

Brereton and Ravenhill parish council

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting

Held on Thursday 27th of July 7:30 pm (ref 23.07.27)

1 Present: M Blackham (MB)(chair), C Boulton (CB), C Davies (CD), R Hall (RH), R Hall – Davies (RHD), C Harris, CH), S Merriman (SM), K Paul (KP), K Theobald (KT) (vice chair)

Counsellors Absent: Apologies, were received from: D Blocksidge (DB), A Cowdell (AC), Jay Gascoigne (JG), J Johnson (JJ)

In attendance: J Smith (JS)(RFO/caretaker), P Whibley (qualified clerk) two members of the public.

Procedural

2 Declaration of interest in any items on the agenda

None

The meeting was open to the public for questions.

No issues were raised by any parishioners, or any questions asked at this stage of the meeting.

Business

3 audit report

It was explained that the audit report must be signed off, even though most of its findings and the recommendations were initiated whilst the previous council members were in post.

It was understood by the wholly new council members that the signing off of the report was to show that they had read and understood the findings and accepted what actions are now necessary to meet their new responsibilities.

At the last elections, the whole of the previous parish Council retired, and we have a completely new council who have inherited an administration in need of complete revision which will include an action plan to cover the external and internal auditors 2021 /2022 report and the outcome of this year 's reports too. we are working closely with Alan Toplis and Kim Squires, our internal auditors, to upgrade our governance and accounting packages and intend to appoint a Clerk/RFO.

3a Resolved: MB to sign and send acknowledgement of the findings of the audit review by the end of the month.

It was permitted, through the chair, that members of the public voiced the "disbelief" that the outgoing council members were not held to account for their failings, which the report had highlighted. It was suggested that an audit should be held prior to any official council election of new members, and prior to any changeover.

The present RFO (J S), was thanked for stepping in at short notice and completing an amazing job of organising the accounts and highlighting the present financial position of the council.

It was highlighted that, through no-fault of the new council, that Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council (B& RPC) have been labelled as underperforming for the past two audits. This now means that should it be deemed to once again, have failed to meet the required standard on the next occasion, then intervention by the county, will almost certainly be imposed.

It is vital therefore that the council must work on the 2022/23 audit review, as well as the 2021/2022 Has been deemed urgent by the auditors.

Timeline of actions to be agreed by the council during the next and subsequent full meetings.

(External auditors, returning in October/November*)

The asset list left by the previous council was out of date and on inspection found to be incomplete. It was agreed that the asset/equipment list needs to be checked. An ex-counsellor (GM) who has previously been involved with this aspect, agreed to examine the present list and liaise with SM.

3b Resolved: JS will make and supply copies of the list for scrutiny. SM/(GM) will report on their findings at the September meeting.

The meeting was closed to the public.

4 Confidential issues

The way forward

The council wanted the opportunity to have an open and honest discussion (requested not to minute) amongst themselves about how to plan future governance of the parish. What discussions were important and what were urgent, so that a collaborative action plan could be shaped with responsibilities and timescales agreed during subsequent meetings.

5 job vacancies

It was agreed that the position of a new RFO/Clerk needs to be compiled and advertised.

5a resolved: SM/MB to liaise and agree the advert and where to place the advert.

It was agreed that all files/paperwork pertaining to any council business should be moved as soon as possible into a locked cupboard within the lockable office.

5b Resolved: J S. Volunteered to ensure that all papers were moved into office but asked council members to help with the process of creating a filing/storage system within the office.

This was felt paramount as the previous council appeared to have failed in their general data protection duty.

6 Action plan

JS explained the position of the councils' finances and highlighted aspects of the income and expenditure figures.

Recommendations:

To appoint an RFO

To ensure that the council have both internal and external action plans.

The meeting was reopened to the public.

7 Matters arising

Asset/equipment:

After discussion, it was agreed that when the asset/equipment list had been updated and complete, that a further discussion should be held to decide which assets should be kept, and which should be sold. The meeting understood that some assets would deteriorate over time and decision on these would need to be made quickly to retain their value if selling.

Also, a decision needs to be made as to whether the public should be consulted prior to any final decision being made.

7a Resolved: JS/SM to report back to the council at the next September meeting 21. 09. 23.

Christmas lights:

Festive lighting co has given three different quotes. After discussion, the lowest quote was agreed. The meeting felt that the council should be seen to be prudent with parishioners' money. The subcommittee with responsibility for this will liaise with the company to ensure a different approach from previous years.

7b Resolved: final arrangements to be brought to the next 2*full meetings by the subcommittee.

Any other business:

Guttering for the hall:

Cost agreed of £429 to replace guttering. Date given for completion, 12.09.2023.

7c resolved: J S. To supervise.

Heritage walks:

Concerns were raised as to why the council had paid for the event rather than the Heritage committee. It was also highlighted that the activity was organised on an incorrect assumption that the council's public liability insurance was being used. Also, as there had been no risk assessment completed in advance, the meeting strongly stated that the activity could not go ahead. But the work could be rescheduled in the future after the concerns have been addressed.

7d resolved: CH will inform the heritage organisation to explain why the walk had to be cancelled.

Meeting closed 9:05 pm

Signed by chair, dated 16.11.23.