

**REPORT OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES MEETING HELD IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, THORNE ON TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016 AT 7.00 PM.**

**Present:** Cllr. M.Houlbrook (Chair)

Cllrs. C.Blackham, J.Blackham, A. Brookes, S.J.Durant, M.Hennessey, A.Jones, R.Porter, J.E.Phillips, and R.Turner.

10 members of the Public

**2906. APOLOGIES**

Cllr. R.Walker – work commitment

Cllr. D.Barton - personal

**2907. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

Cllr S Durant in declared an interest in the planning items as she is on Planning Committee at Doncaster MBC and in Item 12 (Moorends Gala) as she is a member of the Moorends Recreation Ground Working Group.

Cllrs. M.Houlbrook declared an interest in Item 12 (Moorends Gala) as he is a member of the Moorends Recreation Ground Working Group.

**2908. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to signing the minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, pages 4290 – 4297.

Minute 2903 (Matters raised by the Public), page 4295: Cllr. M. Hennessey apologised to the proprietor of the Park Cafe for anything he may have said which might have cause offence, and confirmed that he had contacted the individual directly to apologise.

**RESOLVED: That the minutes be signed.**

**2909. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC**

- One member of the public said that at the Annual Electors Meeting she had brought the issue of littering at Wike Gate Park and had been assured that the bins would be emptied twice a week, but this had not been happening. She said that currently the Fair was at Wike Gate and the area near this was clean and tidy. She said that there was a constant problem of broken glass on the MUGA and that this and the bins were not being attended to twice per week. The Clerk was asked to look at this.
- Member of the public replied to a comment made by a Councillor who had said he'd lied on an issue regarding the Park Cafe at the last meeting and requested an apology from the Councillor. Another member of the public said that she had been in the kitchen of the cafe on the said day and had heard the alleged comments made by the Councillor. The Chair advised members of the public that they should write into the Council if they have any complaints.
- A member of the public said that she had been at an Audit Meeting at Doncaster that day and wondered when the item would be discussed at Council. The Chair advised that it will be forwarded and discussed when the report reaches the Council at a future time.

**2880. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**i) 16/01078/FUL**

Erection of two detached dwellings and one detached double garage at 107 South End, Thorne for Mr L.Todd.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**ii) 16/01127/ADV**

Siting of free standing sign on a 12.9m pole at Capitol Park, Omega Boulevard, Thorne for McDonald's Restaurant Ltd.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**iii) 16/00768/COU**

Change of use of former estate agent (Class A2) to hot food takeaway (Class A5) at 142 Marshland Road, Moorends for Mr Sahin Akcadaq.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**iv) 16/01243/FUL**

Erection of three terraced dwellings and 1 attached garage on approx. 0.19ha of land including associated landscaping, access and parking provision following demolition of existing outbuilding and barn to the rear of 5 Ellison Street, Thorne for Mrs C. Pennington.

**RESOLVED: An objection be submitted on grounds of highway access and layout.**

**v) 16/00126/FULM**

Erection of two business/industrial units (Use Class B8) with supporting offices including access, parking, landscaping and other associated works following demolition of existing buildings on Land and Buildings on the North Side of Lands End Road, Thorne for Peveril Securities Ltd.

**RESOLVED: That Council welcomes the application as it brings potential employment to Thorne.**

**vi) 16/01249/REM**

Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for erection of 5 dwellings on approx. 0.26ha of land (being matters reserved in outline application previously granted permission under 12/01458/OUT on 10.05.2013 at 98 North Eastern Road, Thorne for Dantom Homes (Developments) Ltd.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**vii) 16/01265/FUL**

Erection of two storey pitched roof extension to rear and single storey extension to side of end terraced house following demolition of existing conservatory at 22 Foxhill Road, Thorne for Mrs K. Green.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**viii) 16/01298/ADV**

Display of a) 1 internally illuminated totem sign b) 2 internally illuminated wall mounted signs c) 1 illuminated poster display unit d) 1 externally illuminated timber advertising billboard at proposed Lidl Store, Land Adjacent Water Tower, Field Road, Thorne for Lidl UK.

**RESOLVED: No observations.**

**2911. ANNUAL RETURN, ACCOUNTS & AUDIT 2015-16**

The Clerk reported that the Council's Accountants had completed the year end closure enabling the Council to complete its Annual Return to the External Auditors and a copy had been circulated. He explained that the return needed to be published for formal consultation on 15<sup>th</sup> June, and submitted to the External Auditor by 20<sup>th</sup> June.

The Clerk advised that the Council needed to consider the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1), Accounting Statement (Section 2) and give authority for the Mayor and Clerk to sign them off, together with the Accounts, on behalf of the Council. He said that the Annual Return has been changed this year so that consideration of the Annual Governance Statement precedes the consideration of the Accounting Statement.

The following can be noted in the Accounts:

- a. Non precept/ grant income levels were similar to last year. Excluding Capital and Projects expenditure, the level of expenditure was lower.
- b. Overall reserves have reduced. However the 2016 figure included capital and earmarked reserves. The General Reserve (which is available for any expenditure) increased by £11,566.

- c. The Cash and Investments figures are substantially different. This is a snapshot of the position at year end, and is affected by grant money being received either earlier or later than expenditure. For example the DMBC grant for the toilets (£27,344) was not received until early April, so forms part of the debtor figure. Conversely £21,628 grant money was received in advance in 2014-15, forming part of the creditor figure.
- d. There is no Capital Receipt funding remaining.
- e. Fixed asset figures have changed following investment at the Community Centre, Walled Garden, and Town Centre toilets.

### Write Offs

The Clerk said that following a discussion with the Accountants there are a small number of outstanding debts which it is not considered cost effective to pursue. These are included below. It is sensible to write these off so that they are no longer included in the Accounts.

| Organisation                | Date    | Amount         | Reason              |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Take a Bow Drama & Musicals | 31.5.14 | £24.00         | Not able to contact |
| Martial Arts                | 30.9.15 | £104.00        | Not able to contact |
| Cooplands                   | 31.1.15 | £12.00         | Liquidated          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                |         | <b>£136.00</b> |                     |

### Internal Auditors Report

The Clerk advised that the Internal Auditor had signed the Annual Return off as satisfactory and provided a separate report which will not form part of the formal Annual Return.

The following points were raised:

| Issue – Auditor’s comment  | Clerk’s Comment  |
|--|--|
| <b>Filing:</b> ‘It is best practice to have systems in place that enable anyone coming in to examine the records can do so without the staff actually being there at the time. I would make the observation that the Council need to improve the filing systems etc. to achieve this standard’   | I will discuss these concerns further with the Internal Auditor and make necessary improvements. |
| <b>Petty Cash:</b> ‘I have in the past requested that petty cash records be kept on a daily basis and included in the Computer records and hence shown on the balance sheet at the actual counted balance at 31 March each year. There is no cash balance shown in the accounts and discipline of records keeping that is relevant. It could be argued by insurers after a theft that they would not payout for petty cash as the Council do not have it shown in the accounts.’ | Noted and will be included next year.  |
| <b>Winning Post:</b> ‘I note the correspondence etc. concerning the proposed sale of the Winning Post and appreciate for myself not to comment on the politics involved. I would make the comment that the sale was only advertised locally and in that a very limited way. I would advise that in any future sale of assets they should be advertised widely in the attempt to get the best value of the Council and not restrict to just local adverts.’                       | This was advertised on a national website, not just locally.                                     |

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|--|---|--------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------|-----------------|--|--------|--|
| <p><b>Debtors:</b> 'In the accounts to 31/3/2016 there are a small number of debtors which may be considered bad or doubtful. The Council should either pursue the debts through the courts or write them off to ensure that the accounts general reserve figure is realistic.'</p>  | <p>Some write offs are being considered on this agenda, and reports have been considered by Council on other outstanding debts.</p>   |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| <p><b>Contingent Liabilities:</b> 'In the accounts relating to "Contingent liabilities". The Clerk has kindly informed me that the question of whether there are any or not each year he discusses this with the Accountant. I would suggest that the discussion is widened to include the Mayor and Deputy if not the whole Council.'</p>   | <p>I will prepare a separate report on this to a future meeting.</p>  |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| <p><b>Election Expense:</b> 'It has come to light that the treatment of election invoices received from DMBC is incorrect. In effect the invoices have not been put through the accounts when received. The invoice I hold is not date stamped to signify the date of receipt. The effect of the incorrect treatment is to reduce the Creditors and make the "general reserve" higher than it should be to the tune of £8278 at 31 March 2016. I would advise that ALL invoices are entered immediately upon receipt to ensure proper records are kept.'</p>   | <p>This related to the arrangement with DMBC that these are paid in 3 instalments. To date we have recorded payments when made, rather than to record the full liability. If the latter approach was used it would reduce the "general reserve" by £8278, but this would be matched by a reduced commitment in 2016-17.</p> |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| <p><b>Bank Balance reporting:</b> 'The Clerk reports to you at each meeting with the bank balances at a particular date relevant to the meeting date. The balance he uses relevant to the Council's accounts in error is the actual balance shown on the bank statement. This balance does not take into account of what we call "unpresented cheques" that have been written and sent to pay bills. The effect of this is that Councillors are under the impression that they have a month's expenditure in the bank that there actually is, this is extremely dangerous as at the end of the financial year when the Council are without reserves and may run out of funds.'</p> | <p>At each meeting I include Bank Statement figures, but also provide a detailed budget report which allows for unpresented cheques. I will expand this reporting in the future to include these figures.</p>   |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| <p><b>Payment of £645.60:</b> 'During last year £645.60 was received prior to 31/3/16 but the forwarding payment of the grant was "delayed" until after 31/3/16. I have not received an explanation why this has happened. It has the effect of increasing the general reserve as at 31/3/16 by this amount'.</p>  | <p>This is associated with a Forestry Commission Grant for Thorne Community Wood. Payment to Friends of the Group had been made earlier in the year as the grant system was delayed due to changes to the payment system.</p>   |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| <p><b>Reserves:</b> 'In looking at the Balance Sheet as at 31/3/16 the</p> <table data-bbox="180 1821 842 1966"> <tr> <td>General Reserve is</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£65840</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Less creditors re Election Expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£8279</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grant Payment</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 646    £ 8925</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">£56915</td> </tr> </table> <p>Although the £56915 is described as "general reserve" and includes debtors and prepayments (which are not cash) it is in effect the Council's</p>   | General Reserve is  | £65840 | Less creditors re Election Expenses | £8279 | Grant Payment | £ 646    £ 8925 |  | £56915 | <p>It is recognised that the level of reserves is lower than is recommended, and budgetary allowance has been made to seek to address this. I assume that the reference to the Council having no reserves related to no longer having a capital reserve, as an element of capital assist with the cash flow. The anticipated capital receipts this year will assist with this issue.</p> |
| General Reserve is   | £65840  |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| Less creditors re Election Expenses  | £8279   |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
| Grant Payment  | £ 646    £ 8925   |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |
|  | £56915  |        |                                     |       |               |                 |  |        |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>working capital as there are no reserves. As a working capital the above figure is too small and the Council should take steps to increase this through adjustments to revenue income and expenditure. In looking at the projected budget for the year ended 2016/17 I would advise that the figure of “election” expenditure appears to be low at £17000. As described above there are payments of £8279 to be made as part of agreements for payments of past elections and I understand there are two further elections this year that could cost £14000 each.’</p> |  |
| <p><b>Budgetary Assistance:</b> ‘I appreciate that the accounts do not project a good situation and I would suggest they are amended to reflect all missing transactions. With the Members approval I would be quite able to look at the projected budget etc. as part of the “Internal Auditor’s Duties” to ensure its accuracy. If the Council would consider this as there would be extra expense involved.’</p>   | <p>The only “missing transactions” relate to the election expenses, so a budget revision to include these in a different way would be straightforward.</p> |

### Reappointment of Internal Auditor

The Clerk said that there is a need to formally consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor on an annual basis. There is no requirement under Standing Orders to tender this process as it is a professional service. The principal issue is whether the service is satisfactory.

GT Accounts Ltd has carried out the Internal Audit Service for the Council for a number of years. This is led by Graham Slessor who is an Associate Financial Accountant (the Institute of Financial Accountants (IFA) primary qualification. He has the necessary experience and understanding of the finance regulations that affect Town and Parish Council as well as having an appropriate financial qualification. He has a detailed knowledge of the systems that are used by the Town Council, and has made a number of recommendations for improvements over the years.

The Clerk said that in his view the current arrangement is satisfactory as the existing levels of knowledge about the Council and its systems simplify the process without reducing scrutiny. He said he would therefore recommend the reappointment of GT Accounts for 2016-17.

#### **RESOLVED: That**

- 1. The Mayor and Clerk be authorised to sign the accounts, and Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Return.**
- 2. The write offs totalling £136 be agreed**
- 3. The action points arising from the Internal Auditor’s report be considered and actioned.**
- 4. GT Accounts be appointed as the Council’s Internal Auditor for 2016-17**

The Mayor, Cllr. S.Durant and the Clerk signed the Accounts and Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Return.

### **2912. FINANCE**

Consideration was given to the financial report to the end of Month 1 of the current financial year.

**RESOLVED: That the report be accepted.**

### **2913. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

Consideration was given to the Accounts Payable for Months 1 and 2.

**RESOLVED: That the Accounts Payable be approved.**

**2914. PAY AWARD 2016-18**

The Clerk reported that Town Council staff pay grades are set using Local Government (JNC) grades. At Planning and Amenities Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 he reported that agreement had not been reached on a pay settlement for 2016-17. However interim increases were agreed for relevant staff to bring their pay rates up to the level of the National Minimum Wage.

The Clerk said that he had now received notification from NALC/ SLCC that a pay settlement has been agreed. This is a 2 year settlement as follows:

- New pay scales for 2016-17 to be implemented immediately and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016
- New pay scales for 2017-18 to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017

For staff who received an interim increase referred to above, the backdated pay will represent the balance between the interim payscale and the new payscale. There is a requirement in the Financial Regulations for the Council to formally approve any changes to staff pay.

The new pay scales were circulated. They represent an increase of 1% pa for scp 18 and above, with higher increases for lower paid staff. The scales are designed to build in some headroom between the bottom pay rate and the new National Living Wage in order to start the process of moving towards the expected level of the National Living Wage by 2020.

The Clerk said that of the current Council staff establishment of 12, 8 are below scp18 so will receive the higher percentage increases. These salary scales will not apply to the new apprentice post which is linked to the national minimum wage.

These changes were being discussed when the budget was considered, so appropriate increases are included in the 2016-17 budget. The 2017-18 staff costs will need to be included in the budget estimates when they are considered in January.

**RESOLVED: That the pay award for 2016-17 and 2017-18 be approved.**

**2915. THORNE & MOORENDS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – CHARACTER APPRAISAL & DESIGN POLICIES**

The Clerk reported that the draft Neighbourhood Plan is nearing completion. The target of the Neighbourhood Plan sub group is to have a final draft available for consideration by Council in September, with the formal 6 week consultation period commencing immediately afterwards.

One area that was identified as important through consultation was design quality. Some policies have been drafted, but the view of the retained planning consultant is that they lack adequate detail to make a meaningful impact on future development proposals. Following discussion at the sub group it has been agreed that it would be beneficial to seek specialist design advice so that the draft document included policies that can influence future development.

A grant application was submitted to support the completion of the plan, and I am pleased to advise that a grant of £7,000 has been approved. This increases the total available budget for 2016-17 to £12,000. The grant application included support for a design study.

A brief for this work has been drawn up by the retained consultant. 3 specialist consultants were approached to carry out this work with their fee proposals summarised below:

| Consultant        | Fee (all plus VAT) |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| DRaW              | £10,070            |
| Bramhall Blenkarn | £21,280            |
| Woodhall          | £5,700             |

Of these only Woodhall have submitted a proposal which can be realistically supported through the available budget. Woodhall are a Leeds based Architects practice who have the necessary skills and staff to carry out this work. I would therefore recommend their appointment.

**RESOLVED: That Woodhall be appointed to develop a Character Appraisal and Design Policies for the Thorne and Moorends Neighbourhood Plan at a cost of £5,700 plus VAT.**

#### **2916. CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

At Planning and Amenities Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 a report was considered regarding a request for a non-standard gravestone. At that meeting it was requested that the Cemetery Regulations be reviewed, and reported back to Council.

A proposed new set of regulations were circulated. It was not felt that there was a need to make a large number of amendments to the previous regulations, but areas where it is proposed changes are made are as follows:

- a. The order of the document be changed to deal with the more general regulations first, with the more specific regulations later in the document.
- b. The Right of Burial section has been expanded, adding more details regarding the legal nature of the document and the time limit to the Deed. This is an area where problems occur when a Deed owner has passed away and no arrangement has been made to transfer ownership.
- c. Clarification of the information required when dealing with an ashes burial as the certificate of internment is held by the crematorium. These are more frequently managed by the family rather than an undertaker, and in some cases take place some time after the cremation.
- d. Amendments paragraphs 18 and 19 which relate to memorials. Paragraph 18 sets a preferred standard, whilst paragraph 19 introduces additional flexibility for anyone who wants a non-standard headstone. I would suggest that, as now, the Clerk retains delegated responsibility to consider proposals that meet the standards set out in paragraph 18 (including minor variations), with only non-standard proposals considered by Council.
- e. Paragraph 28, retained even though it has proved difficult to enforce.
- f. More information about benches has been provided. These are intended for public use, and should be located on pathways. There are a number of sites which could be used for a limited number of additional benches. Reference to commemorative trees has been omitted as there are few locations available.

Once the revised regulations are approved they will be circulated with the Funeral Directors who regularly use Thorne Cemetery, and add them to the Council's website.

**RESOLVED: That the revised Cemetery Regulations be approved.**

#### **2917. MOORENDS GALA 2016**

At Planning and Amenities Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 a contribution of £1,100 towards the 2016 Moorends Community Gala on 9<sup>th</sup> July was agreed.

The Clerk said he had been approached by the Moorends Welfare Working Group who have advised that they have submitted a grant application to fund additional activities and entertainment, but that the likely timing of the decision will leave inadequate time to book these activities and entertainment. In the light of this they have requested an additional £1,000 contribution which would not be drawn down, or refunded should the grant be approved.

Potentially the net cost to the Council could be zero, but there is an element of risk should the grant application be unsuccessful. There is no budgetary provision for this additional contribution.

The Gala is the only substantial event planned in Moorends this year. Previous galas have proved popular.

**RESOLVED: That the sum of £1000 be approved with the funding recovered if the grant is approved.**

**2918. STANDING ORDERS**

The Clerk reported that following the last Council meeting he had circulated copies of core documents to Councillors. An issue arose with regard to Standing Order 23 Restriction on Councillor Activities which states:

Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall:

- i. inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect; or
- ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

This clause has been included in the Council's Standing Orders since at least 2012 and follows the wording provided in the model Standing orders issued by NALC.

The purpose of this section is to prohibit Councillors from taking on legal responsibilities where they have no authority, as this opens up Councils to legal claims, and would be an operational matter for the Clerk, employing appropriate professionals where necessary.

The issue has arisen with regard to clause i. In this clause "inspect" relates to formal inspections such as gas boilers, asbestos, legionella etc as well as general building inspections, and does not preclude Councillors from visiting sites and buildings and advising the Clerk of issues that they have identified for appropriate inspection and action.

Councillors may wish to vary the wording to clarify this Standing Order, or accept the explanation above.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that there be no change to this Standing Order.**

**End of Meeting**