

SOUTH KYME PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
Held on 4th December 2023

Present: Cllr C Chapman (Chair)
Cllrs C Clayton P Goode T Kerr
D Langley

Absent: Cllrs J Nadin C Midgley

In attendance: Mr A Chapman (Acting Secretary)

Also present: 1 member of the public

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and stated that apologies had been received from the Clerk who was currently unwell. Mr A Chapman (IT Manager) agreed to assist the council by acting as the Secretary for the evening.

A resident wished to make an apology on behalf of the village residents for the way that the Council, and in particular the Chair, had been treated over the Armistice Day wreath laying ceremony and thanked individuals present for the time and efforts that they gave to the village generally.

A resident stated that, in their opinion, the Armistice Day wreath laying ceremony was a public event however, at this year's event it had been effectively hijacked for individual's personal reasons; there had been no military involvement whatsoever even though the sole purpose of this event was to honour those who had made the ultimate sacrifice for their country over the years. They stated that events throughout the country were run by councils and that there were rules of etiquette and protocol that were clearly laid down on the Royal British Legion website for councils' guidance. They reminded the council that funding had been allocated from public monies for the wreaths and asked the council what they intended to do about the situation. The Chair stated that this should be added to the next meetings agenda for further discussion.

The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.

153. **Apologies For Absence.**

The meeting was advised that apologies with valid reasons for absence had been received from Cllr J Nadin and Cllr C Midgley.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That apologies be noted with valid reasons for absence be accepted from Cllr J Nadin and Cllr C Midgley.

154. **To Receive Declarations Of Interest Under The Localism Act 2011.**

There were no declarations of interest.

155. **To Approve As Correct Records The Minutes Of The Previous Council Meetings And To Authorise The Chair To Sign The Official Minutes.**

The minutes from the meetings held on 30th October 2023 were approved as a correct record of the previous meeting.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That the Chair be authorised to sign the official minutes for the 30th October 2023.

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Chair of SKPC

156. **To Receive Brief Reports As Tabled:**

In the absence of the Clerk, Cllr C Chapman gave an update on correspondence sent and received.

Hannah Robson the NKDC Housing Officer had been contacted and the rubbish accumulating at the residence near the end of Low Road had been investigated. The rubbish had been cleared but Cllr P Goode stated that it was already building up again. The council agreed that evidence should continue to be provided to NKDC whenever necessary to ensure that the issue continues to be dealt with.

Requests for the provision of land for a village children's play area had been sent to local landowners. One favourable response had already been received and would require further discussion.

A letter had been received from the pensions regulators asking for further information on the previous Clerk. The new Clerk had responded appropriately.

A confirmation had been received from the Canoe Foundation granting a 6-month extension to the grant payable for the completed canoe platform. This meant that its completion was not now necessary until May 2024.

Correspondence had been received from Sills and Betteridge reference the ownership of the riverbank. An urgent response was required by the solicitors before the 12 Dec 2023 and therefore it was agreed that this subject be added to the agenda for discussion at this meeting.

Cllr T Kerr gave an update as the council RFO.

Progress had finally been made with the bank in transitioning to the new signatories and updating names and addresses. He confirmed that a bank balance had now been given and this appeared to be as expected.

It was highlighted that with the transition to the new council the account had been registered with two signatories; this differed from the way the account had previously been run. Unfortunately this had the consequence of preventing the council having access to online banking, something the RFO considered essential. Online banking was required to pay bills in a timely manner and for the RFO to produce statements and reconciliations for the council's meetings. The council agreed that the account should be changed to allow a single signatory for banking purposes to enable the RFO or other individuals authorised by the Council to access online banking.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That the South Kyme Parish Council bank account be authorised and transactions enabled, by a single signatory, to enable online banking access.

Because of the current limited bank access, the RFO still had work to do to be able to carry out normal business.

157. **To Present The Budget Monitoring Report And Approve The Bank Reconciliation For The Current Financial Period.**

Once again, some further progress had been made towards accessing the PC bank accounts, however access to the council bank system was still yet to be resolved. The RFO was therefore unable to consider the Budget Monitoring report and Bank Reconciliations and it was therefore proposed that this should be postponed.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Date 18/1/24

20 – 23

Chair of SKPC

158. **To Authorise The Signing Of Accounts For Payment For The Current Financial Period.**

As access to the council bank system was yet to be resolved it was proposed that this should be postponed.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That this will be discussed at the next meeting.

159. **To Discuss And Approve The 2024/2025 Annual Budget, Reserves And Precept.**

The RFO gave an overview of the proposed budget for 2024/2025. It was agreed that small updates be made to most previous budget to allow for inflationary costs, however the councils income using the existing precept figure still meant that income exceeded expenditure, even after consideration of creeping costs on some historical initiatives.

It was discussed that at present the council was not having to pay a clerk. It was agreed that this situation could well change during the next financial period and therefore any monies expected to potentially be paid should be set aside as a reserve or contingency for that eventuality.

It was also discussed that any income for grass cutting from the County Council or from the church be set aside as a contingency to pay for fuel (if this was not forthcoming from local providers) or for maintenance works to Council assets for grass cutting. This would also build reserves for future equipment as long as local providers remained generous.

The RFO stated that the budget would be broken down into two categories: those cost that remain reasonably fixed, such as venue hire fees, insurance, broadband, etc; and those that are more variable such as for initiatives like Biodiversity and the provision of facilities for residents.

It was also noted that although there were no elections forecast for a further 4 years a snap local election still needed to be catered for and a reserve would need to be held for this eventuality. The RFO was to ascertain what this figure required should be.

There was a discussion about whether a further Speed Indicator Device (SID) should be purchased for the village and the future use of the shared ownership one with North Kyme. It was agreed that this should be discussed further at the next meeting.

There was further discussion on the spiralling cost of the canoe platform initiative. Around £3,100 had already been spent on materials and surveys for its installation however, there was a potential for a further circa £2,000 for the remaining costs for completion. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the canoe organisations and Sleaford Navigation Trust to determine whether they would be willing to assist with the funding of these escalating costs.

An external audit was due to take place on 18th December 2023.

It was agreed that the RFO was to prepare the detailed Budget paperwork for the next meeting ready for formal sign off by the Council.

160. **To Receive Any Further Reports From Councillors.**

The Chair reminded all councillors that clear communication between them was vital to the effective and efficient running of the council. She encouraged the council to make use of the WhatsApp group set up for this purpose.

A response from the South Kyme Church had not yet been received reference the locating of the tree commemorating the late Queens Jubilee. The Chair agreed to follow this up.

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The Chair stated that the safety railing at the Clay Bank end of the riverside footpath had now been completed and a decision was imminent from Highways reference potential funding of a ramp and easier access at that point.

The South Kyme Golf Club had approached the council asking for a closer relationship with the village and its residents. The Chair had contacted the new Captain to discuss their aspirations. The Council welcomed this positive step and agreed that working more closely with the Golf Club would be advantageous to the village. It was agreed that future events held at the Club could be advertised through council sources.

Cllr C Clayton advised that although she had been approached by Steve Hayes of the Sleaford Navigation Trust reference an excess of coir rolls that may be available for repairs to the riverbank at South Kyme, she had been advised that there was insufficient time for this to be made possible. However, funding may be available in the near future and suggested that a funding application be made next year.

Cllr C Clayton also highlighted that the East Mercia Rivers Trust were due to carry out water quality checks in rivers and that this would be an excellent opportunity to involve local residents and in particular younger members of the community.

Cllr D Langley asked whether there had been any further update on presentations to be made by local installers of solar installations. Although one had been offered by the Beacon Fen Energy Park a date had yet to be agreed.

161. **To Discuss And Agree Actions Relating To The Ownership Of The Riverbank Currently Being Pursued Through Legal Proceedings.**

An urgent letter had been received from Sills and Betteridge solicitors stating that the application for river ownership submitted by the previous council had now been objected to by three individual parties. It was discussed that the number of issues debated by these individuals were various and would be very contentious and some difficult to prove or disprove.

A decision was required by the solicitors as to whether the Council wished to pursue the claim or not. A discussion was had on the potential next courses of action. Should the Council wish to pursue the ownership claim, it was agreed that it could potentially be very expensive and that it still did not guarantee a successful conclusion for the council.

The meeting was closed at 9.09 p.m. for public comment.

Members of the public commented that some of the statements made by the opposing parties were factually incorrect. It was also pointed out that ownership of the land also meant a future financial burden to the council for any repairs, maintenance or works required, as was highlighted by one of the objectors.

The meeting was re-opened at 9.11 p.m.

As the outcome and the cost to the public purse were clearly unpredictable at this stage it was agreed the risk of continuing to pursue the ownership was not in the public interest as the benefit of ownership did not outweigh these potential costs.

It was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: That the Clerk would withdraw the claim of ownership as the outcome and the cost to the public purse were clearly unpredictable and that the risk of continuing to pursue the ownership was not in the public interest as the benefit of ownership did not outweigh the potential costs.

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162. **To Note Further Agenda Items And Arrangements For The Next Ordinary Meeting (18 January 2024).**

The following items were requested to be added to the agenda for the next meeting, to discuss:

The Biodiversity Action Plan
The Canoe Platform update
The proposed footpath maintenance initiative.
The provision of a children's play area.
The funding of a Village Fitness Class.
The Armistice Day wreath laying event.
The funding of a further SID.

The meeting closed at 9.19 p.m.

Date 18/1/24

23 – 23

Chair of SKPC