

**Minutes of the Meeting of Tunstead and Sco-Ruston Parish Council held at the Horse & Groom
on Tuesday 15th October 2024 at 7:30pm.**

Present: Chris Oakes, Chairman
Rob Hetherington,
Liz Powell
Robert Cole
Gilly Foulds
Jimmy Miller, Clerk

Also present: Four members of the public and Nigel Dixon

1 Public Forum –15 minutes for comments from members of the public

One parishioner said that the flooding in the Parish is still a big problem.

2 Report from Nigel Dixon, NNDC

Nigel Dixon said that, regarding the change of polling station, he had received and read report.

Cllr Hetherington questioned why the people being complained about were investigating themselves saying that this was a conflict of interest. He questioned why the Board was not investigating the Chief Executive of NNDC.

Nigel Dixon said that the Chief Executive is recruited by a board and that board is made up of the leader and the leaders of the key political parties.

Cllr Hetherington replied that what you have is a leader who is prepared to make a decision about who's going to be recruited to the position of chief executive but isn't prepared to make a decision that he will either investigate or get someone from outside who will investigate and he just washes his hands of it completely.

Nigel Dixon said that he thought that he is bound by the constitution of the organisation. The constitution governs who can do what and who has what powers.

Cllr Hetherington said that he'd looked at the constitutions of other district councils and they state that the leader will lead any investigation against a chief executive because they are ultimately his boss.

Nigel Dixon said that they are the political boss. He said that the accountable officer is the chief executive and the chief executive does have a boss in the sense that within the government department, there is an accountability that way

Cllr Hetherington questioned whether he had genuine delegated responsibility under the constitution to make the decision that he made, regardless of the processes that he took which were also wrong according to the Electoral Commission. He said that we're still waiting for that to come back in the answer.

Nigel Dixon said that his understanding is that because he was acting in his role as the returning officer for the election, as against the chief executive of the council, he had a different line of accountability and a different set of rules of what he could and couldn't do and what he was responsible for. So they would be different to the internal rules of the council and more in the realm of the Electoral Commission.

Cllr Hetherington said that it's fairly clear that the Chief Executive broke those rules: that a consultation should have taken place, yet no consultation took place; that the needs of parishioners had to be taken into account yet there was no taking into account the needs of the parishioners; and, that unless it's in exceptional circumstances, there should be a polling station within the parish. He said that there may be exceptional circumstances that we don't know about, and he hasn't made us aware of, but those three things on their own are Electoral Commission regulations. Cllr Hetherington said that none of these things happened.

Nigel Dixon said that the report has identified information that wasn't previously available, and that information comes from two sources. It comes from this establishment here (the pub) and it also comes from the electoral services team.

Nigel said that had Cllr Hetherington and I been aware of that information, I can only speak for myself, but I would not have settled for the process that was followed. That was down to the electoral services officer, with you [Cllr Hetherington] as a go between, and the manager of this establishment [the pub].

Cllr Hetherington said that the only issues which were identified were money, no microwave, and no facilities to make a cup of tea.

Nigel Dixon said that what has emerged since are of a very serious nature and more needs to be done here so that these issues need to be addressed.

Cllr Hetherington responded that this goes back to someone not carrying out the process, the consultation beforehand.

Nigel Dixon said that he disagreed with that, and that then takes us to the electoral services team. What happened there?

Nigel Dixon said that what the chief executive has said is that he was not advised of that information at that stage when he was taking the decision with regard to the polling station here. Nigel said that he has no reason to dispute this. Nigel said that that the Chief Executive wasn't advised even on 18th June, when he came to the TPC meeting, and that he wasn't aware of that information either. Nigel said that he only became aware of that information when this investigation was carried out. Nigel further said that that applies to himself as well.

Cllr Hetherington said that if the Chief Executive wasn't aware of those significant issues, what was he talking about when he didn't know about that information on the night he came to TPC in June. He still made the decision based on what seemed to us at the time, very flimsy grounds which are still the issues which are in the current review that is taking place which you have just responded to. They still haven't used any of those issues which you are referring to, substantive issues, they've still used the same stuff about over the years that there have been one or two complaints. That's what they've actually put in the review document, which I've responded to. Cllr Hetherington questioned why they won't be honest and open and put that information in the documents now.

Cllr Hetherington said that we've got our investigation still waiting to be taken forward.

Nigel Dixon said that that was not the case and that TPC have got a complaint that's been waiting to go forward. The essence of that complaint will look at whether the actions of the chief executive were reasonable or not in the circumstances, in terms of following the rules set down by the

Electoral Commission and NNDC. Nigel said that TPC have got a choice. He said that he was satisfied with the report but that he couldn't share it with TPC because of the conflict of interest which exists between the chief executive on the one hand as the author of this report and the complaint which is against him.

Cllr Hetherington said that NNDC are still not being open and honest with TPC in terms of what the issues are. He said that he believed that having what they sent out in September, the response that TPC have put back is based on that which is similar to what was said in the first place. He said that if they'd been honest and put the real issues into that document that we all saw instead of saying that there had been a number of issues over the years, things would have been different.

Nigel spoke about NNDC's Local Plan. Currently, the draft plan has provisionally allocated 40 homes to be built in Tunstead.

3 Report from Norfolk Constabulary

The report from Matt Pritty was noted.

4 To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Place and North.

5 Declarations of interest for items and applications for dispensations

None.

6 To approve minutes of 17th September 2024

Cllr Cole proposed approving the minutes; seconded by Cllr Powell; unanimous decision in favour.

7 To receive and note the Clerk's report

The Clerk's report was noted.

8) Planning

a) Applications received

None

b) Applications received since 10th October 2024

None.

(c) Planning decisions

None

(d) Planning Decisions received since 10th October 2024

None

9 Correspondence – To consider and respond to the following correspondence:

Correspondence list to be issued

The correspondence list was noted.

10 Finance

a) To note Bank Reconciliation

b) To note Accounts

Cllr Foulds proposed that TPC approve the bank reconciliation and accounts; seconded by Cllr Hetherington. Unanimous decision in favour.

c) To approve items for payment:

Payee	Item	Amount
J. Miller	Salary for October 2024	£299.00
J. Miller	Home office October 2024	£10.00
J. Miller	Mileage (meeting October 2024)	£15.30
SLCC	Annual membership	£80.00
Royal Mail	Delivering for neighbourhood plan	£11.70

Cllr Lloyd proposed that the items be paid; seconded by Cllr Cole; unanimous decision in favour.

11 Paying fees of Tunstead Village Hall

Cllr Oakes said that the village hall needs legal work to move forward in its aim to build a new village hall.

A representative of the village hall committee said that they need a formal document to show that they have permission to put surface water in the ditch and to dig up the drive. The village hall committee cannot do that themselves because they are not a legal entity. TPC own the land where the village hall will be built so TPC will need to pay to get this done.

Cllr Oakes said that TPC had £10,000 earmarked for the village hall's fees so said that the fees would come out of the earmarked fund.

The representative of the village hall committee said that he anticipated that the solicitors would review the title deeds, then look at issues such as whether we would be entitled to trench the loke, whether we would be able to develop the mouth of the loke according to the civil engineer's designs which the village hall committee now have, and whether we would be legally entitled to use the water course of the adjacent land owner for surface water drainage.

Cllr Hetherington proposed that conceptually subject to workings and costs TPC should approve such expenditure; seconded by Cllr Oakes; unanimous decision in favour.

The Clerk will investigate solicitors who could undertake the work.

12 Purchase of additional defibrillator

Cllr Oakes said that this would be looked at in a future meeting.

13 Removal of polling station from the Parish with no consultation

Cllr Hetherington said that a review was underway and that he had submitted comments to NNDC on behalf of TPC for this. NNDC will be reviewing the information and should get back to TPC by the end of November.

14 War memorial

Cllr Oakes said that the names of the servicemen who lost their lives in the First World War would have their names added to the war memorial in time for Remembrance Sunday. He mentioned that the war memorial could be professionally cleaned at the same time for an extra £100.

Cllr Hetherington proposed that TPC pay for the cleaning; seconded by Cllr Foulds; unanimous

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decision in favour.

Cllr Oakes also said that he would be unable to lay the wreath at Tunstead Church this year as he would be taking part in the Remembrance service at Sea Palling at the same time. Cllr Powell offered to lay the wreath at Tunstead Church.

15 Flooding

Cllr Foulds said that Anglian Water had supplied two SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) for Manor Farm Cottages. She said that NCC had cleared gullies in the Parish but not the one near Wroxham Barns. She said that a ground penetrating survey had been carried out which showed that to lay pipes in certain locations due to BT cables and electric cables underground. She said that this meant that it was even more important to make sure that existing pipes run properly and this all came back to everyone carrying out their riparian responsibilities.

Cllr Foulds said that Orbit had done some work to their ditches but that they had only tickled the sides of ditches at Market Close and dumped all the vegetation which they had cut into the middle of ditch. She said that the back ditch not been touched at all. She has contacted them and asked them to do the job properly.

16 Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hetherington said that TPC had been awarded a £10,000 grant and that a design guide is currently being put together which will give options to stipulate the design of any new housing in the Parish and there is also a housing needs analysis being undertaken. He hoped that there would be a draft document ready within the next 2-3 weeks.

17 Representative to attend Norfolk ALC AGM on 20th November

Cllr Hetherington offered to attend the meeting and Cllr Powell offered to attend if Cllr Hetherington found he was unable to attend.

18 Agenda items for meeting in November 2024

Meeting closed at 9:10pm.

Date of next Parish Council meeting: 26th November 2024