

Acton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7:00pm on Wednesday 19 June 2024 in Acton Village Hall

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Nick Antill, Eleanor Clark, Christine Johnson, Steve Le Grys, Katie McSweeney, Graham Round (chairman)

In attendance: Fiona Mullins (clerk) and 4 members of the public.

Minutes

Apologies

- 1 Cllrs received apologies from Cllrs Roberta Caradine, Carol Dyer and John Gibbens and resolved to approve their reasons for absence.

Minutes

- 2 Cllrs resolved to agree the minutes of the meeting held on ~~19 March~~ 15 May 2024. The minutes were signed by the chairman.

Declaration of interest

- 3(i) Cllrs were reminded to declare any interest on any item on this agenda at this point or at any point during the meeting in accordance with Acton Parish Council's Code of Conduct. Cllr McSweeney noted that she lives near the home under item 8a). The chairman advised that this is not a conflict of interest.
- 3(ii) There were no declarations of interest or requests for a dispensation.

District, County reports

- 4(i) There was no report from County Cllr Faircloth Mutton.
- 4(ii) District Cllrs Malvisi and Nunn sent a written report which was circulated to Cllrs.

Acton Field Trust

- 5 Cllrs received a report on the Acton Field Trust. The bank account was opened and the remaining reserve fund was transferred across from the parish council ring-fenced reserve to the new account. There is £1,100 in the bank account and the Trust expects to receive the further funds in early July once the Innominate Trust closes. No investment decisions will be made until after the upcoming elections.

Clerk's report

- 6(i) Cllrs noted the clerk's report on significant matters not on the agenda and not already drawn to councillors' attention. Comments and updates noted were:
 - 23/11/8(ii) a quote has been received for repairing play area equipment and resurfacing

- 22/02 9(vi) Cllr Johnson reported that £45,000 was thought to have been given to Go Start to get an additional electric vehicle, based on the additional development and population in Acton, and that this would provide on demand transport for people in the area but confirmation of this was still awaited from GoStart’s treasurer.
- Cllr Round clarified that the signage “Acton Village” on the gateways is intended to alert drivers that they are entering a village.
- The land with overgrown foliage in the ditch behind the garages of Browns Close has been identified as belonging to the homes on Canon Pugh Drive according to the Land Registry information.
- BDC has confirmed that they will maintain trees on both Gotsfield Close and Babergh Close.

Public Forum

7 Members of the public commented as follows:

- (i) A resident commented that she is concerned about trees on Babergh Close and thanked the council for its efforts to address this.
- (ii) A resident commented that the streetlamp nearest the school on the link from Lambert Drive to the High Street is covered by foliage. Cllr Round noted that the school has been informed and the council will raise this with them again.
- (iii) A resident noted that he is waiting for a response to an email. Cllr Round noted that a response will be made but is awaiting further consideration of the details.
- (iv) A resident commented that permission to install the gym trail equipment has not been shown in a letter. Cllr Round responded that the Village Hall committee has minuted its approval in principle. Once planning permission has been obtained then a formal letter of approval will be sought.
- (v) A resident commented that the new bench by the bus shelter has been put in the wrong position, as it is not angled to face the bend around which buses will come. Cllrs were involved in siting the bench and Cllr Johnson noted that it was considered that to put the bench at an angle it would have to be further from the bus-stop so it was placed parallel to the road.

Planning

8(i) Cllrs considered the following planning applications:

- a) DC/24/02452 Orchard End High Street Acton CO10 0AJ Severance of plot and erection of 1no one and a half storey dwelling. Cllrs resolved to oppose this application. The ecology report is not adequate as it does not identify great crested newts and other animals which are known to be present in that area. Cllrs support the arboricultural officer’s objection. Flooding is a major concern. The proposed development is not in line with Neighbourhood Plan policy Acton 4 due to detrimental effect on the blue corridor and Acton 2 due to the dwelling being crammed in with lack of parking and manoeuvring space.

8(ii) Cllrs noted planning validations, parish council recommendations and local planning authority decisions made since the last meeting.

Governance

9(i) Cllrs noted the resignation of the assistant clerk, Sadie Clark, as of 24 June and thanked her for her contribution to the council. Cllrs resolved to consider the role and further recruitment in closed session.

9(ii) Cllrs approved printing a copy of the Good Cllr Guide for each Cllr in black and white at a cost of up to £70 excl VAT.

9(iii) Cllrs resolved to adopt new model Financial Regulations drafted by NALC published May 2024 noting that the clerk selected appropriate options from those given in order to reflect the council's practice.

9(iv) Cllrs resolved to update the procurement thresholds in the council's Standing Orders (see website) as follows:

- Para 18a(v). whether contracts with an estimated value below ~~£25,000~~ £30,000 including VAT due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.

- Para 18c. A public contract regulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 with an estimated value in excess of ~~£25,000~~ £30,000 including VAT but less than the relevant thresholds in standing order 18(f) is subject to Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which include a requirement on the Council to advertise the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder website regardless of what other means it uses to advertise the opportunity.

9(v) Cllrs received the report of the internal auditor (see website) and approved the following actions:

Recommendation or comment	Action
Recommendation: the schedule of payments requiring authorisation should form part of the agenda for the meeting and the detailed list of all payments should be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of the meeting at which payment was authorised.	List of payments to be added to the agenda as well as the schedule of payments in an appendix.

Recommendation: council should note that the value as stated at Line 9 on the Accounting Statements of the AGAR should be equal to the value of the register as approved at the meeting of 20th March 2024.

Minute 24/03 9(v)Cllrs approved the council's asset register (published on the website) subject to any final changes to the end of March. AIF
The council's AGAR statement line 9 reflects the actual position of the council as at 31 March 2024 as required by JPAG Section 2 para 5.176 "the value of the cell at line 9 is taken from the authority's asset register which is up to date at 31 March and includes all capital acquisition and disposal transactions recorded during the year."

Comment: At the next annual review, council should ensure that Standing Order 18a(v) and 18c are amended to reflect the changes to procurement thresholds.

The revised thresholds have been inserted into the Standing Orders agenda item 9(iv)

Comment: SALC has advised that the new updated financial regulations are now available for adoption by councils at the earliest opportunity.

The new Financial Regulations were adopted agenda item 9(iii)

Comment: For those authorities that fall between the Transparency Code 2014 and the Transparency Code 2015 (gross income and expenditure exceeding £200,000), councils should strive to follow the provisions of the 2015 code. Comment: Council is working towards ensuring compliancy.

The clerk will bring a review of recommended transparency code provisions to a future meeting.

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- 9(vi) Cllrs received the Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24 noting the clerk's explanation about treatment of Acton Field Trust funds in a ring-fenced account.
- 9(vii) Cllrs noted that the 30 day period for exercise of public rights will be Thursday 27 June to Wednesday 7 August 2024 inclusive.
- 9(viii) Cllrs resolved to approve the Parish Council's compliance with the governance statements within the section 1 of the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return and authorised the chairman to sign section 1.

Finance

- 10(i) Cllrs noted the 2023/24 end-of-year accounts that were approved in May (minute 24/05 11ii) and approved the explanation of significant year-on-year variances for external audit.
- 10(ii) Cllrs noted the bank reconciliation that was approved in May (minute 11iii) and approved the version that is required for external audit.

- 10(iii) Cllrs reviewed and approved the 2023/24 end-of-year reserves noting that the Acton Field Trust ring-fenced reserve was transferred to a separate Trust bank account in May 2024.
- 10(iv) Cllrs resolved that section 2 of the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return accurately reflects the Council's payments and receipts and authorised the chairman to sign it.
- 10(v) Cllrs reviewed payments made in May having seen the invoices, noting in particular:
- a) Payments made under delegated powers or under Financial Regulation 4.1 since the last meeting:
- £681.41 SALC (and NALC) membership subscription (clerk and chair within agreed budget)
 - £379.20 Website annual hosting and gov.uk emails, domain name (2 years) (clerk within agreed budget)
 - £138.00 Batteries and pads for Tamage Rd estate defibrillator (clerk, Health and Safety)
- b) payments over £1,000:
- £4,401.60 Westcotec, Large "smiley face" Speed Indicator Device (minute 24/02 8i)
 - £14,723.64+VAT Village gateways - Glasdons £14,257.41 incl VAT and Asphalt Building Construction Ltd £3,410.98 incl VAT. (minute 24/03 8(ii) budget £16,620 + VAT, total cost)
 - £3,629.45 Transfer of ring-fenced funds to Acton Field Trust bank account (legal requirement to have separate bank account)
- Cllrs authorised the schedule of payments (appended to the minutes) signed by the Chairman
- 10(vi) Cllrs approved regular contractual payments, direct debits and standing orders (annual review):
- E-payment Staff salaries, direct debit pension, e-payment NIC and PAYE (variable, contractual)
 - Standing Order Pearce and Kemp street-light maintenance (£22.50pm contractual)
 - E-payment Hickford grass cutting (contractual)
 - Standing Order Litter picker (£91.67pm minute 23/07 8(vi))
 - Direct Debit SSE Electricity for street lighting (variable, contractual)
 - E-payment APFVH Village Hall hire for meetings (variable, contractual)
- 10(vii) Cllrs approved a grant of £350 to the Acton Play Group from the donations budget for non-chargeable activities at the village fete on 29 June.

Environment

- 11(i) Cllrs approved the list of tasks for the Acton Action Plan 2024 that were identified in consultation with residents noting that each individual item will be costed and brought to future meetings.

- 11(ii) Cllrs approved a report by Cllrs Clark and McSweeney on plans for a Christmas event, for a cost of up to £150 plus VAT in addition to the £600 original budget, including local choirs and community awards. Initial enquiries have been made to involve the school, the church, the shop and the Crown pub.

Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

- 12(i) Cllr Antill reported on a recent SALC meeting which highlighted Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Public Survey by a partnership of Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. A presentation on Babergh communities is to be made by Teresa Farley on 24 September. Cllrs may ask the clerk to book if they wish to attend.
- 12(ii) Cllr Antill requested village hall governance to be on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 12(iii) Cllr Le Gryns asked about a recent incident regarding public safety on Acton's roads, particularly between Long Melford and Great Waldingfield. Could this road be declared an accident black spot. Cllr Johnson suggested that it be reported to the community police officer.
- 12(iv) Cllr McSweeney asked that the school be asked to maintain the hedge along the boundary.
- 12(v) Cllr McSweeney reported that trees at Babergh Close are an ongoing concern. Cllr Round offered to contact County Cllr Faircloth Mutton about the various trees that are of concern.
- 12(vi) Cllr Round reported that he has written to the village hall and requested a meeting as soon as possible and proposed that this issue should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

The chairman proposed that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, the Council consider item 9(i) in private session due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Closed session

- 9(i) Cllrs considered the role of assistant clerk, discussed various options and resolved to recruit a replacement in due course.

The chairman closed the meeting at 8:54 pm

Acronyms used:

AGAR Annual Governance and Accountability Return

APFVH Acton Playing Fields and Village Hall

Cllr Parish Councillor

NALC National Association of Local Councils

NIC National Insurance Contributions

PAYE Pay as You Earn tax

SALC Suffolk Association of Local Councils

SSE Southern Electric

Next meeting Wednesday 17 July 2024 7pm

Schedule of payments

Payments made under delegated powers or under Financial Regulation 4.1 since the last meeting:

Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Gross
Website and email hosting	BWP Creative	-316.00	-63.20	-379.20
Membership	SALC	-681.41	0.00	-681.41
Batteries for defibrillator	Imperative Training Ltd	-115.00	-23.00	-138.00

Payments authorised for settlement before the next meeting:

Direct debits, standing orders and other contractual payments approved by the Council

June salaries and HMRC payments

Payments arising from previous Council decisions

Payments authorised by clerk or clerk and chair under delegated powers (Financial Regulation 4.1)

Schedule of all income received and payments made in May 2024:

Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Gross
May litter picking	Litter picker	-91.67	0.00	-91.67
Annual data protection fee	ICO	-35.00	0.00	-35.00
Streetlight maintenance	Pearce and Kemp	-18.75	-3.75	-22.50
Grant warm spaces project	Acton Good Neighbours	-500.00	0.00	-500.00
Opening bank account	Acton Field Trust	500.00	0.00	500.00
Installation village gateways	ABC Limited	-2,842.48	-568.50	-3,410.98
website and email hosting	BWP Creative	-316.00	-63.20	-379.20
High Street bench bus stop	Glasdon UK	-671.06	-134.21	-805.27
Village gateways and signs	Glasdon UK	-11,881.16	-2,376.25	-14,257.41
membership	SALC	-681.41	0.00	-681.41
Dividend ord shares	Lloyds shares	8.41	0.00	8.41
Transfer ring-fenced funds t	Acton Field Trust	-3,629.45	0.00	-3,629.45
May salaries and pension	Clerk and assistant	-1,746.70	0.00	-1,746.70
Batteries for defibrillator	Imperative Training Ltd	-115.00	-23.00	-138.00

These payments were authorised at the Parish Council Meeting dated 19 June 2024

Councillor Signature: *G Round* (signed in the meeting)