

**FISHLAKE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9TH
FEBRUARY 2021 VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE AT 7.00PM**

1. Open Public Forum (OPF) 9th February 2021

1.1. The Chair opened the public forum and invited comments or questions from members of the public in attendance. Mr Edwards introduced himself as a member of the Fishlake Community Flood Action Group explaining his purpose in attendance was to be available to respond to any queries in connection with the collection and distribution of funds raised by the group to support of victims of the village flood in late 2019. He referred to the anonymous requests for information addressed to the Parish Council in connection with the actions and decisions of the group and reminded the meeting that full disclosure of the details of the underlying financial transactions has been provided to the Clerk to the Council demonstrating total transparency and utmost propriety in the management of the donations and grant allocations. He references the extent of concerns expressed by some members of the community into the decisions made and stressed that full accounts and explanations are available for any individual or party wishing to interrogate the logic and reasoning of the choices of the grants and would be happy to provide any further details that may be requested.

1.2. The Chair closed the Open Public Forum.

**MINUTES OF THE FISHLAKE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.00 PM VIA ZOOM VIDEO
CONFERENCE**

PRESENT: The Chair, Councillor J S Waite,

Councillors: D Chaffer, P Trimmingham, P Webb and D White

2. **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** All Councillors were present.
3. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTEREST:** Councillor Webb informed the meeting of an interest in the Community Flood Action Group both as a member of the group and a beneficiary. Although contributing to the general administration activities of the action group had specifically stood down from involvement in any decisions process in the determination of allocation of grants. Councillor Webb's restricted involvement was confirmed by Mr Edwards who referred to a statement made by the Flood Action Group on the 17th March 2020 advising the community that decisions regarding allocation would be made solely by the "non-flooded" members of the group.
4. **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE FOLLOWING MEETING:** Councillor Webb advised that references to Grant House Farm in item 6 of the agenda should be Bank House and all Councillors had been present at the meeting. Subject to these amendments it was approved that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 19th January 2021 be accepted as a true record.

Signed Chair, 9th March 2021

5. **TO CONSIDER ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS:** The Clerk presented details of the receipts and payments account of the Council for the period to 9th February 2021. Total OF receipt for the parish were £37,736.45 which compared with expenditure of £5,317.65 generating a surplus of £32,418.80. The Clerk presented details of the income reminding the councillors of the transactions making up the total receipts into the Parish account as follows:

Date Received	Details	Amount
03/04/2020	Bank interest	5.30
06/04/2020	Precept	17,880.00
20/05/2020	HMRC VAT refund	1,975.98
28/09/2020	Precept	17,873.00
05/10/2020	Bank interest	2.17

The Clerk reminded Councillors of the extent of the level of reserves who in noting the magnitude observed that much of the growth was due to the delays in the planned improvement projects occasioned by the flooding in 2019 and the impact of the Covid restrictions. It is anticipated that going forward future development plans in the village would accelerate the consumption of a substantial proportion of the surplus reserves.

The total expenditure included the following retrospective payment that was presented for approval.

Date	Details	Amount
04/02/2021	Elderberry Flower Company	40.00

It was resolved to approve the payment.

6. **TO CONSIDER ALL ITEMS OF CORRESPONDENCE:**

- 6.1. An email from the Senior Advisor – Environmental Agency attaching a copy of the latest Fishlake Flood Recovery Newsletter for distribution around the local community and an enquiry whether this could be shared via hand delivery. Mention was made that the department had received calls from some residents pointing out that there had been little communication from the Parish Council, or Flood Action Group in the past 12 months. Cllr Trimmingham advised the council that he through the Neighbourhood Watch email database and Mr Edwards via Facebook channels actively manage the sharing of news and information on a regular basis. He noted that in the past 24 hours the latest newsletter for the agency was sent to over 200 recipients and Mr Edward informed the meeting that the only issue of which he is aware was raised by a resident for whom the Action group had the wrong address; an omission that has now been rectified. The Council concluded that the present system of information sharing via social media was adequate, but this could be supplemented by the posting of a hard copy of the newsletter on the Parish Notice Board. **Action:** Copy of the newsletter to be added to the notice board.

- 6.2. An email from the Senior Advisor – Environmental Agency (EA) inviting the Parish Council and Community Flood Action Group to a meeting with EA, DMBC and other agencies to receive an update on recovery works and future plans tentatively scheduled for Tuesday 16th February 2021. Noted and agreed.

Mr Edwards informed the meeting that in addition to the flood action group there is another resident group who have come together to share concerns and views in aspects of flood management in Fishlake. Mr Edwards explained that he had been in touch with members of this group questioning whether they wished to be included in the regular update sessions with the local agencies which invite was declined. The Councillors noted the existence of this group and recognised the importance of full inclusion by all members of the community in the overview of the Government agencies in their work on flood defences. To that end it was agreed that all such meetings with the EA and other agencies be minuted copies of which should be placed on public record, accessible on the parish notice board, and social media platforms.

- 6.3. An email from a resident of Fishlake requesting information covering the 6 core classes of data available to the public concerning Fishlake Parish Council including audit and accounting. The Clerk summarised the details required with include copies of minutes, accounts, declarations of interest and Parish Annual Returns all of which are in the public domain. **Action:** Clerk to prepare the necessary documents for the financial year 2019/20 and 2020/21 to date and forward to the resident for examination. Noted

- 6.4. A letter from a resident who wishes to remain anonymous, raising several points and queries in connection with the conduct and the practice of the flood action group on the collection and distribution of monies following an appeal to the community for the support of victims of the 2019 flood. The Clerk detailed the key points and observations as follows:

- The entry on the Just Giving page inviting donations was for ‘... The elderly and vulnerable and those who found themselves unsupported by insurers’ Subsequently the entry on the page was changed with the removal of reference to the elderly and vulnerable.
- How did the Action Group communicate with the homes affected and publish the relief available to those in need and how the funds could be accessed?
- What is to be done with the balance of the funds?

The Clerk summarised details of the history of the relationship of the Parish Council with the action group with reference to the relevant minutes.

1. Parish Meeting 28th Jan 2020 agenda Item 13 update on flooding matters.
'support was given to setting up of a Flood Action Group which will liaise with the Clerk on any work being done to avoid duplication with the PC. It was noted that the village is in need of an incident/ disaster recovery plan going forward. The Clerk suggested that the group be created with regular updates given to the PC via an agenda item at future PC meetings. Agreed'

2. Parish Meeting 11th February 2020, agenda item 13 update on recent flooding matters.
'Distribution of donated money currently held in PC account. The Clerk confirmed that all funds donated for Fishlake can be match funded by the government up to the value of £300,000 but must be held by a registered charity. Following discussion with the Clerk, S4All have kindly offered to hold the donated funds on behalf of the Parish Council in order for the money to be match funded and agreed to distribute to residents as per the PC's criteria.

The money will be split between the residents without buildings/ contents insurance and a sum for each is to be agreed by the Flood Action Group once a total figure is confirmed.

3. Parish Meeting 11th March 2020, agenda item 5 accounts and finance matters.
'BACS – S4All – Transfer of donated funds - £26,131,64

4. Parish Meeting 9th September 2020, agenda item 2 Declaration of Interest.
'Invited by Chairman and all 5 members declared and interest in item 5(b)

5. Parish Meeting 9th September 2020, agenda item 5(b) Accounts and Finance Matters.
'To approve distribution of funds from S4All re 2019 flooding. On the basis that all members declared an interest in this item, it was agreed for the Clerk to speak with S4All and explain that the PC cannot have any involvement in the distribution of these funds. Noted.'

The Clerk presented details of the amounts collected and received into the bank account of the Parish a sum totalling £26,131.64 that included a donation to the Just Giving page of £19,846.73. Details of timing and the nature of the movement of these donations into the account of S4All and subsequent return in full into the Parish bank account on 2nd June 2020 of £26,131.64 followed a match funded amount of a further £26,131.64 on 4th June 2020 and the final withdrawal of the total collection into the account of Thorne Rotary Club in two tranches of £25,000 each on 21 August 2020 and 24th August 2020 with the remaining balance of £2,263.28 on 25th August 2020.

The Clerk presented a summary of information supplied by Mr Edwards of the Flood Action Group providing a full accounting and audit trail of all the funds collected detailing the distributions to the nominated beneficiaries of 14 households who had no insurance cover.

The Councillors queried the powers and responsibilities of the Parish Council in questioning the Community Flood Action Group concerning their activities and the decisions made by the Group in the allocation of the funds. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council have no statutory authority to investigate any organisation or association acting in a charitable capacity in the collection or distribution of monies. The Parish Council does have an interest should it wish to pursue on behalf of its residents such enquiries as it deems appropriate to question the legitimacy and propriety of actions of groups affecting residents of the parish. However, these are no more exhaustive than any private individual who may legitimately seek freedom of information requests from any enterprise, charity or other organisation. Any answers to which enquires are equally subject to the provisions of the General Data Protection Act that preserves the right of individuals to maintain anonymity, which is particularly relevant in this case as certain beneficiaries have expressly wished to retain their anonymity. It is also worth noting that the Parish Council in their meeting on 9th September 2020 abstained from involvement in the decisions concerning the distribution of funds given their declaration of interest of Councillors in the impact of the flood.

Mr Edwards provided the meeting with details of the processes, actions and rationale of the decisions made by the Flood Action Group.

- All donations to the appeal arose from promotion through the Just Giving page. This site would only accept payments via credit card consequently cheque donations received from individuals were paid into the Parish Council bank account; the Flood Action Group had no bank facilities.
- In the interest of full transparency all financial transactions managed by the Flood Action Group in connection with the appeal have been published on the community Facebook page and any resident in the community is welcome to make direct enquires of members of the group who are happy to make full disclosures and explanations.
- In consultation with and recommendations from DMBC the group identified the most appropriate criteria for receipt of financial support as those residents of the village who were uninsured. This information was collated with the assistance of DMBC following their door-to-door enquiry of the insurance status of each resident. 14 residents were established whose circumstances came within the criteria definition.
- The problem in incorporating vulnerability within a category list was the number of those residents who can legitimately be classified as vulnerable. The objective insurance definition of vulnerable is any individual experiencing an event that generates stress through, bereavement, divorce or catastrophe.

On this basis everyone in the village can be classified as vulnerable. The group needed to establish a degree of clarity and therefore focused on those who were uninsured as having greatest need and were most vulnerable.

- To date grants of £3,000 were made to 14 uninsured residents. Following the extent of concerns expressed by residents the group passed the decision for the distribution of the balance back to the village, who selected 3 individual each of which received £3,000. All donations were made in confidence on a clear understanding that recipients will remain anonymous in compliance with the General Data Protection Act.
- The balance remaining is £4,798.35 held in the Thorne Rotary Club account that will be held pending a decision on how it is to be distributed.

Mr Edwards reported that in the past few weeks he and members of the group have received abuse and threats from residents in the community, questioning the actions and decisions of the group in the distribution of the monies. Notwithstanding, he and his fellow members stand by the criteria adopted which was determined in consultation with DMBC; all monies are accounted for and all decisions are open to scrutiny.

Councillor Webb observed that in the interest of transparency and propriety that she had waived anonymity and had placed on public record that she was a recipient of a grant from the appeal fund. For avoidance of doubt she, having declared an interest as a potential beneficiary, had absented herself from any of the decisions about the allocation of grants.

Cllr Trimingham sought to clarify the position of the council. As advised by the Clerk the Council have no direct powers to interrogate or investigate the decisions of an independent group. The Council acknowledge that an accounting has been provided by this group that is clear in which all monies have been fully reported. In so doing the Council would like to offer its thanks for all the work undertaken by the members of the community group and express gratitude to the charity Stainforth-for-All who have also been subjected to complaint and abuse.

Residents or others who come forward with further questions or issues in connection with the actions of the community group in the management of the appeal must and shall be directed to address their comments, or queries to the Community Flood Action Group all of whom are happy to respond to any legitimate concerns. Mr Edwards reiterated his undertaking to communicate with anyone who has any questions and provide full explanation of all decisions and actions; the group have nothing to hide.

Action: Cllr Trimingham suggested that given the extent of the abuse generated as a result of the flood appeal the Clerk write to the Trustee of Stainforth 4 All with a letter of gratitude for all their support and effort in the management of the financial arrangements. Agreed.

7. TO CONSIDER ALL PLANNING MATTERS:

- 7.1.** 21/00119/FUL from T Nixon, New Bank House, Fair Bank Lane, erection of a hay barn and general-purpose agricultural store. Cllr Webb questioned whether the application for planning should include flood risk assessment. It was noted that the documents supporting the application did include submissions from the Environmental Agency in respect of Flood Zone 2 and 3. Noted.

- 8. TO CONSIDER HIGHWAYS MATTERS:** Cllr Waite informed the meeting that he had brought to the attention of Doncaster Highway Maintenance the extent of 'potholes' in the road requesting urgent repair. In addition, the hedge surrounding Park Farm needs cutting as it impinges and overhangs on the public pathway limiting access and thereby represents a danger to public safety. **Action:** Clerk to write to DMBC Highways requesting that they expedite the hedge cut back.

Cllr Trimingham commented upon the magnitude and extent of potholes on Millfield and Sour Lane; they require urgent action as the current state of the roads will severely damage traffic and may be the cause serious accident.

Action: Clerk to write to DMBC Highways requesting urgent repair with timescales.

Cllr Chaffer suggested that it was not unreasonable to request from DMBC Highways a comprehensive plan outlining details of their intentions for road repair in the village. This should provide objectives and timescales. The Clerk advised that such a request had been made last year with no response. **Action:** Clerk to seek from Doncaster Highways an update on the status of actual and intended maintenance reminding the department of the previous request for information.

- 9. TO CONSIDER IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES:** Cllr Waite suggested that given the current level of crime within the area consideration be given to the deployment of additional security cameras in the village. **Action:** Clerk to investigate the potential of the provision of security cameras in consultation with DMBC and Police to establish legality, cost and practical implications.

Cllr Trimingham suggested that given the prospects of social distance restrictions continuing for some time during 2021 with consequent limitation of face-to-face meetings the Parish Council invest in an annual Zoom video licence at a cost of £119.90 plus VAT. **Resolved:** Council purchase an annual Zoom licence. Carried unanimously.

Cllr Webb suggest that the Parish Council website be progressed. **Action:** Clerk to progress the construction of website.

10. **TO CONSIDER FISHLAKE PLAYING FIELD MATTERS:** The Clerk advised that enquiries for the installation of the playing field gate have been made with Burn Fencing who need to take measurements before quoting. **Action:** Contact details of Cllr Waite to be provided to Burn Fencing to facilitate access to the site.

Cllr Trimingham advised that the Playing Field Group have indicated they would be willing to make contribution to the cost of the gate. In addition, he had been informed by the Group that they had successfully re-gained full access to their bank account and are therefore able to provide comprehensive statements of their financial affairs Cllr Trimingham highlighted the poor quality of the goal posts on the field and that they will need replacing to comply with safety standards and conditions of insurance. **Action:** Cllr Trimingham to liaise with members of the group in addressing any replacement issues and implications.

11. **TO CONSIDER FLOOD PLAN / PREVENTION:** The proposed meeting with the EA Agency, DMBC and other agencies was agreed. Cllr Trimingham stressed the importance of impressing upon these agencies the need for action on the main riverbank of the River Don. Water levels have been such that river water is breaching the bank at certain points along the course of the river.

12. **TO CONSIDER POLICE MATTERS / NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH:** Cllr Trimingham reported on incidents in the village. An aggravated breakin with the assault of security officers at the EA site in the village. This is a serious event given the attack on the staff and the consequent slowing down of work on the riverbank. A vehicle theft from a dog walker and assaults in the village. The key problem is a lack of police response due to poor staffing levels. These comments are not intended as a criticism on the ability and capability of the new Inspector who is very competent and able. It is simply a matter of police resource. **Action:** An ongoing invitation be extended to the Chief Constable for the region to attend the Parish Council meeting.

Cllr Webb commented on the extent of warnings of suspicious activity that are posted on social media but questioned whether the incidents are being formally reported. Cllr Trimingham advised that Neighbourhood Watch is the appropriate mechanism through which all criminal activity can be reported; it is a simple process and immediate. **Action:** Cllr Trimingham encourage in his regular Neighbourhood Watch emails the reporting of all incidents and provide details of the online resource through which such reporting can be actioned.

13. **TO CONFIRM DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:** as Tuesday 9th March 2021 at 7.00 pm on Zoom.