

**Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in the Village Hall, Northiam at 7.00pm, Thursday 10th November 2022**

**Members of the Public and Press are welcome and encouraged to attend.**

**Due to the adoption of new Standing Orders, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to give their opinion or view once in relation to an item on the agenda.**

**MINUTES**

**Present: Tony Wadie Chair, Tony Biggs Vice Chair, Carolyn Pierce, Bob Russel, Penny Farmer, Anthony Wontner-Smith, Dean Johnson, Jon Streatfeild, Ben Dallimore**

 **Nicola Ideson, Acting Clerk Date: 10th Nov 2022**

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1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

No apologies of absence were received.

The Chairman announced that the meeting would be recorded by the Council, Ben Dallimore was also recording

The Chairman read from a statement.

First of all, I would like to welcome our two new Councillors.

Carolyn Pierce and Robert Russell

I am sure all my colleagues would like to give them both a very warm welcome.

As you all may know I was elected on a majority vote to be the new Chairman of Northiam Parish Council. I had high hopes and I still do that I can turn this dysfunctional council round and to get it to work properly for the residents of our village.

I am the fourth Chairman in just over a year, the previous three resigned due to bullying, harassment, intimidation and sadly stress.

We are also on our fourth Clerk the previous three also resigned because of bullying, harassment and intimidating behaviour.

I am sure you all can see a trend developing which is not a pretty one.

This trend is sadly continuing with both our Clerk and myself being reported by certain councillors to the RDC standards department. These councillors feel that as their bullying and harassment tactics have worked in the past they will work again.

I would like to briefly mention one complaint from a councillor who was a friend. This councillor came to my house un announced to ask for a copy of a stables document I found in the Parish Office, this I duly gave the councillor. The councillor then stayed for a tea and a chat about my role as the chairman and the stables. I then mentioned to this councillor that I had asked our clerk to make contact with a Solicitor that the councillor had been in touch with. The purpose of this was to check that the solicitor had not been instructed or given the impression that we as a council have appointed them to work for us. At this point the councillor went red in the face and started to rant and rave threatening me and our clerk that the councillor can destroy me as a chairman/councillor and have the clerk sacked and she would not work again as a clerk. The councillor was very happy with saying these things but I was disgusted.

JS – said that this was ludicrous and untrue.

The Chairman continued his statement

The councillor left after calming down saying sorry for their outburst. This councillor later that evening sent a text to me saying and I quote, “Sorry it got a bit heated I don’t want Nicky to leave either.” For my part this was just an outburst and I had no intentions of taking it further and forgot the whole episode.

The real trouble started after our Council Meeting on the 13th October which was the day after the councillor’s outburst. The vote was regarding the CIC and their continuation of the change of use for the Stables and the SFF. This vote went against this councillor and three others and one of the four decided to abstain which made it a split vote. Being the Chairman when a vote is split I have the casting vote which I used for the CIC’s continuation.

So, after this and the fact that I dared to go against his wishes the said councillor made a breach of the code of contact complaint about me. When I found out about this I did what any human being would do and thought ‘sod it’, and promptly made a complaint of threatening behaviour against said councillor.

Sadly, three of my colleagues are totally fixated and predetermined and are hell bent on having the CIC removed as our Management Agents and to remove the current tenant from the stables, Me as the Chairman and our well qualified and professional Clerk, and will stop at nothing until they achieve this.

I detect a dose of sour grapes and them throwing their dummies out of the bath for loosing this vote but there you go and that’s that.

1. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)**

Jeanette King - I have lived in the village 24 years, I would like to object to item 7 on the agenda (A no confidence vote in the Chair called for by Cllrs Farmer, Dallimore and Streatfeild) on the following grounds, this item is inappropriate and unnecessary. I have had a professional career and was in a position of responsibility, the Chairman has been appallingly, badly treated. I have never witnessed behaviour like this in my career. The Chairman was unanimously voted in by the council and the Councillor that proposed him (Penny Farmer) is one of the Councillors who are trying to remove him.

Carol Biggs said that the way Ben Dallimore speaks to our clerk is shameful, and would not be tolerated in any other workplace setting. It is unacceptable and is very intimidating. I find it most uncomfortable to witness.

Cllr Dallimore you told us were going to save us money by changing email system could you furnish us with an update. BD I will email you, TW asked BD to answer the question. BD said that due to Standing Order 3j all questions shall be directed to the chair. The Chair in accordance with Standing Order 3h asked Ben Dallimore to answer the question. The conversation continued being directed through the chair. BD said we were going to stay with the current company as that bill had already been paid. The clerk said that it had been approved at the July meeting to change email supplier to the same company that provide the Parish Council website as company emails are included in the website package.

CB to JS due to the recent loss of mains water, at the July meeting you agreed to set up an emergency resilience team and to put an advert in the parish magazine asking for volunteers, has this been arranged? JS No it wasn’t but I did advise where the water would be after contacting Southern Water. CB you were supposed to set this up in advance so we were prepared.

Robert Maltby – I attended the CIC AGM and the support and atmosphere for that meeting was completely different to this meeting. The PC is a laughing stock, BD you are even laughing now. TW asked BD what is your purpose of being a councillor who are you actually working for I am here for the public why did you want to become a councillor. BD I wanted this council to start abiding by the rules,

A member of the public said to BD you are abusive. RM being a parish councillor is in small ways the same as representing public office Pete Sargent , Sue Schlesinger and Jacqui Harding, other Cllrs and clerks have all left because it has become so miserable.JS a number of these public meetings contain preprepared speeches by the council and the public, by the time the council get to the items on the agenda these mob tactics result in the items not being discussed properly. A member of the public -we are fed up with your nonsense.

Steve Pratt asked about the playground fence and slide, Dean Johnson said I don’t do this anymore but I have obtained 3 quotes TW we only have 2 if there is a 3rd can you email it to me. SP there is a tree behind the pavilion and that has split, one part is over and now close to the power lines and the other part is over hanging the football pavilion.TW we have the tree survey coming up (Item 10) so this should be rectified once a contractor has been decided on. SP asked when the Zip Wire at the playground would be repaired. DJ said that he has got a quote from Kompan they are the only company that can repair the zip-wire as they were the company that installed it, but they were reluctant to do anymore work for the council as they had not been paid for installing the slide. The clerk said they had been paid and that only the parts need to come from Kompan any contractor in the industry could fit them. Another contractor has offered to provide a quote but they need photographs of the damage.

A member of the public complained about rubbish being left at the square in Coplands they believed that the rubbish had been left by building work from numbers 19 and 26. PF said that this land was owned by Optivo and they were unresponsive when the council had contacted them before about other matters, The Clerk offered to contact the Environmental Health department at RDC. PF said this wouldn’t do any good and that Optivo needed to be contacted.

Karen Ayling said that an overwhelming majority want the stables lease signed I think if councillors are planning to argue this, they should have taken legal advice before hand, and if councillors are planning to get rid of the tenant how are they planning to replace them?

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND INSTANCES OF LOBBYING**

BD agreed to abstain from item 9 the Stables Lease but he said he had a point of order he wanted to make.

1. **MINUTES** **OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

To approve and sign the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 13th October. BD had some queries in relation to how what he had said had been recorded in the minutes, the minutes were not approved.

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
2. **AMENDMENT TO THE STAFFING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERNCE**

To agree the amendments; that the chair and vice chair are members of the staffing committee according to their ex-officio status; That the number of members for the staffing committee is 3.

BD said that according to Standing Order 7a a motion could not be reversed within 6months of it being approved. The Clerk argued that the motion was not being reversed it was an amendment. The amendment was not approved.

The Chair proposed that the members of the Staffing Committee be nominated. TB nominated the Chair this was not agreed. After some confusion DJ and AWS were nominated and they were agreed as the two other members of the Staffing Committee. RM asked what is the relevance of the Staffing Committee. The Clerk answered they act as the clerk’s line manager.

1. **FINANCES**
2. To receive & approve the payment report October 2022 – Not yet received yet
3. To receive the most recent bank reconciliation and financial report – Not yet received
4. To approve the time-sheet of the Clerk for the period 07/10/22-04/11/22 –

BD said that the time sheet of the Clerk could not be approved as her retraction of resignation (Item 15) had not been approved. The clerk asked are you saying you are not going to pay me for work I have completed. BD no you have been working unlawfully. The Clerk left the meeting.

Before the Chairman closed the meeting TB read from a letter that had been posted through his letter box.

‘Carry on Councillors’

Parish Council Meeting – Thursday 13th October 2022

The very first thing to say is that being a Councillor is a fairly thankless task. You put yourself forward devoting a sizeable chunk of you own time to parish matters. You are trying to ‘please all the people all of the time’……..an impossible task and you work behind the scenes to resolve local issues. Thankfully we have some Councillors who do this job very effectively and in the correct manner but sadly we seem currently to have a few who seem intent on misusing their position and are disrespectful to their fellow Councillors, the Clerk and Chair. They are letting themselves down and more importantly they are letting down the very people they are meant to be representing………..the residents of Northiam.

So, this particular meeting was a cross between an episode of ‘The Last Hours of the Titanic’ and ‘One Foot in the Grave’. Firstly, the Chair, Clerk and Vice Chair were trying their hardest to steer the ship, avoid the icebergs and make progress to calmer and safer waters. But sadly, some Councillors behaved like Victor Meldrew in a totally unnecessarily rude and belligerent manner putting unqualified hurdles in the way at every turn totally thwarting any meaningful progress…..sadly they were not even remotely funny and totally out of order.

Northiam, at the moment seems to represent a patient with multiple health issues (like most Councils). The Councillors are the medics but instead of working together and taking a totally holistic approach we have two or three councillors so fixated on one particular issue, rather like a spot that won’t stop itching……in this case St Francis Fields……..So blinkered are they that they are failing to notice that the patient is actually haemorrhaging and having a heart attack!!! Unless they can stem the blood loss and get the heart pumping again this project is in serious danger of falling apart and other village matters are also paying the price and not getting the attention they deserve.

The majority of the villagers (not all) supported and trusted the Parish Council in the St Francis Fields venture and the only way it will succeed is with the continued goodwill and support of the residents. Consider all of the hard work, effort and time already invested in the project by the amazing band of volunteers and supporters. But, if these Councillors cannot get their act together, behave democratically, sensibly and in unison the tank of goodwill will be at risk of running dry. If the Parish Council don’t have the security of the continued regular incomes from the bungalows ...and the stables, and other proposed diverse and varied projects…..they are running the risk of not being able to make the loan repayments and thereby jeopardising the whole project.

In May, all seats on the Parish Council are up for election or re-election, in the interim Northiam residents should take time to attend Parish Council meetings to see what goes on- take a close interest in current and new candidates – ask questions of the Councillors; check their track records, what they are contributing, how they have to agree to disagree. Surely, they should be cooperating together, democratically and courteously….with one combined aim to represent and improve the village for the benefit of **all its residents.**

And, in the interim, the Parish Council/CIC should be listening and taking very seriously the ideas and projects some villagers have been personally exploring and putting forward. Just all get your act together and get on with it, stop being blinkered and short sighted, be fit for purpose and represent the whole village. That is not too much to ask.

A CONCERNED RESIDENT

***All appeals, enforcements and decision notices have been previously circulated to Councillors.***

The meeting ended at 8 o’clock

Chairman ……………………………………………………………………………………………………