

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EASINGTON VILLAGE PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2022**

- Present: Councillor L Morton (Chair)
Councillors L Birkett, W Day, S Laws, J Lee, A Lumsden and A Robson
- Staff: Mr S Wardle (Interim Clerk) & Mrs K Hall (Admin Assistant)
- EVPC 22/23/104 **Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence were RECEIVED and APPROVED for Councillor E Marriott .
- RESOLVED** that the information given, be NOTED
- EVPC 22/23/105 **Declarations of Interest on Items on the Agenda**
Councillor J Lee declared an interest in items 112(b) and (c) on the agenda in her capacity as an allotment holder as they relate to allotment matters.
- RESOLVED:** that the declarations be received and NOTED.
- EVPC 22/23/106 **Public Participation**
There were no members of the public registered to speak.
- RESOLVED:** that the information given, be NOTED.
- EVPC 22/23/107 **Minutes of the last Meeting held on 11th July, 2022, Special Meeting held on 18th August 2022 and Staffing Committee held on 26th August 2022**
- RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the above meetings be confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman.
- EVPC 22/23/108 **Matters Arising**
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| EVPC/21/22/272 | Risk Assessments – were ongoing. |
| EVPC/21/22/331 | Damage to Village Green (Clappersgate) – signs had been erected and the grounds staff had been asked at a recent Team meeting to look for old “No Parking” signs. No reply had been received on the legal advice which had been requested regarding the fencing near to Sea View House |
| EVPC/21/22/075 | Planning Applications – objection had been submitted on behalf of the Parish Council regarding DM/22/01768/FPA |
| EVPC/21/22/078 | Police Matters – the identified areas of concern had been submitted to the Local Policing Team |
| EVPC/21/22/081 | Allotment Inspections – Letters had been circulated and responses received from 3 tenants to be considered under Agenda Item 9b |
| EVPC/22/23/084 | Memorial Headstone Application – Memorial permit signed and returned to memorial Mason |

EVPC/22/23/098 HR Issues – Staffing Committee had met and subsequently a Special Parish Council meeting had been held on 18th August 2022

RESOLVED: that the information given, be NOTED.

EVPC 22/23/109

Police Matters

Members considered the report of the Police dated 12 September, which had been previously circulated.

RESOLVED that the information given, be received, and NOTED and that DCC and the Police be contacted regarding recurring problems associated with activities of residents from Kings Arms.

EVPC 22/23/110

Report of the County Councillor

There was no County Councillor in attendance

RESOLVED that the information given, be NOTED and a future report be awaited

EVPC 22/23/111

Seaton Holme

A summary of current and future bookings and enquiries for Seaton Holme was provided for Members information.

The Interim Clerk suggested that a review of overhead costs should be undertaken in order to provide a m² rate that could be applied to different rooms and considered as part of a wider review of hire rates, fees and charges. The costings would provide a baseline whereby Members could make a more informed decision on charges and take account of the overheads, energy and staffing costs involved which could feed into the wider budget process. As an example, the Council could decide to have community rates for local groups and organisations and a different rate for external bookings.

RESOLVED that the information given, be NOTED and the Interim Clerk prepare some costings to be considered by the Council as part of the budget process.

EVPC 22/23/112

Cemetery and Grounds

a) Report of the Cemetery Superintendent

Members considered the Cemetery Superintendent's report which had been previously circulated.

Members requested the Memorial Plaque be fitted at the earliest opportunity and that the necessary repairs to the cemetery gates be arranged.

RESOLVED that the information given, be NOTED and the actions outlined be undertaken.

Councillor Mrs J Lee declared an interest in items 112(b) and (c) below in her capacity as an allotment holder as both related to allotment matters.

b) Allotments

The Interim Clerk gave an update on allotment tenant management issues and in particular reference to the Notices to Quit that had been issued in

relation to 2 allotments. The Clerk outlined that following an inspection he had undertaken on 3 October he had withdrawn the Notice for allotment SR06B as adequate improvements had been undertaken and that the tenant had given his assurance to adequately maintain his allotment going forward.

Further discussions with the Interim Clerk were ongoing regarding allotment SR39A, and further progress would be reported back to Members.

RESOLVED that the information given be NOTED

c) Allotment Management

Councillor A Robson had requested consideration be given to handing the running of the allotment site back to the Allotment Association which had been previously deferred by the Council in July.

Discussion ensued regarding previous problems that had been experienced resulting in the Parish Council taking the decision to manage the allotments direct.

The Interim Clerk suggested that rather than simply refusing the suggestion, the Allotment Association be asked to put forward a full and detailed bona fide written case to the Council for consideration, illustrating in detail their proposal and how they would satisfy any Parish Council requirements to ensure the effective management of the allotments.

RESOLVED that the suggestion above be AGREED and that Councillor Robson refer the Council's decision back to the Allotment Association.

d) Cemetery Mapping

The Interim Clerk outlined that he had been unable to find a Council decision to undertake the necessary site work and obtain the necessary software and licences to complete the digital mapping of the cemetery. He had followed up previous correspondence with Pear Technology Services Limited in November 2021 and they had confirmed the original costings as detailed below would still apply:

- Prepare digital map of existing plots using existing paper maps - £1250.00
- Map out grave layout for new Section F - £300.00
- MapLink software - £400.00
- MapLink annual support and software updates £90.00/annum

The above prices did not include VAT

RESOLVED that the information given be NOTED and that the above proposal from Pear Technology Services Limited be ACCEPTED at a cost of £1950 plus the annual software support and licence and be progressed as soon as practicable.

e) Double Depth Plots- Rules of Management & Fees

The Interim Clerk advised Members that as the new part of the cemetery was now in use (Section F) and would facilitate double depth plots no provision for fees was included in the Rules of Management & Fees. As an interim measure it had been agreed in liaison with the Chairman that an additional £25.00 fee would be charged for a double depth plot and that it be reviewed when the Council considers a review of all fees and charges.

RESOLVED that the information given be NOTED and the interim action taken be ENDORSED

EVPC 22/23/113

FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Bank Balances as at 30.09.2022

The Administration Officer & Interim Clerk reported that the bank balances as at 30.9.22 were £8,100.50 in the Current Account and £164,491.85 in the Savings Account totalling £172,592.35

RESOLVED: that the information given, be NOTED
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b) Income and Expenditure Report to 31.8.22

The Clerk updated Members on the Council's income and expenditure.

RESOLVED that the information given, be NOTED.

c) Bank Transfers

The Clerk informed Members that the Transfers for July, August & September were as follows:

	Current – Savings	Savings - Current
July 2022	£75,581.21	£13,143.10
August 2022	£23,592.91	£22,329.08
September 2022	£690.4	£10,937.54

RESOLVED that the Transfers be NOTED and ENDORSED.

d) Invoices for Endorsement of Payment

RESOLVED: that the invoices for payment, together with payments of donations/petty cash/payroll, for July, August & September; details of which had been printed and circulated to each Member (a copy of which is appended to the minutes) be ENDORSED;

e) Income Received

RESOLVED: that the income received for July, August & September; details of which had been printed and circulated to each Member (a copy of which is appended to the minutes) be NOTED.

f) Audit & Notice of Conclusion of the Audit & Annual return for Year Ended 31 March 2022

RESOLVED that the Notice from Mazars Auditors, and documentation dated 17 August confirming the completion of the Councils Audit for year ended 31 March 2022 be RECEIVED, together with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit which had been published by the Council, copies of which had been circulated to each Member. It was noted that no significant matters had been raised and no areas for minor scope for improvement identified.

The report had identified the following other matters not affecting their opinion to be drawn to the attention of the Council:

In undertaking the review of 2020/21 Annual Return it came to our attention the Council had not met the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in providing electors with a period of 30 working days to inspect the accounts. The Council correctly answered no to the relevant assertion in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement and has complied with the regulations in 2022.

We were required to return the Annual Governance & Accountability Return to enable the Council to correct the following:

A) The balance brought forward at Box1 (2020/21) was incorrect. It was initially shown as £75,053 rather than £73,053 as per the opening balance of the AGAR; and

B) The Council has left Box10 for the year ended 31 March 2022 in section 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) blank. Although the answer could be inferred from other answers on the AGAR the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate

In future the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete

FURTHER RESOLVED that the other matters identified above, be RECEIVED and NOTED.

g) Request for Financial Assistance – Durham Hospital Radio

The Interim Clerk suggested the Council implement a formalised pro-forma application for all similar requests for financial assistance and that a copy be sent to Durham Hospitals Radio.

RESOLVED that the suggestion be AGREED and that the Interim Clerk prepare a formal application for future requests for financial assistance

h) Budget Arrangements

The Interim Clerk outlined some key areas for Members to consider when planning to review budgets and determine it's Precept for 2023/24. Inflation was currently +10% which would impact on all supplies and services. The National pay award 2022/23 was pending (anticipated to be 8-9% and huge increases in energy prices would all have a major impact on expenditure. In summary, the Interim Clerk estimated increasing overheads and costs of approximately +£25k to stand still. It was therefore important to ensure the Council identified efficiencies and looked at maximising income and manage expenditure carefully.

Households throughout the Parish would also be severely impacted and putting the Council in a difficult position to balance all expectations against the need for increasing the Precept and the additional impact on the community.

Durham County Council had asked all Parish & Town Councils for their Precept details by 20 January 2023 and therefore the Council needed to progress and finalise its 2023 Budget and precept requirement over the next 2 months

The Interim Clerk asked all Members to give due consideration to future projects and to review the methodology to be undertaken for the budget at the next meeting.

In the meantime, the Interim Clerk would undertake some analysis to identify areas where income could be increased, and efficiencies could be made to assist with the budget process.

Members commented on the gravity of the situation and also the fact there may be a longer term issue requiring the Council to think medium to longer term when considering budgets.

RESOLVED that the information given be NOTED and that Members give due consideration to future projects and plans to bring forward to a future meeting to determine the 2023 Budget and review of current Fees & Charges.

EVPC 22/23/114

Planning Matters – Applications, Refusals, Approvals, Withdrawals and Appeals

RESOLVED that the schedule of planning matters (applications, refusals, approvals, withdrawals, and appeals) a copy of which had been included on the agenda and circulated to all Members be RECEIVED and NOTED.

EVPC 22/23/115

Members reports of their Attendance at Meetings and Events on Behalf of the Parish Council

As there had been no meetings or events, no reports were provided

RESOLVED: that the information given be NOTED.

EVPC 22/23/116

Progress Report of the Interim Clerk

- a) **Staffing Resources** – to be dealt with after exclusion of press and public
- b) **Interim Clerk Position** – to be dealt with after exclusion of press and public
- c) **Remembrance Day Arrangements** – Parish Council wreath to be laid by Chairman and Interim Clerk to arrange to give a £50.00 donation to the Royal British Legion
- d) **Christmas Tree Lighting Event**- Tree to be delivered week commencing 21 November 2022
- e) **Review of Fees & Charges** – dealt with under Financial Matters (Budget)
- f) **Allotment Rents** – arrangements for collection or rents in place for October
- g) **Fire Alarm System Upgrade** - Interim Clerk to obtain more information from Subco Fire Systems Ltd on outstanding proposal to install new central battery unit at Seaton Holme (£5280+vat)
- h) **Community Emergency Plan** – to consider a budget allocation as part of the budget process but defer progress until appointment of Clerk

EVPC 22/23/117

Correspondence

- Horden Parish Council - Invitation to 75th Anniversary Church Service
- Warm Spaces Initiative & Funding - CDALC & DCC
- Local Government Pay Update 2022 – awaiting formal acceptance of Employers offer from Trade Unions
- CDALC Notice of AGM – 8.10.22
- Letter & Card of Thanks - Vivien Hall & Mavis Burn

EVPC 22/23/118

Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve information prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

EVPC 22/23/119

HR Issues (Exempt Item)

The Interim Clerk provided Members with a current position report regarding staffing issues and morale.

He also reminded Members that his position was interim and was initially expected to be for 2/3 weeks however the delay in the recruitment process had changed matters. He asked the Council to note that his hours were limited, and that the Council needed to note that only core priorities were being addressed. He would still continue to assist the Council on a week to week basis.

The recruitment timetable for a Clerk had been extended.

The Administration Assistant had submitted an application to review her working weekdays.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) the information given, be NOTED
- b) the Interims Clerk’s update be RECEIVED
- c) the Administration Assistants Working days be amended from 5 to 4 days per week (Mon to Thursday) with flexibility maintained by mutual agreement (current revised and substantive working hours remain unchanged)

EVPC 22/23/120

Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council was scheduled for Monday 14th November 2022 at 6.00 pm

RESOLVED: that the information given, be NOTED.

CERTIFIED TRUE RECORD

Chairman

Date