

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF the 293rd MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2014

Present: Cllr Mitchell in the Chair
David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Amanda Taft – Administrative Officer

Cllrs Baldwin, Bennett, Brading, Brand, Dann, Edmunds, Getkahn, Jordan, Martin, Ridley, Seeley, Shafe and Vane

Voting Members: 14

CC1315/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Isard-Brown and Wynne-Jones

CC1316/14 Declarations of Interest by Members

The Chairman recommended that any declarations of interest be made, if necessary, throughout the meeting.

CC1317/14 Representations from the Public

There were no members of the public present.

The Chairman was asked if item CC1324/14 (Habitual and Vexatious Complainant – Cllr Robert Ridley) could be moved to the first item on the agenda and this was proposed and seconded but the motion failed.

CC1318/14 Minutes

The Minutes were proposed and seconded but then Cllr Ridley requested a recorded vote. He was asked if there was a problem with their accuracy and he replied that the Minutes stated there were '10 rising to 11' Members when in fact the Minutes should have read '9 rising to 10'. Cllr Ridley was asked if he had brought this to the attention of the Clerk prior to the meeting and he said that he had not. Members were advised that should they notice any error in, or have any problem with the Minutes that they contact the Clerk as soon as possible.

Resolved:

- That the amended Minutes of the 292nd monthly meeting of the Council held on Thursday 30 January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

CC1319/14 Matters Arising

CC1313/14 (Budget and Precept 2014/15). The Clerk was asked that when a different print company was used for the Parish Pump whether three companies had quoted for the magazine and the Clerk confirmed that this was the case.

CC1320/14 Committee Reports

CC1320.1/14 Environment and Amenity Committee held on 7 January 2014

Resolved:

- That the Minutes of the Environment and Amenity Committee meeting held on 7 January 2014 be adopted as a report of the meetings.

CC1320.2/14 Any matters arising

EA1016/13 (Budgets 2014/15). It was asked why a plaque is needed for the tree outside the office and a Cllr responded that he had suggested it as it is a very rare

rare tree.

EA1017/13 (Land Acquisition Working Group). The Clerk was asked for an update and he advised that TRDC had said there would be no further progress until after the next District Council elections in May. Cllrs did not consider this response to be satisfactory or appropriate. The Chairman reminded Cllrs that the Working Group has the authority to question TRDC's decision and they could ask the Clerk to follow this matter up with TRDC.

CC1320.3/14 Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 4 December 2013, 18 December 2013 and 15 January 2014

Resolved:

- That the Minutes of the Planning and Development Committee held on Wednesday 4 December 2013, Wednesday 18 December 2013 and Wednesday 15 January 2014 be adopted as a report of the meeting.

CC1320.4/14 Any matters arising

There were no matters arising.

CC1320.5/14 Finance and Administration Committee held Thursday 9 January 2014

Resolved:

- That the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee held on Thursday 9 January 2014 be adopted as a report of the meeting.

CC1320.6/14 Any matters arising

There were no matters arising.

CC1321/14 Supporting Papers to Agenda Items

This matter was introduced by the Chairman and the Clerk explained that the Council already has a procedure which ensures that a copy of the supporting papers (excluding Part 2 papers) are attached to Agendas at the library (FA731/11 of 9 June 2011 refers).

Cllr Ridley was asked if this motion was helpful as the law is the law and Standing Orders are in place and although there will be occasions and exceptional circumstances when late information comes along; this information is the supporting paper and not the motion. It was also clarified that late information is at the discretion of the Clerk and the Chairman. The Clerk again advised that the Council has a legal obligation to note the External Audit Report by 30 September but the Annual Return signed by the External Auditor did not arrive until after the Agenda was issued. Cllrs felt that we currently have a sensible, legal and rational way of dealing with supporting papers and there was no need for changes as it would be too prescriptive.

A recorded vote on Cllr Ridley's recommendation was requested and Cllrs Ridley and Brand voted for the proposal, Cllrs Baldwin and Vane abstained from voting and Cllrs Bennett, Brading, Dann, Edmunds, Getkahn, Jordan, Martin, Mitchell, Seeley and Shafe voted against the proposal. The motion failed.

CC1322/14

Revision of Council's Financial Regulations and Associated Standing Orders

The Chairman introduced this matter which had been referred from the Finance and Administration Committee for ratification. One Cllr said that he would like to make amendments and it was pointed out that this could happen if Council agree to the changes. The amendment in question was that for expenditure of over £2,000, three tenders or quotes should be obtained.

There was some discussion about the difference between tenders, quotes and estimates and the Clerk clarified that the F&A Committee had agreed 11.2 (i) – (iv) as being practical, reasonable and workable figures.

It was suggested that the proposed amendment was nit picking and not at all flexible and it would be a waste of Council time to try and micro manage.

Resolved:

- That Council adopt the draft Financial Regulations
- That Council adopt the associated changes to Standing Orders for consistency with the adopted Financial Regulations
- That Standing Order 24.2 is amended from 'by December' to 'no later than November'

The Clerk advised that he would modify both the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and incorporate them into one document.

CC1323/14

S137 Grant Application from Little Green Residents' Association

This item was introduced by the Chairman and it was pointed out that the grant application has been to the F&A Committee, this Council meeting and it would then have to go to the E&A Committee and it was asked if Council could make a decision on the grant at this meeting. The Clerk replied that Council had agreed £1,000 in the budget for ponds and the F&A Committee considered it appropriate that the E&A Committee consider the grant alongside the budgeted pond project. He clarified that if the matter is delegated to the E&A it would not need to come back to Council. The Clerk said that he would write to the grant applicants to advise them of the situation following the outcome of this meeting.

It was pointed out that there is a complicated issue concerning land ownership of the pond in Little Green Lane but investigations into this, and other matters were ongoing. It was also mentioned that this is a complicated matter, unlikely to be decided in one meeting.

Resolved:

- That the S137 Grant Application from Little Green Residents' Association is delegated to the E&A Committee
- That the sum of £1,000 from the S137 Grants budget is delegated to the E&A Committee

CC1324/14

Habitual and Vexatious Complainant – Cllr Robert Ridley

The Chairman introduced this item and one Cllr queried the fact that he had not seen the Minutes of the Human Resource & Compliance Committee and neither was there a supporting paper to accompany the agenda item. Another Cllr felt that the decision was a foregone conclusion and that it was a 'kangaroo court'. Cllr Ridley asked why the six month review had not taken place in September 2013 and another Cllr apologised for this oversight whilst another Cllr commented on the fact that there was a procedure in place whereby Cllr Ridley could have contacted the Chairman or Clerk by letter.

Cllr Ridley felt that the HR&C Committee should have reported to the F&A Committee in a Part 2 session and then they should have reported back to

Council.

It was pointed out that the HR&C Committee and its constitution was democratically agreed by Council due to the discontinuation of the Standards Board. It was also pointed out that Cllr Ridley had earned the label 'Habitual and Vexatious Complainant' before he was a Councillor and this was withdrawn when he became a Cllr only to be reinstated by Council in March 2013. It was asked if any more detail could be given and it was advised that Cllr Ridley has continually breached the Council's Media Policy and his emails are very much in the public domain. At this point Cllr Ridley asked Council just to vote on the recommendation of the HR&C Committee but another Cllr asked for further examples of behaviour and so it was asked that the meeting go into a Part 2 session.

Resolved:

- That the meeting continues into a Part 2 session

PART 2

Cllr Ridley chose to leave the meeting at this point (8.59pm).

It was stated that Cllr Ridley's behaviour has not changed since he was placed on the Habitual and Vexatious Complainant Register. In contravention of the Council's Media Policy, Cllr Ridley continues to send frequent, unfounded, spurious allegations by email about Council, staff and Councillors to a wide distribution list (various Members of Parliament and the Press to name a few) and he continues to bring the Council into disrepute. At 9.16pm, Council reverted to a Part 1, public session.

A recorded vote was requested. Cllrs Brading and Vane abstained, Cllrs Baldwin, Bennett, Brand, Dann, Edmunds, Getkahn, Jordan, Martin, Mitchell, Seeley and Shafe voted for the proposal. The proposal was agreed.

Resolved:

- That Cllr Robert Ridley remains a Habitual and Vexatious Complainant under the Council's Policy for such complainants
- That Cllr Ridley be removed from the Council's Environment and Amenity Committee
- That a public statement is issued to this effect

CC1325/14

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.19pm.