Little Downham Parish Council

E-mail: clerk@littledownhamparishcouncil.gov.uk Tel No. 01353 649499

Mr Dale Parson
Chair to the Council

Ms K Palmer
Clerk to the Council

Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting held on Thursday 21st March 2024 in Little Downham Village Hall Meeting Room at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Parson, Cllr Butcher, Cllr Maxey, Cllr Taylor, Cllr Winters, Cllr Travers, Cllr Waddelow, Cllr Waters, Cllr Spofforth, Vacant Seat

Also Present: The Clerk to the Council and 1 member of the public

1	**To receive and accept Apologies for Absence:** (LGA 1972 s85 (1)) Cllr Scott – personal reasons
2	**To record any declarations of interest:** Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any prior requests from members for Dispensations that accord with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e) (NB this does not preclude any later declarations) Cllr Gail Taylor declared a pecuniary interest in item 6 for application 21/00396/FUM Cllr Dale Parson declared a personal interest in item 6 for application 21/00396/FUM
3	**Public Participation Session:** Open Forum to provide an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions for future agendas or on items that are on the current agenda and allow any Councillors declaring an interest to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted at that meeting. After this session members of the public will no longer be permitted to address the Council unless invited to do so by the Chairman. Limited to 3 minutes per person, 10 minutes in total.
4	**Motion to Exclude the Public and Press** Under the Public Bodes (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. – **RESOLVED** to close the meeting to the public and press. One member of the public present left the meeting at 20:08.
5	**Councillor Conflict** To discuss and debate matters that have led to a need to resolve conflict and failing trust between Members of the Parish Council following action/s by a member that did not comply with the code of conduct that is jeopardising the effective execution of Parish Council business. This purpose being to understand why trust between Councillors has failed and determine how to re-establish it. **PT –** Called the meeting as he believes the situation threatens to jeopardise the effective running of the Council with the possibility of Members leaving because of the issues. PT and JW thought it was important to meet to establish why trust has broken down and how to resolve it. PT thought it appropriate to conduct a Round Table discussion. **MW** – Cllrs need to be honest with each other and speak to one another about issues and if Cllrs can't do that they may as well not bother. Members needs to feel comfortable to speak openly without fear. **PS** – Cllrs need to be confident that things said in the meeting are said openly and matters discussed outside are relevant to the Parish not personalities. **RM** – Suggested that if meetings happen informally that notes are shared on the PCs WA group. **JW** – Cllrs are skirting around the issue. FW took DPs email the wrong way and went around it the wrong way, then made a comment about not trusting the Clerk. Thinks the BCM was involved somehow which breaks the CofC. DPs, KPs and JWs integrity was questioned and does not trust FW

at all and will not. If Members can trust FW that is up to them. Doesn't think it will be the last occurrence of this kind as FW took offence at an email sent to everyone.

RM – Thinks it unfair to focus on FWs conduct as he suspects all Members have done things they shouldn't – namely talking to members outside of meetings. JWs statement about not trusting FW now or in the future is a little unfair as all Members are on a learning curve. Putting aside the issue of training all Cllrs should have some faith in her behaviour now and in the future as others have made mistakes. FW is a new Cllr but RM isn't and has made a recent mistake. Would like to think Cllrs could move forward and learn to trust each other with some safeguards in place.

JW – Been on PC 10/11 years and has never had this issue with trust. Is focusing on FW as FW is the cause of the problem. Talking to each other isn't the problem, sending an email about the BCM to an outside person (Anna Bailey) and it became about Dale. There are ways of dealing with matters.

DP – The letter was aimed at me. FW was in the BC when the discussion with a visitor took place but left halfway through. FW then spoke to the visitor days after to ask about how they had felt. RM has made a mistake some years ago. Lots has been said about the BCM and volunteers leaving in support of her but does not yet know what the PC has supposedly done. If there is no trust, there is no point.

PT – Has given a lot of thought about this, believes DP is having his integrity questioned for the following reasons: FW's comments to the BCM and her involvement in discussions around her employment that were not appropriate and were tittle tattle. Motives are unclear and at best naïve. Then arrived at the last meeting with a dossier and went to Anna Bailey and stated it was because she did not trust the Clerk. It was an unacceptable comment without evidence.

AB – not been at recent meetings so can't comment but always found DP to be straightforward and took the email to be to the group. What is the reason for not trusting the Clerk.

FW – It was hard to know what was going to be asked so printed off the email to ask questions only. I didn't mean "I don't trust Kate" but wasn't comfortable asking the Clerk anything because of the close working relationship with the Chairman. Contacted Anna Bailey as didn't know CAPALC helpdesk was available. Was uncomfortable with the emails. Has communicated with many types of people but still found the email offensive. Was shocked at the way DP spoke to the BC visitor.

DP – FW was not around for half the conversation, didn't ask DP how it went but put in a complaint.

FW – I was concerned about DP's tone.

DP – Why were you concerned when the visitor wasn't?

AB – The Clerk has demonstrated professionalism as it was clear she had not divulged the contents of FWs email to DP.

GT – If the visitor was okay, FW can't be judge and jury.

FW – Felt is was not acceptable to do that in a public place, then wrote an email to the Clerk who responded. She then spoke to DP about it in private.

DP – Is it appropriate to talk to the BCM about her employment?

FW – I did not understand at that time.

JW – Is telling the BCM the PC think she is incompetent appropriate?

FW – The BCM is an anxious person and she is supportive of her.

JW – It was not your place and you should have gone to the Clerk. The BCM had spoken to her about how worried she was about her job before an appraisal.

GT – You have judged the Clerk about the defibrillator and judged others and goes too far with people.

RM – He had advised the BCM to take someone in with her for her exit interview and thinks it's a good idea to have someone else there to get an idea of why she is leaving.

KP – advised there was a long list of exit interview questions that would be asked of the BCM to find out as much as possible.

MW – Why did she need someone to attend with her? What led her to think she was so bad at her job she needed someone with her for an appraisal?

JW – The BCM had spoken to a VH Trustee she was worried about her job because 2 Cllrs had told her the PC were trying to get her out and she needed to watch her back and she should take someone in with her to her appraisal as there was someone else lined up to take her job.

FW – Assumes the BCM is getting anxious and it has got out of context. She is an anxious person.

DP – Why did FW and RM not bring these matters to the PC if the BCM was as anxious as FW is stating?

FW – Felt that being at the BC Committee meetings it was obvious there.

DP – Hasn't always been at the BC sessions so all the time the BCM has raised issues/anxieties did it not occur to RM or FW to bring it to the PC meeting?

RM – No, takes the point and accepts there should have been a reference made to the PC. Sometimes the PC did not always get to the end of an agenda and he could have spoken to either DP or KP about it but didn't.

PT – The bottom line is trust. Whether FW/RM meant to or not, some trust is lost and if one Cllr is a cause of mistrust to a point that business is affected, they need to ask themselves if they are best placed to serve that Council or community. Doesn't believe the matter is resolved.

DP – Doesn't trust FW and if nothing changes to gain his trust back, he will not be at the next meeting.

FW – What are you looking for to gain that trust back?

DP – Trust is earnt, it's not just me, it's my reputation, it's my granddad and dad who also served on the PC. I support the Clerk a lot and some Cllrs do very little, if anything, I carry Cllrs and if I need to walk on eggshells there is no enjoyment and I don't want to do it. FW has also questioned the Clerk's integrity. HE is not the best writer and emails get sent with wrong grammar and punctuation all the time but if offence is taken and not spoken of there is no trust. At this point he is 75% likely to leave the PC.

PT – DP is not alone; the ramifications of FWs actions are far reaching. Does not feel comfortable working with someone if he needs to question himself all the time. And asked FW if continuing to serve as a Cllr is the best thing to do for the Parish if fellow Cllrs feel uncomfortable with her.

FW – Asked for clarification from PT.

PT – The matters raised give him cause to wonder if he should trust her.

FW – Has no experience of being on a PC. Has done training now so understands more. It is clearly personal to DP and is sorry she upset him. Realises she should have spoken to DP in the first place and felt it was too confrontational.

AB – Thinks DP has done an excellent job as Chairman and hasn't had any experience of issues such as this happening before.

PT – If FWs presence challenges the Chairmans' integrity that needs to be taken on board. This needs to be resolved and the one way he views it is if FW resigns but that is up to FW.

DP – The cards have been firmly put on the table and there is nothing more to add. There is 2 weeks to the next meeting when he will make his decision.

PS – Either FW apologises and admits she was wrong or no other points matter.

DP – Doesn't believe an apology will clear it up.

	JW – The PC could take a vote of no confidence which lets FW know where she stands and then both FW or DP can make their own decision. All Councillors should respond because it affects everyone. RM – Stated he would like to tender his resignation and would not be voting. Cllr Maxey left the room at 21:07 PS – Having an insight into actions leads to a different type of apology. If someone understood their actions and was able to apologise. FW – Verbally resigned and left the room at 21:07 The Clerk advised the meeting that without a written resignation it was not legally standing. PT – Believed it was still worth holding the vote of no confidence as the resignations were not legal until received in writing. P – JW, S – PS to hold a vote of no confidence. Members voted unanimously as not having any confidence in FW. Members discussed their sadness that Cllr Maxey resigned.
6	**Planning** -To consider any applications/decisions/appeals that Council need to review. **Applications:** **23/01354/FUL** - Removal of small lean-to shed and part demolished brick walls. Erection of new single storey extension, conversion of garage/ store building to domestic accommodation - 12 Townsend, Little Downham**. APPROVED** **24/00261/FUL -** Demolish existing single storey side extension and rear conservatory and construct a 2-storey side extension and part single storey rear extension. - Quince Cottage 5 Park Lane, Little Downham. – **SUPPORT** **24/00267/FUL -** Temporary permission for the siting and use of five container units as offices, and associated works retrospective - 11 Black Bank Road, Little Downham. – **SUPPORT by majority, PS abstained.** **24/00276/FUL -** Single storey rear extsn - 23 Old Fir Close, Lt Downham – **NO COMMENT** **** Cllr Gail Taylor declared a pecuniary interest in the application and left the room.** **** Cllr Dale Parson declared a personal interest.** **21/00396/FUM -** Redevelopment of Corkers Crisp/Taylor Farms complex **-** Willow Farm, Pymoor Common, Pymoor. - An amended plan/additional information has been received for this application on 9th February 2024. The amendment involves/Additional information received includes 1. Justification of the proposal 2. Visibility splays 3. CCTV plan 4. Amendments to bike store 5. Site plan and entrance to the site 6. Office plan layout JW – P, AB – S – All in favour – SP – abstained. **24/00240/VAR -** To vary Condition 1 (Approved Plans) of previously approved 21/00909/FUL dated 25 November 2021 for erection of two residential dwellings and associated works - Land Southeast of 7 Cannon Street, Little Downham – **NO COMMENT** **Decisions:** **24/00073/FUL** - Garage alterations - 37 Cannon Street Little Downham - APPROVE

7	**To confirm the date of the next Meeting/s:** 4th April 2024 – Full Council Meeting
8	**Close of Meeting –** 21:11