLORS REPORTS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS:**

Cllr J Marshall advised that the Peter Lathom Charity has awarded funding to various organisations and Schools in the area. There is also funding available to individuals (under 25 years) who were pupils at Ormskirk Rd School. Further details are available from the Charity.

Cllr S Roberts requested that the removal of the trees affected by ash dieback in Millennium Wood be included on December agenda.

Cllr N Makin requested that the possibility of setting up a working group to consider planning matters be included on December agenda,

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9:05pm