**Minutes of the Croston Parish Council Meeting**

**held on Wed 10th Jan 2024, at** **Croston Old School**

**In attendance:** Cllrs K Almond, P Sloan, P Strachan, C Titherington-Teale, C Turner, C Worthington (items 5 to 12), S Moult, P Fenemore, County Councillor A Whittaker Items 1 to 4), Mr P Cafferkey (Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer);

Three members of the public were also in attendance.

Please note, unless stated otherwise, decisions were unanimous.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Cahill.
2. **To agree the minutes of the last Parish Council mtg held on 13th Dec 2023:**
Cllr Fenimore requested that the minutes record that he had not given his apologies but did not attend the meeting of the 13th Dec 2023 because “the required notification had not been given and that the proposed agenda was not properly authorised or dated. ln view of these failings, I regarded the proposed meeting not to meet the legal requirements and I would not, therefore, be a party to potentially illegal activities.”
3. **To receive declarations of interest:** None
4. **Public Participation:** County Councillor Alan Whittaker was present to make the parish council aware of the recent decision by Michael Gove (secretary of state for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities) to make Chorley Council a “designated council” with regard to planning matters. This means that developers can bypass Chorley Council and go directly to the Planning Inspectorate to have their applications considered. County Councillor Alan Whittaker encouraged the parish council and / or individuals to object to Government with regard to this decision. The parish council agreed that it was important to have a “local say” on proposed housing developments so as to ensure adequate infrastructure was in place e.g. sewage and drainage systems.

County Councillor Alan Whittaker also reiterated his concern regarding the proposed devolution deal on offer to the County of Lancashire; these concerns have been previously recorded in the minutes of 13th Dec 2023.

Three residents of School Close were in attendance to request a financial contribution towards replacing a damaged fence between Croston Recreation Park and School Close. As it was agreed that the fence is not a party fence, but the responsibility of the residents of School Close, the Clerk advised that the council could only consider such a decision once it has been established that any such contribution was legitimate use of public monies. The residents also expressed concern about children and youths climbing onto the cabin in the park, the application of anti-vandal was discussed.
5. **Planning Matters**:
	1. 23/01066/CLPUD, 5 Westfields, Croston, PR26 9RT, Application for a certificate of lawfulness for a proposed single storey rear extension (following demolition of rear detached store).
	2. 23/01051/PDE, 3 The Orchard, Croston, PR26 9HS, Notification of a proposed single storey rear extension measuring 5m in depth, with eaves height of 2.88m, and a maximum height of 3.2m

There were no objections to the above items.

1. **Finance Update**
	1. **Finance Report:** The Clerk presented the finance report which shows a forecast estimated balance at the end of the financial year (2023-24) of £15,372; of this, £15,322 relates to Community Infrastructure Levy monies. **It was resolved** that the finance report be approved.
	2. **Direct Debit HMRC: It was resolved** that the Clerk be approved to setup of a direct debit for the payment of employees’ tax to HMRC.
	3. **It was resolved** that the following transactions made through the parish council’s bank account during the month of Dec 2023 be approved.

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| **Date** | **£**  | **Payee** | **Description** |
| 01/12/2023 | 27.60 | EASYWEBSITES-RW2ZD | website monthly fee |
| 01/12/2023 | 459.00 | Countrywide Mntnce | monthly grounds mntnce charge |
| 04/12/2023 | 431.00 | MCB Print Ltd | winter newsletter printing |
| 05/12/2023 | 7.70 | Co-op Bank | Co-op Bank Charge |
| 05/12/2023 | 7.00 | Co-op Bank | Co-op Bank Charge |
| 15/12/2023 | 56.00 | Lee Distribution | winter newsletter distribution |
| 15/12/2023 | 36.00 | Croston Old School | room hire |
| 18/12/2023 | 2.50 | Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's expenses for Nov |
| 18/12/2023 | 504.79 | Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's net pay for Nov |
| 18/12/2023 | 10.80 | Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's mileage for Nov |
| 18/12/2023 | 158.40 | Patricia A Peet | Refund for old website charge |
| 18/12/2023 | 480.51 | Lengthsman | Lengthsman's net pay for Nov |
| 31/12/2023 | 5.28 | Unity Trust Bank | Unity Trust Bank Charge |

1. **Precept 2024-25: It was resolved** that the precept for 2024-25 be set at £34,728. Consequently, for a Band D house, for example, the annual precept would increase by £8.51; from £23.81 per annum to £32.32 per annum. The increase to the precept was considered necessary in view of the need to build in some financial resilience for the council by starting to build up a contingency fund, as recommended by the National Association of Local Councils. The council was also mindful of the need to undertake repairs and maintenance of council owned assets.
2. **Budget 2024-25**: **It was resolved** that the expenditure budget for 2024-25 be £51,544.
3. **Clerk’s Claim for Dec 2023: It was resolved** that the Clerk’s claim for Dec 2023 be approved.
4. **Society of Local Council Clerk’s (SLCC) Membership and Microsoft 365 Subscription: It was resolved** that the council would fund 60% (£88.80) of the Clerk’s membership for 2024; the other 40% being funded by Little Hoole Parish Council. **It was also resolved** that the council would fund 50% (£29.99) of the Clerk’s annual subscription to Microsoft 365, the other 50% being funded by Little Hoole Parish Council.
5. **Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Grant: It was resolved that** that the grant would be spent on the PRoW from Workhouse Farm on Out lane, to where it joins The Orchard at the GP Surgery.
6. **Grant for New Bench:** It had been previously resolved that the council apply to the Lancashire Environmental Fund for a grant to replace one of its dilapidated public benches. **It was now resolved** that the bench to be replaced, if the grant application was successful, would be the bench located half away along Carr Lane. This was a majority vote, with Cllrs Fenemore and Turner abstaining.
7. **Project Update re Renovations:** The Chairexplained that quotes would be obtained for any renovation projects and that work would only go ahead once approved by the council.
8. **National Savings & Investment Account: It was resolved** that the Clerk be approved to try and establish who the signatories are on this parish council account (balance of £2,981.08), with a view to it being transferred to the council’s Unity Trust bank account.
9. **Chorley Council Garages:** It was agreed that the Clerk write to Chorley Council requesting the parish council be kept up to date on any developments regarding the future maintenance or sale of these garages, and to express disappointment that the parish council had not been informed that three of the garages had been available for sale in 2015.
10. **Date of Next Meeting:** Wed 14th February 2024, 7.30pm, Croston Old School

Approved as a true record: Pauline Strachan, Chair, 14 Feb 2024.
