**Minutes of the Croston Parish Council Meeting**

**held on Wed 13th Dec 2023, at** **Croston Old School**

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

Seven members of the public were also in attendance.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllrs Worthington, Cahill, Moult. Cllr Fenimore wishes it to be recorded that he was not attending 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.”
2. **To agree the minutes of the last Parish Council mtg held on 8th Nov 2023:**
The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th Nov 2023 were accepted as a true record and agreed unanimously.
3. **To receive declarations of interest:** None
4. **Public Participation:** County Councillor Alan Whittaker was in attendance to express concern at the proposed devolution deal on offer to the County of Lancashire (including Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authorities). He explained that eight of the twelve Lancashire District Councils (including Chorley Council) had written a letter of objection to the proposed devolution deal to form a Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA). Concerns include the feeling that the deal will not delivery any meaningful change and that some of the money awarded to the devolved function may result in less monies for District Councils. Additionally, only four members will form the CCA with voting rights, two from the County Council, one from each of the two unitary authorities, i.e. no voting representation for the Districts Councils. A consultation will run until 26 January 2024.

There was discussion on the recent incident involving a tree trunk falling onto and seriously damaging the railings on the pedestrian bridge behind the Old School. Lancashire County Council (LCC) has confirmed their ownership of the bridge. The parish council stated that it had liaised with LCC to have more secure barriers erected around the damage for public safety, which LCC has done. The Old School expressed concern for any possible future damage from trees falling onto the building and wishes to pursue reassurance on this from parties concerned, which the parish council shared.

Six of the seven members of the public in attendance were at the meeting to object to what they see as the parish council’s continuing exploration of conversion of a landscaped grass verge on Bramblewood for parking, despite Chorley Council having refused planning permission for a previous application in the area of Bramblewood. It was felt that this should not be a parish council issue and they were disappointed, that as residents of Bramblewood, they had not been consulted by the parish council. The members of the public felt that the parish council should be seeking to address the current parking issues on the junction of Bramblewood and Station Road by seeking permission for double yellow lines. Other issues raised included the heavy lorries that drive through Croston and the need for improved parking in the village, through the creation of community car park, possibly by a compulsory purchase order of the former gas works land.

A member of the public expressed concern that the vacant Grapes pub, a grade II listed building, was being allowed to fall into disrepair and the lack of any known plans by the new owner of the pub was also a cause for concern and speculation. The parish council confirmed that they shared these concerns.
5. **Planning Matters:** None.
6. **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 £14,640. **It was resolved** that the finance report be approved.
	2. **Clerk’s Pay Award:** NALC (National Association of Local Councils) had recently published the agreed pay award effective from 1st April 2023. **It was resolved** that the new pay scales be approved and the Clerk’s pay on spinal column point 21.
	3. **It was resolved** that the following transactions made through the parish council’s bank account during the month of Nov 2023 be approved.

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| **Date** | **£ Amt** | **Payee** | **Description** |
| 1-Nov-23 | 27.6 | EASYWEBSITES-RW2ZD | Website monthly charge |
| 10-Nov-23 | 24.00 | Croston Old School | Room Hire |
| 15-Nov-23 | 459.00 | Countrywide | Grounds Mtnce Contract |
| 16-Nov-23 | 574.27 | Employee 2 | Net pay for Oct 2023 |
| 20-Nov-23 | 294.87  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 40.12  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 32.98  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 317.89  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 23.97  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 31.98  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 20-Nov-23 | 11.76  | B/P to: CVFG Ltd | CVFG Christmas Lights |
| 23-Nov-23 | 0.60  | B/P to: Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's expenses Sep 2023 |
| 23-Nov-23 | 29.70  | B/P to: Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's mileage Oct 2023 |
| 23-Nov-23 | 28.80  | B/P to: Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's mileage Sep 2023 |
| 23-Nov-23 | 522.07  | B/P to: Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's net salary Sept & Oct 2023 |
| 23-Nov-23 | 1.50  | B/P to: Paul Cafferkey | Clerk's expenses Oct 2023 |
| 24-Nov-23 | 275.00  | B/P to: RBL Poppy Appeal | Donation to Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal |
| 28-Nov-23 | -800.00 | CROSTON PARISH COUNCIL | Grant from LCC re Public Rights of Way & Bio Diversity |

1. **Budget 2024-25**: It was agreed to defer this item until the Jan 2024 meeting**.**
2. **Clerk’s Claim for Nov 2023: It was resolved** that the Clerk’s claim for Nov be approved.
3. **Reduction in Lengthsman’s Hours: It was resolved** to ratify the council’s email decision to approve the Lengthsman’s request for reduction in weekly hours from 13 hours per week to 6 hours per week.
4. **Maintenance/Improvement of Parish Council owned/leased land/property: It was resolved** that the outline plan for the maintenance/improvement of parish council land/property, as presented to the council, be approved.
5. **Grant for New Bench: It was resolved** to approve that the council apply to the Lancashire Environmental Fund for a grant to replace one of its dilapidated public benches.
6. **Representative for Coffee Day Committee:** Cllr Sloan volunteered to be a parish council representative on the Croston Coffee Day Committee. This is in addition to Cllr Almond who is also a parish council representative.
7. **The Grapes Pub:** The parish council confirmed that they shared the concerns expressed by a member of public during the public participation (agenda item 4 refers). The council agreed to continue to monitor the situation.
8. **Chorley Council Garages:** The Clerk agreed to forward to all councillors an email response he had only just received from Chorley Council regarding the poor condition of the eight garages owned by Chorley Council to the side of 54 Peartree Road, Croston.
9. **Correspondence: email re poor condition of benches:** The parish council had received an email from a resident about the poor condition of a number of the public benches. The parish council is looking to instigate a programme of repair / replacement subject to budget availability.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wed 10th January 2024, 7.30pm, Croston Old School

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