

Minutes of Great Melton Parish Council Meeting

Monday 11 December 2023 at 7.30 pm held at Great Melton Village Hall

Parish Councillors (Cllr) present: Ian Sears (Chair), Mary Barnard, Michelle Collins, Peter Markham.
Also present: Anita Rose (Parish Clerk).

1 Member of the Public

The Chair asked the Council if they agreed to record the meeting for minute purposes. This was unanimously **AGREED** by all.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs L and R Richardson due to illness and Cllr Fleming due to a bereavement. Apologies were also received from County and District Cllr Margaret Dewsbury.

2 Members' declarations of interest in items on the agenda

Cllr Sears declared a conflict of interest in item 7.2 application number 2023/3298 and Cllr Markham declared a personal conflict of interest in item 4.8.

The Council unanimously **AGREED** to grant dispensations to Cllrs Sears and Markham to participate in discussion only regarding these matters.

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting were unanimously **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair.

Item 5 on the agenda was brought forward.

5 Open forum for public participation

With reference to Agenda Item 4.8, Mr T Markham had expressed an interest in taking over the land at High Green from January 2024. He would like to use this land for grazing sheep and asked the Council if they would agree to some minor adjustments to protect his sheep, namely he proposed the removal of the Himalayan blackberry bush and the installation of a fence to one side to keep the sheep away from the yew hedge. (See item 4.8 for the Council decision.)

4 Clerk's report

The Clerk reported the following updates.

4.1. The Clerk had experienced further ongoing problems with Unity Trust Bank - the postal address had not been updated which has consequently caused a delay in submitting the VAT return.

4.2. The role of the Compliance Manager Steve Kenny had been clarified. The clerk explained that the role is still one of enforcement but had simply been rebranded by South Norfolk District Council (SNDC).

4.3. The Clerk received an email from Land Agent, Mr Corfield, on the 4th December confirming he had asked Equinor for the procedure regarding reimbursement for Parish Clerk time committed to the Windfarm Project and will report back once a reply has been received.

4.4. The Land Registry documents for the land owned by the Parish Council have been scanned and added to the Parish Council file store on Dropbox. An email has been sent to the Land Registry seeking clarification regarding a change of address for the proprietor.

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10

Dated: 11th March 2024

4.5. The Clerk shared correspondence received from SNDC regarding Code of Conduct training. This training has been made available to all Parish Councils that have adopted the new Local Government Association Code of Conduct.

4.6. South Norfolk District Council have updated a copy of the Area and Parishes map. A copy has been sent to all Councillors and has been added to Dropbox.

4.7. The Clerk notified Councillors that the Greater Norwich Local Plan main modifications consultation ended on 6th December.

4.8. The tenant of the allotment land had advised the Council on 10th December that they no longer wished to continue to rent the land from January 2024. After discussion and following the recent interest from Mr T Markham, the Council unanimously **AGREED** to offer the tenancy to Mr T Markham for £50.00 for the first year.

6 Finance

6.1. Update on Council's finances up to 30 November 2023

The Clerk presented an update on the Council's finances. It was noted that 'Grants to other organisations' included an allocation for community developments from CIL funds, which presented an incorrect figure to this column. The clerk was tasked with adding an additional column to separate this expenditure.

6.2. Annual Community Infrastructure Levy Report

The Community Infrastructure Levy Report year ending 31 March 2023 was presented to the Council and unanimously **AGREED**.

6.3. GOV.UK and ORG.UK email / website

The Council had received correspondence from PKF Littlejohn external auditors, advising Parish and Town Councils that every local authority should have an email account that is either a gov.uk or a org.uk email address. The basis for the advice was the increasing risks associated with cyber security and the notion that a gov.uk or org.uk domain demonstrates the Council's official local government status and helps to build trust and credibility.

After discussion it was **AGREED** that whilst this advice is best practice the cost implication for a Parish as small as Great Melton outweighs any benefits at present. The Council have **AGREED** to monitor the situation and have asked the clerk to keep a close eye on upcoming changes to the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners Guide.

The clerk was asked to email Cllr Margaret Dewsbury to understand if there was any central funding to support the adoption of recommended domain names and, if so, what criteria (if any) needed to be met.

6.4. Budget and Precept 2024/25

The Clerk presented the draft figures for consideration. The Council unanimously **AGREED** to approve the budget. The precept will increase to £1126.00. Proposed by Cllr Sears and seconded by Cllr Collins.

6.7. The following payments were unanimously APPROVED by the Council.

Unity Trust Bank	Service charge	£18.00
Royal British Legion	Poppy wreath	£20.00
Great Melton Village Hall	Hall Hire x 4 sessions	£80.00
A Rose	Salary (July – Sept)	£313.00
A Rose	Salary (Oct – Dec)	£361.06
L Canterra	Salary	£17.17
HMRC	PAYE	£26.00

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6.6. Grant request from Great Melton Parochial Church

After careful consideration and taking into account the increase of 2024/25 precept the Council **AGREED** to award a grant of £400.00 to Great Melton Parochial Church towards maintaining the churchyard. Payment to be paid from April 2024 onwards.

6.7. The Clean Up and Bloom application

The Council unanimously **AGREED** to apply for the Clean Up and Bloom funding. Cllr Sears had offered to apply on the Council's behalf.

6.8. Winter Pressures Grant

It was unanimously **AGREED** to not apply for this grant. It was agreed that the Council would not qualify for this grant due to not being in a position to run any qualifying schemes.

7

Planning

7.1. 2023/0109: Church Lodge, Market Lane

Retrospective application for retention of existing ground floor layout following removal of ground floor section of chimney stack – **No further comment.**

7.2. Planning Comments

The following comments were unanimously **AGREED** for the planning applications listed below.

2023/3298: Mosswood, High Green; Rear single storey extension – No comment.

2022/1422: Church Farm, Market Lane; conversion of existing barn complex to form No. 6 residential units - Object under the following reasons.

- 1) The application remains of poor quality - e.g. errors in respect of the attributed location, with the address given as "Rectory Road, Little Melton" and the adjacent church described as "Little Melton Church". The assertion that the barns were last used as cattle sheds more than 50 years ago, is factually incorrect.
- 2) The design and access statement still suggests that there are bus stops in the village. The closest bus service is 2km away.
- 3) The Planning Officer's report of 24th October 2022 details several deficiencies in the original application - e.g. the ecology report. The Parish Council was unable to find evidence that these deficiencies had been addressed.
- 4) The revised application claims that there are no trees or hedges on the proposed development site (or on land adjacent to the site that could influence the development or be important as part of the character of the local landscape). In our opinion, this misrepresents the situation at the site and the Parish Council recommends the local authority checks the tree survey that was included in the first iteration of this application.
- 5) When the application was considered in 2022, it was felt that 4 units would be reasonable. Whilst a reduction to 6 units is an improvement, the units of Barn B still appear to be a compromise with respect to layout and room dimensions. The option as proposed could possibly be compatible with an affordable housing proposition. The purpose of the build should be made clearer.
- 6) Parking facilities for 27 cars seems disproportionate and excessive for the number of units proposed - the report of the Highways Officer in October 2022 highlights the potentially hazardous impact of an excessive number of traffic movements in a rural location served by roads

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12

Dated: 11th March 2024

of restricted width, generally lacking verges. Contrary to assertions in the application, this route is still used by heavy articulated agricultural vehicles, in addition to cyclists, walkers, horse riders and local traffic.

7) The Parish Council noted the amended proposal for access to the site. The report of the Highways Officer in October 2022 clearly draws attention to the hazardous location of the two points of access to the property. Since the exit from the suggested amended access is even nearer to a blind 90-degree corner than the access proposed in the original application, this option is very likely to be even less satisfactory than the alternative option.

8) Concerns were raised regarding arrangements for management of the land.

8 Climate and Ecology Bill

The Council **AGREED** to not support this bill due to its political nature.

9 Councillor updates

9.1. Sheringham Shoal Extension and Dudgeon Extension project, no update to report.

9.2. NWL/A47 update, Cllr Markham reported that the A47 flooding had caused significant chaos and upset amongst residents of neighbouring villages. The diversions put in place through these villages created much disturbance and long queues of traffic. Cllr Markham had been advised that contractors were working hard to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

9.3. Pavilion/Village Hall Committee minutes were noted. Cllr Sears reported that clarification regarding the liquor licence was being sought, whilst review of the constitution with regard to trustee responsibilities and liabilities, in particular, was on-going.

9.4. Town and Parish Summit (9th November) deferred to March Meeting.

10 Highway Working Group

Cllr Sears reported that the speed limit application is progressing, with feedback on its progress from the Highways Engineer, guardedly optimistic. Cllr Sears thanked members of the group for their hard work on this important initiative.

11 Biodiversity Policy

The Clerk circulated a draft copy of the Biodiversity Policy which was unanimously **AGREED** to adopt after minor amendments.

12 Correspondence

Correspondence received on the Dementia Care Conference 2024 and Orstead Community Benefit Fund was noted.

13 The Council RESOLVED to exclude members of the public and press (under the Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960) for the following confidential items:

14.1. Local Government services pay agreement 2023 and backdated pay.

Unanimously **AGREED** and noted.