SACRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on the 27 March, 2019
Fulforth Centre, Sacriston

Present: Cllrs H.Dixon (Chair), E. Waldock (Dep Chair), D. Robson, P. McLoughlin, R. Harrison, B. Smith, G. Ludlow, F. Morrell, L. Claughan, E. Metcalfe, Clerk J.Evans
Apologies: County Cllr S Wilson & Cllr K Wilson

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Cllr (s)	Action/ Timescale
1	**Introductions**	Chair opened the meeting @ 6.30pm and welcomed everyone. Apologies were accepted.	HD	
3	**Disclosure of Interest from Members**	None		
4	**Public Questions**	As well as the Parish Council 44 members of the public present. The Chair addressed the meeting and explained that as an Extraordinary meeting of the Parish there would only be 1 item on the Agenda, that of the Allotments and no further items would be discussed. Also, as it was a highly emotive area he would be obliged if all parties wishing to add to the discussions respected one another's views and gave each other the opportunity to speak uninterrupted….all comments via the Chair. The order of the meeting would be as follows: The Allotment Holders would. have 15 mins to ask questions to which the Allotment Association could respond then Cllrs would have the opportunity to ask questions. Following this the process would be reversed.	HD	

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		Questions from the floor from Allotment Holders: 1. Concerns over the proposal to raise the allotment rent to £25 per year, why was this when they were under the impression that in 2017 and subsequent years the Association had a balance of approx. £3,000 in the bank. 2. How is it that people who had resigned from the committee had once again got back on. One of them being a lady who did not have an allotment and also a gentleman who had been suspended for having a large storage unit (still on the allotment) and now allowed back on committee? 3. Was everyone paying for their plots? 4. Why was there a caravan and storage unit on site? 5. How is it that expensive repairs to roads etc had been undertaken without full consideration by the members and had quotes been obtained in accordance with procurement guidelines? 6. Why can't they see the waiting lists, it's not a public document. 7. Agreement had been made for 3 members to see the balance sheets then rescinded on the following Sunday, why was this? 8. There is a lack of clarity as to how serious allegations against members are investigated 9. Why were proxy votes allowed at the last meeting when not all members knew about the opportunity to vote in this way? 10. **Allotment Association** (questions answered in the main by Mr. P. Dawson Secretary of Scariston Allotment Association) 1. The rent rise was only a proposal and it would have to go via the appropriate means including the AGM for members to vote. It had been proposed because they had been one or two high expense claims for water leaks and security on both sites. It couldn't come in until the following year if it was agreed. Also, very little investment had taken place at Daisy Hill as compared to Cross Lane. 2. The Books – yes it had been agreed to share them but as it was close to the AGM it had been decided to get them audited by an independent person then brought to the AGM for everyone to see if they wished to do so. PD then asked the meeting if anyone could recommend a suitable independent auditor at a reasonable expense who would undertake the work. 3. With regards to the makeup of the committee PD apologised but due to exceptional family circumstances he had not been around much to organise the situation. He had agreed to take proxy votes on the night of the AGM and was confident that even if this process had not been adopted the result would not have changed. Allotment holders challenged him on this as they felt more votes would have been made if everyone was aware that proxy votes were acceptable …some members they believe did not vote.		

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		4. The committee had allowed a new allotment holder time prior paying for his plot because of condition of the allotment. A gentleman in the audience confirmed this to be the case as it had taken him weeks to cut back weeds (5ft high in some places) the plot was unusable for weeks. 5. PD confirmed that he had the waiting list on spreadsheet and could email it to the Clerk. Furthermore, if whoever was on the top of the list refused a plot, they then went to the bottom of the waiting list, this may be why there was some confusion? 6. The gentleman owning the caravan on site confirmed that he had sought permission from the Allotment Committee due to the fact that his shed had been burnt. The caravan was just a shell to keep some of his equipment and somewhere for him and his grandson to sit. 7. The committee had 2 quotes for the work needed on site and went with the cheapest. Not a lot of investment had been made at Daisy Hill in comparison with Cross Lane and they had now decided to replace gates and add locks etc as a security measure. **Parish Members** Cllr Metcalfe thanked everyone for their frank views and opinions and confirmed that as an Accountant he was prepared to offer his support and look at the books for no remuneration. He would be absolutely open in his findings. This generous offer was accepted. Cllr McLoughlin confirmed that he had briefly looked at some of the paperwork relating to the accounts and had not seen any discrepancies other that the monitoring system was extremely poor and scraps of paper were evident in the place of invoices and receipts. Cllr McLoughlan asked why the question with regards to investigations of alleged misconduct had not been answered and did the Committee have a policy on conducting investigations? PD confirmed that they had no policy the intention was to review and produce a constitution at the next AGM at the moment they just operated with a basic policy. Cllr Morrell & Cllr Dixon confirmed that the presence of a caravan on site was not allowed and only one member of the allotment association had agreed to it and not the full allotment committee. As it would set a president the caravan would have to be removed along with the storage unit. A lengthy discussion then proceeded with regards to this and various other pieces of equipment on all 3 allotment sites in the village. Cllr Morrel confirmed that the garden rents could not be increased even if it agreed at the AGM not for at least 12 months.	EM PMc Pmc FM HD FM	

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		Cllr Ludlow asked if everyone got to see the balance sheet at the AGM. PD confirmed that they could once audited.	GL	
		Cllr Smith asked if everyone was aware of where they were on the waiting lists for allotments and was the date of application held on the spreadsheet. PD confirmed that the date was but the order may change if they refused an allotment they would automatically go to the bottom of the list.	BS	
		Cllr Harrison asked how the Ballot had proceeded at the last AGM as it appeared to him not to have been conducted within guidelines. A full discussion then took place over the use of proxy votes with many differing views on what had happened. It was also identified that the candidates' names had not been posted until the night before the meeting. Discussions took place over this and previous meetings that had taken place with the Parish trying to mediate and it was obvious that no agreement could be reached over what each party had said/done with each saying that they had witnesses to the events …all with differing views. This forms part of the on-going dispute which the National AA had been requested to review. Prior to reversing the meeting process Mr. B. Thurkettle gave a passionate speech asking for everyone to come together. All he wanted was for the Allotments to go "back to the good old days" when everyone got along and **proposed that the Parish took them back over. This was then seconded by Mr. J. Berryman.**	RH	
		Cllr McLoughlin did say that the Parish had asked PD for the allotment holders contact details to request a ballot on the way forward but that the Parish was unable to get this information because PD thought it would contravene GDPR regs (ie he could not provide details without individuals consent). However, now the proposal had been made was anyone against it? The overwhelming view (no one against it) was that the Parish should take over the management of the allotments for a period of time and introduce a new and updated constitution etc. One gentleman spoke further and asked that if the parish decided to do this they should take over the responsibility permanently and not just for a limited period of time. PD confirmed that this is what he had been hoping for as the running of the allotments was becoming increasingly difficult and time consuming for both him and the committee.	PMc	

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		RESOLVED Cllr Dixon accepted the proposal and confirmed that it would have to be decided on by the full Parish Council at their next meeting. He and he would take it with him to the next full meeting of the Council to be held on Wednesday 3 April, 2019. Thereafter all allotment holders would be informed of the outcome in writing if they could leave their names and contact details prior to leaving.		
18	**Date & Time of Next Meeting**	Cllr Dixon thanked everyone for the way in which the meeting had been conducted and for their continued patience for a short time longer. Meeting Closed @ 8.05 pm Signed ……. Date ..…../……/…… *Chairperson*		