

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Tunstall Parish Council on

Monday 16th December 2024 at 7pm in the Midwinter Room at St John the Baptist Church

Present: Cllr Rich; Cllr Burgess; Cllr Reed.

Also in attendance: J Miller; Cllr Wright (Kent County Councillor); Cllr Rich Lehmann (Kent County Councillor).

48. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair confirmed that whilst the council had planned to operate the clerking remotely however due to the various documents that require a wet signature the clerk is in attendance.

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none. Cllr Stephens and Cllr Stephens had sent their apologies.

50. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Cllr Reed declared an interest as Chief Executive of Swale Borough Council.

51. DRAFT MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to sign and approve the minutes of the meeting of 23rd September 2024.

52. WARD COUNCILLORS – there were no reports.

53. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES

It was noted that there was no further interest and the vacancies will continue to be advertised.

The clerk left the meeting for the following item:

54. CLERK VACANCY

It was **RESOLVED** to increase the rate of the pay for the Locum Parish Clerk from 1 December 2024. This will be reviewed again in April 2025. The advert for a new clerk will be launched in January 2025.

55. FINANCE

- a) To receive update on the Barclays Bank account and transfer funds to Unity Trust Bank.

It was noted that all forms have now been completed.

- b) To note External Auditor response and create action plan.
An action plan was created as follows:

<p>Point 1 The Council has left Box 11a in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) blank. The box should have instead been ticked as 'No' to reflect the Council are not a sole trustee and are not responsible for managing trust funds or assets. In future, the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in when preparing their AGAR.</p>	<p>Action: The Council will check each box before signing the AGAR.</p>
<p>Point 2 The 2022/23 figures in the Accounting Statement (Section 2) were correctly restated and a reason provided but the column was not headed 'restated' to confirm the differences from the previous year's annual return. In future, if prior year figures are restated, the Council should head the column 'restated'.</p>	<p>Action: Where restated, columns shall say this.</p>
<p>Point 3: The bank reconciliation initially provided by the Council did not include cash book figures to reconcile to the bank statements. In future the Council should use the standard proforma provided in our guidance when preparing the bank reconciliation.</p>	<p>Action: The Council could not provide the Barclays statements due to the change of signatories not yet taking effect. This will be rectified before the next AGAR.</p>
<p>Point 4: The Council have ticked three assertions in the Annual Governance Statement as 'No'. However this does not seem to have been reflected in the objectives ticked by the internal auditor. In future, the Council should ensure there is consistency between the findings in the internal audit report and the assertions ticked in the Annual Governance Statement.</p>	<p>Action: The Council was addressing the issues raised during its inqorate period not covered by the internal auditor.</p>
<p>Point 5: The Council were unable to locate the original engagement terms specifying the scope of the internal auditor's work. In 2024/25 the Council should formally write to the internal auditor after appointment setting out the scope of the work.</p>	<p>Action: The Council provided the email from the Internal Auditor and will request a formal letter for 2024/25.</p>
<p>Point 6: The Council is required to regularly review its standing orders and financial regulations but has not done so for more than three years. The Council should ensure that standing orders and financial regulations are formally reviewed in 2024/25, any revision approved and periodic review at least every three years ensured in future.</p>	<p>Action: The delays in reviewing governance was due to the periods of inqoracy and will be addressed in March 2025.</p>

- c) To receive and approve bank reconciliation as at 30th November 2024
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation.
- d) To receive and approve budget position as at 30th November 2024.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the budget position.
- e) To consider donations.

It was **RESOLVED** to donate to the Homewood church war memorial refurbishment the sum of £500, to be paid when the invoice is received.

- f) To agree budget and precept for 2025-26.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the budget of £7,500 and a precept of £7,500. This equates to a Band D equivalent of £10.89 per annum. The council shall continue to use reserves to fund current costs.

The Pond Works reserve will be removed as the works have been completed by Kent County Council.

56. EXTERNAL MEETINGS

- a) To receive update.

Cllr Rich reported that she had attended the Western Area Committee (along with Cllr Reed), KALC Annual General Meeting. Cllr Rich shall continue to represent Tunstall Parish Council at the Swale Area Committee, Western Area Committee and the Liaison Forum in 2025.

Cllr Reed withdrew from the meeting for the following item:

57. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- a) To receive updates.

Cllr Rich attended the Swale Borough Council Planning Committee where the Highsted Park application was discussed. It was noted that the application has been called in by the Secretary of State and shall be considered next year, with an expected timeline of July 2025.

58. VILLAGE GREENERY

- a) To receive update.

It was noted that no response had been received from Kent County Council for a “walk around” the parish, County Councillors shall be pursued to assist. It was noted that the bi-annual cut back of Sterling Road had been completed. Planters have been updated and will be reviewed again in the Spring.

- b) To receive update on signs.

It was noted that the “competition sign” has been offered to the school.

The main village sign adjacent to the pond was discussed. It was noted that the parish council doesn’t own the sign, and it is on land not registered to any owner. Cllr Rich will look through the archives for any official record that may allow the parish council to add the sign to its asset register. This would enable the council to investigate the costs to replace the sign with a more robust black ironwork sign. It was noted that planning permission may be required as the sign is in the conservation area.

59. VILLAGE EVENTS

- a) To receive update.

Cllr Rich attended the Remembrance Sunday events at the Church and the school. A wreath was laid on behalf of the Parish Council.

60. SPEEDWATCH

a) To receive updates.

It was noted that the reports are being added to the website.

61. CORRESPONDENCE AND MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

a) Email from resident regarding sign.

It was noted that this item was covered earlier in the meeting.

62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 24th March 2025 followed by the Annual Statutory Meeting on 19th May 2025.

Meeting closed at 20:16pm

Signed.....

Date.....

DRAFT