

SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

An extraordinary meeting of Swanton Morley Parish Council was held in Swanton Morley Village Hall on Tuesday 6th December 2011. The meeting commenced at 7.30pm.

Present: Mr R. Atterwill (Chairman), Mr B. Marsham, Mr A Sommerville CPM, Mr S Westbury, Mr J. Carrick, Mr A Fleming and Mr S. Atterwill. Also in attendance were Mrs F. LeBon (Clerk), Mr R. Richmond (Breckland District Council) and one member of the public.

Matters Raised Under Time Allocated to the Public

None

The Meeting Went Into Session.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mr Borrett

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr Westbury declared a personal interest in any matter relating to the allotments

3. To Agree Payment of £4200 to NESMC Ltd for the preparation and grass seeding of Manns Lane site and old village hall site

Mr R. Atterwill advised that this agenda item was to facilitate payment for work that was already agreed at the meeting of 10th October 2011. It was reported that the seeding of land behind the old village hall was also included in this payment. Mr Marsham proposed that this payment should be made, seconded by Mr S. Atterwill. Carried. Cheque 101981 was drawn to facilitate this payment.

4. To Award Grass Cutting Contract 2012

The Clerk advised that tenders had been sent to the three contractors on the Parish Council's approved contractor list. Two had responded, however one contractor (CGM Maintenance), whilst emailing the tender before the Parish Council's deadline, had failed to ensure that the sealed bid had been received by the council's deadline. The prices from this contractor were considered for the purpose of comparison with the contractor (Norse Commercial Services) that had submitted prices by the deadline and it was agreed after a proposal from Mr Westbury and a second from Mr Fleming to re-award the contract to Norse Commercial Services.

5. To Agree Parish Council Budget for 2012/2013

A budget pack was provided to councillors for consideration. Mr R. Atterwill talked councillors through:

- a) Proposed charges for the hire of Swanton Morley Village Hall
- b) Proposed staff costs, on the assumption that there is no pay increase agreed between NALC and SLCC for 2012/2013.
- c) Items to maintain the playing fields, village green and village seating.
- d) Items to maintain the churchyard and burial ground.
- e) Items for communications

Under this item it was noted that the Parish Council's application for Quality Council was due for renewal in 2012. An item had also been included for the upgrading of the village website as at present it isn't serving the purpose of the village well enough.

The predicted expenditure for the remainder of 2011/2012 was discussed to establish the money expected to remain as revenue for the Parish Council at the close for the 2011/2012 financial year. It was expected that the quotations for rabbit fencing the allotments would be approximately £3000. It was also agreed to add in an amount of £4000 to include screen fencing between the allotments and the youth football pitches (as this forms part of the lease) and laying some hardcore material on the track to prevent this getting boggy in wet weather and vehicles getting stuck. The amount for these parts of the project was expected to be £4000.

Further to the meeting on 14th November, concerns about the amount being spent on the archery framework were raised. Mr R. Atterwill advised that it had been agreed at the Village Hall meeting that a contractual agreement should be entered into giving a sliding scale of repayment should the archery club choose to leave the Village Hall as a training venue.

Councillors then considered the proposed 2012/2013 items of expenditure. Discussions occurred as to the budget cuts by Norfolk County Council that would affect the maintaining of the public rights of way, in particular Harkers Lane. It was agreed to establish the land ownership of Harkers Lane rather than assuming any financial responsibility for keeping this area clear.

Mr Carrick, when discussing the HLS income and associated commons budget, stressed the need to address the river widening on the Wensum adjacent to Mill Common so as to ensure cattle being grazed on the common did not cross the river.

An item had been placed in the budget, in addition to the grass cutting contract, to allow NESMC to do the first two cuts of the new football pitches and top dress them, then this could be passed over to the grass cutting contractor.

The situation regarding the repair of the church wall was discussed. Estimates to completely repair the whole wall were thought to be in the region of £250,000, plus another £30,000 of professional fees to get the project to the stage whereby it would be ready to go to tender. It was agreed that this was not feasible, even with a public works loan which would take 50 years to pay back and would result in an amount repayable in excess of £500,000. Mr Sommerville and Mr R. Atterwill are to meet with Mr Waite (Church Architect) in the new year, but it was agreed that the £2000 remaining in the capital fund, plus £4000 in the 2012/2013 budget would allow for the completion of emergency repairs. An additional £600 was budgeted for the professional fees associated with this.

It was agreed to budget £500 to expose the ditch at the bottom of the Village Hall field, clear the pipes and thus assist with drainage of this area.

The Village Hall Management Committee had requested £3000 to install an automatic fire alarm system and a further £500 to address the premises license which is currently not befitting of the service wished to be provided by the hall.

The automated fire alarm had been raised in the fire risk assessment in 2007 and, whilst all other matters in the assessment had been addressed, this was the only item that remained outstanding to make the hall compliant. Mr Sommerville raised concerns about the opinion of the insurance company should a fire happen within the building and there be no automatic smoke detection.

Mr Carrick, whilst stressing that he would not vote against this item, raised concerns that the Parish Council had too much to do with the hall and it required an independent committee of volunteers. When this is done correctly it is outstanding. With the aforementioned items and the clerk's hours, the village is subsidising the hall too much. The workload needed to be spread out and go back to the voluntary sector.

Mr R. Atterwill gave Mr Carrick examples of how the voluntary sector had let the hall down, including the recent food hygiene report by Breckland District Council that had advised that the cooker and extract fan were domestic, not commercial. As a result they were not really fit for purpose for functions of the hall. In addition to this, the Parish Council had to pay for a lead alternative for the roof of the hall after the theft of the lead, as a result of volunteers leaving the building underinsured.

He also gave the example of Hickling Parish Council who had only recently reported to the press that they were likely to raise their precept in the region of 300% to fund a legal wrangling with their Village Hall management committee.

Mr Carrick was of the opinion that the Village Hall was too dependent on the Chairman and the Clerk. Mr R. Atterwill reminded Mr Carrick that there were 5 people on the committee and other volunteers as part of the team, citing that there were six volunteers on duty at the recent student event.

Mr Westbury reminded Mr Carrick that there were still two positions vacant on the Village Hall Management Committee if volunteers wanted to come forward to assist. Mr R. Atterwill reminded Mr Carrick that one volunteer on the committee lived in Scarning such was the lack of response from people in Swanton Morley.

Mr Carrick stressed the need for fund raising and agreed to participate in the Christmas Quiz and attend the performance of a Christmas Carol.

Mr R. Atterwill drew the attention of the meeting to the estimated cost per household to fund both the Clerk's hours for the Village Hall and the fire alarm and licensing changes would be 21p per week per Band D property. 80% of households in the village were in bands A-C.

Mr Westbury queried whether the amount in the budget would be enough for the emergency repairs to the church wall. Mr Sommerville advised that it would be sufficient. Mr Carrick suggested that the DAC

may have to change their attitude over works such as this as people cannot afford to fund such large scale projects.

Mr Westbury queried whether the proposed contingency of £5000 was enough as NALC had previously advised that the percentage of contingency in relation to the amount of precept should be much higher. This matter was discussed and it was felt that as it was necessary to substantially increase the precept this year an extra increase to the contingency sum would only add to the overall increase in taxation.

After a proposition by Mr Fleming and a second by Mr S. Atterwill, the proposed budgeted expenditure for 2012/2013 was agreed at £53,264.92 (£48,093.12 including income expected during the 2012/2013 financial year).

6. To Agree Precept for 2012/2013

Taking into account revenue in the capital account and monies expected to be left over from the 2011/2012 financial year, Mr Marsham proposed that the 2012/2013 precept should be £39,600.88, seconded by Mr Westbury and carried.

7. To Agree December Edition of The Mardler

The Clerk advised that it was important that The Mardler be agreed at this meeting rather than the full council meeting to be held on 12th December as the Village Hall newsletter had to go out this week as there were imminent fund raising events to be promoted. Mr Carrick proposed that the draft Mardler provided be accepted, seconded by Mr Fleming and carried.

The Meeting Was Suspended

Mr Palmer asked whether village organisations would be allowed to promote their events in The Mardler or have items distributed alongside The Mardler. Mr R. Atterwill stressed that The Mardler was a strictly a Parish Council newsletter but other items would be accommodated if space permitted.

Mr Richmond thanked the Parish Council for the invitation to the meeting.

The Meeting Resumed

The meeting closed at 9pm

_____ (Chairman) _____ Date