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Groby Parish Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Groby Parish Council held at 7.00 pm on Monday 20th June 2005 at the Parish Council Chamber, Leicester Road, Groby.

Cllr Lock welcomed all to the meeting and informed everyone that both the Clerk to the Council and the Chairman had resigned after the meeting held on the 6/6/2005.

Cllr Lock stated that he was left with two options: to call either an ordinary parish meeting or an extraordinary one. If he had called the first type we would have to follow the agenda as set out in standing orders and as we will have most of these items on next weeks meeting, thought it was impractical. He had structured the agenda to cover the areas that he felt needed urgent consideration by this Council.

Before he started the meeting for the benefit of all he was presented on the Friday a request for someone to attend a site meeting on the 13th and HBBC on the 14th. He asked Cllr. Batty to attend both and Cllr Purves to attend on the Monday. He also found out today that a meeting with Persimmon homes has been called for the 28th June at 14.00 and had contacted Cllr Batty and agreed to attend himself. This will need clarification at next weeks meeting.”

Cou/61/05-06 Present.

Members: Cllrs Batty, Beck, Coates, Hagan, Hodges, Kennard, Lock, Marvin, Purves, Yarwood and York.

Temporary Minute Clerk Miss H Chamberlain. Members of the public.

Cou/62/05-06 Apologies for Absence.

Cllrs Dickson, Emmerson, Hollick and Jones.

Cou/63/05-06 Declarations of Interest.

Possible personal interests were declared by:

Cllr Hodges - Public Open Spaces, relating to gates to playing fields etc

Cllr Batty - Public Open Spaces, relating to gates to playing fields etc

Cou/64/05-06 Election of Chairman.

It was put to the meeting in view of five members of council being absent from the meeting whether to go ahead with the election of a Chairman at tonight's meeting.

Cllr Hagan commented that the council was under no obligation to elect a Chairman so it was suggested deferring the election until more Council members were present and concentrating on other items on tonight's agenda.

Cllr Yarwood commented that electing a chairman was possibly more important than other items listed on the agenda and the election should go ahead.

It was stated by Cllr York that she felt there were more important items on the agenda to be considered in view of the fact the council still has no Clerk to the Council and no Minute Clerk.

It was discussed that the possibility of having a full council at the forthcoming few meetings would be unlikely due to the fact that it is coming up to holiday time and also that the next meeting scheduled for the 27th of June which was the adjourned meeting already had a fixed agenda so the election of a chairman could not be added to it was pointed out by Cllr Batty and agreed with by Cllr Lock.

Due to the fact that the council currently has no Clerk to the Council and no Chairman the onus of the council is currently being carried by the Vice Chairman, which Cllr Beck thought unfair.

Cllr. Lock made it clear that the council had two options either elect a Chairman tonight or defer until the meeting of July 11th.

After some further discussion it was put to the vote whether to elect a Chairman tonight or defer to July 11th. It was decided through a show of seven hands to elect a Chairman tonight.

Nominations were called for.

Cllr Batty nominated by Cllr Hodges and seconded by Cllr Yarwood.

Cllr Hagan nominated by Cllr Beck and seconded by Cllr York.

Cllr Kennard asked Cllr Batty whether any existing problems would cause more problems if he were to be elected. Cllr Batty replied that although he had a lack of confidence in certain County Councilors, it would not affect his position if he were to be elected Chairman.

Public statements upon elected representatives claimed as facts are not recorded in this minute on the advice taken from relevant organizations and the Vice Chair curtailed comments at the time to ensure this Council did not become party to falling into disrepute.

It was asked of the council, which way they wanted to precede with the vote, a show of hands was called for and a secret ballot was decided upon, with Candidates Cllrs Batty and Hagan stating they much preferred a show of hands.

(For secret ballot: Cllrs Beck, Coates, Kennard, Lock, Marvin, and Purves. Against: Cllrs Batty, Hagan, Hodges, Yarwood, York)

Resolved that Cllr Hagan was elected new Chairman. He accepted reluctantly and stated that it was “not his hearts desire” to so do.

(11 votes cast; 6 for Cllr Hagan, 5 for Cllr Batty).

Cou65/05-06 To receive The Chairman’s Declaration of Office.

Cllr Hagan accepted and signed the Declaration of Office.

He proposed that a Vice, Vice Chairman may be a good idea to step into the Vice Chairman role should the Chairman or Vice Chairman is unavailable and offered the position to Cllr Batty. Cllr Batty declined.

Cou/66/05-06 Election of Vice Chairman (if Necessary).

Cllr Lock said he was happy to continue in the role of Vice Chairman providing the other members of the council were satisfied with him in that role. The Chairman asked for any objections of which there were none.

No election was necessary

Cou/67/05-06 To Appoint a Temporary Clerk.

Cllr Lock said that he had contacted the LRAPLC secretary Ron Simpson for temporary cover but he has as yet been unable to supply anyone.

He also informed the council that they are at a crucial point in the audit section of the 2004/5 accounts. Ian Frazer, the auditor, said he will assist the best he can but one of the main problems is that the database we use to produce the accounts is called quicken and Cllr lock is currently trying to extract the required information from it. The submission date to Hacker Young is 1/8/05 meaning that a notice needs to be placed on the notice board giving 14 days notice. He has advised Cllr Lock to do this giving them 14 days to do the accounts and that if

Council appointed someone as a temporary unpaid RFO the requirements would be met. Cllr Lock will also assist with payroll for the time being as he has experience of PAYE.

Cllr Batty asked Council if they knew where the previous clerk had got to with the accounts. Cllr Lock replied no. He then suggested that with Councilors approval he proposed to approach Don Backus, Clerk and RFO, Retired.

Resolved that the Council goes down the avenue of approaching MR Backus. If he were unable to help then re-approaching Hinckley and Bosworth would be another way forward. All Councilors were in agreement.

Cou/68/05-06 Recruitment Working Party.

Volunteers were called for to be members of the recruitment working party.

Cllrs Batty, Hodges, Hollick, Purves and York volunteered.

They will between themselves discuss a convenient and suitable time for them all to meet (sometime this week) and discuss the way forward with the appointment of a temporary clerk.

Cllrs Lock and Purves have met with MR Ron Simpson of the LARPC to discuss various scenarios. He was asked to attend tonight's meeting but was unable to do so due to other commitments and asked Council to contact him later in the week.

Cllr Lock is happy to approach a retired Clerk and RFO with regard to helping out with RFO work and will approach Ron Simpson to help find someone to act in an advisory capacity at future meetings whilst Council is still without a clerk.

It was suggested by Cllr Batty that the workload is looked into and maybe looks into employing temps from an agency to deal with the backlog of administrative work that is currently building up with the absence of a clerk to the council. It was felt by that sometimes it takes twice as long to show a temp what to do in an office and that maybe someone should discuss with staff to verify their perspectives.

Resolved that the recruitment working party be made up of Cllr's Batty, Hodges, Hollick, Purves and York. The party will convene at a time agreed between them.

Cllr Lock to ask a retired RFO to temporarily help with RFO work and to approach Ron Simpson to find someone to act in an advisory capacity at future meetings. As Cllr Lock is Chairman of the Staffing Committee he will to talk with staff and discuss a plan of action sometime this week.

Cou/69/05-06 To appoint a Temporary Minute Clerk.

Cllr Lock introduced Ms Helen Chamberlain and said that she would be able to fill in as temporary minute clerk until September.

Resolved Helen Chamberlain to be Temporary Minute Clerk, Protemp.

Cou/70/05-06 Public Participation

None.

Cou/71/05-06 Urgent Business.

The council how any urgent business requiring urgent action will be dealt with in the absence of a Clerk to the Council discussed it.

Cllr Lock read out an extract from the guide to local councils which states that:

Councillors should not take any responsibility for administrative, managerial or supervisory tasks: these are to

be discharged by the Clerk. Problems will occur when Members sometimes try to take over the role of the Clerk to the Council, particularly in the case of the Chairman/Town Mayor or Councillors drafting the Minutes of Meetings, or writing letters from the Council on the grounds that the Clerk to the Council cannot be left to do it. If this assumption is correct then the Council has failed to appoint a suitable person to the office of Clerk to the Council. If, on the other hand, this action is simply a cover for Councillors to want to 'do it their way' it must be rejected as an entirely wrong mind set.

Cllr Lock said that he had spoken to Ron Simpson who from his own experience and knowledge suggested that it was written into standing orders or the Clerk to the Councils job description that the authority is given to two or three councilors and this would then alleviate the problem.

Both Cllr's Coates and York stated that in the past the problems had been dealt with by finding five Councillors and dealing with any urgent business that way and that system had worked. Cllr Batty said that this was an unlawful way of doing things and another way forward must have been found.

Cllr Hodges proposed that as Cllr Lock had currently been doing the job and did it well that he be appointed temporary Clerk to the Council. Seconded by Cllr Hagan. Cllr Lock accepted providing the other Members of Council were happy with that and until a proper Clerk to the Council could be found.

However, this post wouldn't have to be relinquished by Cllr Lock when a proper Clerk to the Council has been employed and therefore would alleviate this problem should the proper Clerk ever be unavailable in the future

Resolved that Cllr Lock be appointed Temporary Clerk to the Council in an unpaid capacity and therefore would be able to deal with any urgent business should it arise.

Cou/72/05-06 Workload.

Cllr Lock asked the council to look over appendix A. He said that he was aware it had been passed at the previous meeting but asked Council if it could be moved to the remit of the Recruitment Working Party as a basis for coming up with ideas for recruitment and advertising for staff etc.

Cllr Batty called it "fundamentally flawed nonsense" but the Chairman pointed out that as he is a member of the RWP he could pick it apart at the RWPs next meeting.

Resolved that appendix A be moved to the remit of the Recruitment Working Party.

Cou/73/05-06 Gates to Playing Fields etc.

Due to travelers moving around the area at present, there is a threat that they could move onto Parish Council land which has resulted in Council taking the decision to keep playing fields etc gates locked where possible.

Cllr Collins from Hinckley and Bosworth has said that in his opinion the threat was still very real and Groby Parish Council were justified in the preventative measures. Although it may be inconveniencing some parishioners, the inconvenience of having travelers move in would be much greater.

Because the threat may continue for some time, it was felt that it was something that needed to be reviewed on a meeting-to-meeting basis.

Resolved that the situation be monitored and reviewed at each Groby Parish Council meeting and will be dealt with under 'matters arising'.

Cou/74/05-06 Date of Next Meeting.

All agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Monday 27th June 2005 at 7.00pm.

The meeting went into closed session at 8.50pm.

Signed.....Date.....
Chairman

Closed Session

Cou/75/05-06 Staffing and Opening Hours of Office.

It was put to the meeting that as the council is without a Clerk; The Administration Assistant is currently running the office on their own. Although it has been agreed to work during office opening time providing there are no other commitments. (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am –1.30pm, Tuesday and Thursday 11am – 3pm). The absence of a clerk means that certain issues have to be considered and resolved without delay, several members of the council felt this situation far from ideal.

There were several suggestions on how to improve safety in the office for the benefit of staff.

1. a new slip bolt fitted to the external door.
2. a mobile phone provided for staff Administration Assistant to facilitate communication at all times should the phones ever be out of action
3. an intercom system to enable staff Administration Assistant to identify callers before they are allowed access to the building.
4. the upgrading of the current alarm systems

All of these will be looked into; items 3 and 4 will require quotes for the work. Budget of approx. £250.

Council discussed the office opening hours. As operating manning levels are not ideal and we have a backlog of work building up due to the absence of a clerk it was suggested by Cllr Coates that perhaps maybe Councillors could help man the office. Cllr Purves commented that a sign could be put up stating that the office is only open for an hour and a half until further notice.

Numerous strategies were discussed and it was felt that Councillors as well as members of the public needed to restrict their access to the office to allow staff Administration Assistant to get on with her work without disruption, a sign be placed on the door informing Parishioners of the different office opening times and phone numbers of for example County Hall who could provide further support should their enquiry need urgent attention. The addition of a fireproof security letterbox in the external door to enable Parishioners to post queries through the door would also be beneficial due to the fact that letters posted to the P.O Box actually costs the Council money.

The office will be closed when the Administration Assistant is on annual leave beginning on 15th July.

Resolved that this item be added to the agenda for the meeting on July 11th to give Members more time to come up with viable solutions. In the interim, the suggestions to improve safety in the office will all be looked into.

Cllr Lock referred the Council to Enclosure B.

Job Description.

Cllr Lock stated that on the 7th February the Council had agreed to adopt the national agreement profiles of job descriptions and contracts of employment. Merits had been taken from the national agreement and added to current job descriptions and also items have been added in that the national agreement didn't cover.

Cllr Lock called for any changes that Councillors wished to make.

1. Cllr Purves pointed out that adding 'and any other duties commensurate with the post' would cover Council should situations arise where duties were called for that was not specifically on the job description. All agreed.
2. It was also felt that that it should be added that 'The clerk may also be Responsible Financial Officer and therefore responsible.'

Council was happy with the document after these two amendments.

Contract of Employment

Various items on the contract of employment were discussed. Cllr Purves made the comment that in her experience a clause minimising the amount of time off in lieu that can be accrued would be beneficial. The wording was agreed to be:

'Any time off in lieu must be recorded and agreed by..... No more than five hours in a calendar month period may be accrued and must be taken within that agreed time period.'

Other issues that were discussed included pay scales, notice period before and after a probationary period and who would monitor working times.

Cllr Yarwood leaves the meeting at 9.50pm due to other commitments.

Due to limited time it was decided that the document be moved to the remit of the Recruitment Working Party who would bring back recommendations to full council.

Resolved that the job description be amended with the input of points 1 and 2 as above and that the contract of employment be moved to the remit of the Recruitment Working Party.

The meeting closed at 10pm.

Signed..... Date.....
Chairman