

**SANTON DOWNHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
IN THE ROTARY ROOM, VILLAGE HALL, SANTON DOWNHAM  
MONDAY, 21<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2016 AT 7.00PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present: Mr Michael Mackender, Chairman**  
**Mrs Sylvia East, Parish Clerk**  
**Mr Malcolm Finch**  
**Mr George Radford**  
**Mr Gareth Rees**

**Cllr Peter Ridgewell**  
**Member of the Public: Mrs Vera Sayer**

**Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and asked if Mrs Sayer had anything to report. Mrs Sayer stated that The Breckland Club now had its Trustees in place and commented that the Club Solicitor had been asked to communicate with the Parish Council Solicitor. The Chairman advised that the issue of the Leases would be discussed later on in the Agenda. Mrs Sayer raised an issue that Brandon Gate Lodge had placed some extremely large boulders on either side of their driveway, which she felt were too close to the road. It was agreed that this matter would be reported to the Highways Department.

**Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Dr Toomer who was away on holiday and Cllr Silvester who had another meeting to attend.

**Declaration of Interest**

There were no Declarations of interest on the items on the Agenda

**Minutes of the Meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 were proposed as being correct and duly signed

**Parish Clerk's Report**

- An update of income and outgoings since the previous meeting were handed to all Parish Councillors, this showed a balance of £4,561.91 as at 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The Parish Clerk then asked the Chairman to co-sign cheques for the first part of her salary for 2016 and a cheque to SALC for the Good Councillors Guides. £738 and £21 respectively.
- The Governance issues were discussed and the relevant form signed by the Chairman regarding Financial Governance. A short discussion took place regarding the Insurance and Public Liability, and it was agreed that the level of Public Liability at £6 million was sufficient. The Chairman queried the Insuring of the "bus shelter". The Parish Clerk confirmed that the original bus shelter was no more, but that we have refurbished the old wooden bus shelter near the church, and although this is not on Parish Council land, the Forestry Commission have no interest in this and gave permission for this to be refurbished as it is a village landmark. The Chairman queried who would be responsible for any public liability with regard to this, and it was felt that since the Parish Council had undertaken the refurbishment and to all intents and purposes own the bus shelter, not the land, it is likely that the Insurance held under the Parish Council Insurance would cover this issue. The Parish Clerk will of course speak to the Insurance Company, and the Forestry Commission.

**Parish Councillors Reports**

There was nothing to report

**County Councillors and District Councillors Reports**

Cllr Ridgewell reported on the Wake for Cllr Bimson, which had been held at Santon Downham Village Hall. The Funeral and the Wake attendance clearly showed the esteem in which Cllr Bimson had been held in. Cllr Ridgewell commented that Cllr Silvester was currently undertaking several of

Cllr Bimson's meeting duties, hence the reason he had been unable to attend our Parish Council Meeting. He also touched on the brown bin situation, which of course we are all aware of. A short discussion took place with regard to the fact that there would be no Police attendance to our meetings in future, and it was reiterated that Anne-Marie had specifically asked to be kept in the loop. Comments were raised on the downsizing of the Community Police in our area and Cllr Ridgewell made reference to the fact that we would also be losing the Police person who looked after the 'Lost and Found' department. He had no idea where, or if, this would continue elsewhere.

### **Chairman's Report**

- The Chairman raised the issue of the Scots Pines on the smaller of our greens and advised that our Tree Surgeon thought it was extremely unlikely that we would receive permission to take down both Scots Pines, and that attempting to go in this direction could lead to Forest Heath imposing TPO's. In line with legislation, we currently have to put in a planning application for major works to the trees owned by the Parish Council but TPO's are not in place. We therefore put in a planning application to remove the worst of these two trees. The application would go before Council on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, and in the event that this would be approved, the tree would be taken down on the 5<sup>th</sup> April. Letters would be posted to the houses facing this green, asking that vehicles not be parked in this area on this day.
- The Chairman thanked Mr Malcolm Finch for the saplings he had provided, and advised that these are now planted into tubs and will be grown on for a couple of years before planting somewhere on our greens.
- The lease situation was then raised:
  - a) Miss Dot Sayer's lease of the small piece of land for a garage and parking of a caravan. The Chairman suggested that the Lease be renewed once again and that the rental of £105 per annum be unchanged. This was unanimously agreed. Miss Sayer will in due course be sent a letter along these lines.
  - b) The Chairman advised that the Lease for the Village Hall is now sorted
  - c) With regard to the Lease for the Breckland Club, this remains in limbo and no contact had at this time been made by the Club Solicitor with the Parish Council Solicitor, despite promises that the situation would be moved forward. It was generally agreed that Solicitors tended to be somewhat long winded, but by the same token, now that we have reached this stage, time costs money. Mrs Sayer promised that she would email the Club Solicitor and copy in the Parish Clerk. The Parish Clerk advised that she had asked the Parish Council Solicitor if it was professionally acceptable for him to communicate and get the ball rolling, although she realised this could effectively cost the Parish Council yet more money, it had however, been hoped that some initial communication would have taken part before now. The Parish Clerk advised that professional conduct issues did not allow for her to speak directly to The Breckland Club Solicitor.

The Chairman stated that it was naturally taken on board that these things could take time and that after all this was an issue that was overdue by many, many years. However, he underlined that all the Parish Council was attempting to now undertake, was to put right a situation that would not have occurred, had the proper advice been sought before the Club portion of the Village Hall was rebuilt.

The Chairman advised that unfortunately, it is not viable for the Parish Council to give a longer lease than five years, since this would involve land registry and far higher costs, which the Parish Council are not willing to undertake, however, the Parish Council have made a clear promise to be fair to The Breckland Club, which will be documented, and the Lease will be renewed for a period to offer full recompense for the outlay made by The Breckland Club. The Parish Council has a clear and legal duty to act with integrity and honesty

towards its tenants who share the Village Hall building.

The Chairman dwelt on the issues of the new Transparency Code that effectively now govern all organisations, and are especially relevant to Parish Councils. As a Landlord it is important that the Parish Council acts in a responsible and legal manner and is transparent about all of its dealings. It is now no longer feasible to assume that because things were done in a certain way for years, it can continue, and this is an important and very relevant issue that needs to be fully understood.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

There being no other items to be discussed, the date of the next meeting was agreed for the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016. This would be the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual General Meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting would, as always be an informal gathering and commence at 6.30 pm. The Annual General Meeting would commence at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

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