

# DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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## **Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the full Council held on 1 June at 8.00pm in Drinkstone Village Hall**

**Present:** Cllr Daphne Youngs (Chairman), Cllr Sue Cousins,  
Cllr Christine Harbutt, Cllr Gary Hembra, Cllr Cora Munford,  
Cllr Haslett Schofield and Cllr Lorna Thurlow

**In Attendance:** County and District Councillor Penny Otton  
PC 421 Annelly Miles  
10 parishioners  
(Acting) Parish Clerk: Doug Reed

**2015/016 Apologies for Absence**  
None.

**2015/017 Declarations of Interest**  
None.

**2015/018 The meeting was adjourned for reports from external bodies and for public comment and questions:**  
**018.1 District and County Councillor:** Cllr Otton presented her report, which had been circulated previously (attached as an appendix to these minutes), and answered questions from councillors. She noted, in particular, an imminent meeting with the County Council Highways Engineer responsible for Drinkstone. To that end, she was made aware of outstanding issues affecting the village, not least the problems on Park Road.  
**018.2 Suffolk Constabulary:** PC 421 Annelly Miles presented her report which had been circulated previously (attached as an appendix to these minutes). There had been two crimes reported in the period since the last Council meeting, one burglary and one theft. There had also been an attempted burglary. Rod Curtis, a volunteer working with the Safer Neighbourhood Team, was introduced, and it was noted that he would hope to attend and present reports to future Council meetings.  
**018.3 Public Discussion:** A resident asked about the Parish Plan and if there was any intention of either updating it or undertaking a new one. It was reported that parish councils were now being encouraged to complete 'neighbourhood plans' but that these were significant pieces of work and expensive to carry out. A parish plan, nonetheless, could be produced for use by the Council and village even if it did not carry any weight elsewhere or with other authorities. The Chairman indicated that the matter needed to be reviewed but that it was not an immediate priority.

### **Meeting resumed:**

**2015/019 Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting**  
It was resolved that the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, held on 14 May, be signed as a true record.

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## 2015/020      **Matters Arising**

**020.1 Signatories (minute 2015/009.3 refers):** Cllr Cousins reported that progress had been made with Lloyds Bank but that forms were still awaited from Santander UK. **Action: Cllr Cousins**

**020.2 Playing Field Slide (minute 2015/013.4 refers):** Cllr Harbutt had investigated the slide and the suggestion that it might be helpful to place rubber matting at the top, but could not see how it might be applied nor any real benefit that would accrue. With the annual health and safety inspection due shortly, it was felt that any action should await the outcome of that work.

**020.3 Bonfires (minute 2015/014.1 refers):** Further to residents' concerns, the Clerk had looked into the subject and was able to confirm that there were no specific controls, such as permitted times, over the lighting of bonfires. Should they be lit regularly or the material being burnt was hazardous to health then they might constitute a 'statutory nuisance'. In all events, the Parish Council had no power to invoke. Residents wanting to seek action would need to report matters to Environmental Health at Mid Suffolk District Council.

**020.4 Council Houses (Gedding Road) (minute 2015/014.2 refers):** Regarding the possible change of name to these properties, Cllr Cousins reported that she had looked into the basis of the original request placed before the Council and had been told, by a former parish councillor, that 90% of the residents of the houses had been consulted. While this was not disputed, it was felt that the Council should only proceed in the face of written evidence and she was, therefore, asked if that might be possible to secure. **Action: Cllr Cousins**

## 2015/021      **Parish Clerk Vacancy**

As requested by the last Council meeting a Task and Finish Panel, comprising Cllrs Harbutt, Schofield and Youngs, had met to review the terms and conditions, job description and salary of the post. The Panel had used the work on salaries undertaken previously by Cllr Harbutt, consulted the Suffolk Association of Local Councils for advice and guidance, and researched 'best practice' in other authorities. In presenting the recommendations (contained within a detailed written report), Cllr Youngs emphasised the importance of the position of Clerk and the fact that the Council needed to move forward in terms of how it operated. In particular, the Panel felt that the role necessarily needed to encompass financial administration, responsibility for which had hitherto rested with an unpaid councillor. Cllr Cousins spoke to express her concern at the need for any change to financial responsibilities, pointing out that the 'divide' between Clerk and Finance Officer had worked well previously with no adverse impact upon Council affairs. After further discussion, the recommendations of the Panel were put to the vote. it was resolved:

- ◆ by six votes to one, that the Council redefined the role of Clerk to include the role of Responsible Financial Officer (RFO);
- ◆ by six votes to none, with one abstention, that the position be advertised immediately on the understanding that the successful

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applicant be expected to assume RFO responsibilities at the end of the 2015-2016 financial year;

- ◆ by seven votes to none, that the salary be raised to SCP 17-19 (NJC Pay Scales 2014-2016) with the precise starting point subject to experience; and
- ◆ by seven votes to none, that once the RFO responsibilities had transferred to the Clerk, a Finance Councillor be appointed to exercise financial oversight over relevant Council affairs.

**Action: Cllr Youngs**

## 2015/022 Planning

**022.1 Applications:** None.

**022.2 MSDC Decisions:** None.

## 2015/023 Finance

Cllr Cousins reported on the current position with the Council finances, as below:

Current account (Santander UK)	£3,102.50
Deposit account I (Santander UK)	£2,660.66
Deposit account II (Santander UK)	£5.27
Sub-Total:	£5,768.43
VAT owing	£111.00
Total:	£5,879.43

Allotments

Current account (Lloyds Bank)	£735.38
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The above included £138.00 in allotment rents. It was resolved that outstanding invoices be paid, as below:

- ◆ Mid Suffolk District Council: £225.00+£45.00 VAT (waste bin emptying);
  - ◆ Mr D Reed: £143.44 acting Parish Clerk - May); and
  - ◆ War Memorial Institute: £15.95 (defibrillator insurance).
- £1,626.83 was confirmed as being ring-fenced:
- ◆ Defibrillator fund: £111.83;
  - ◆ Elections: £615.00; and
  - ◆ Playing field: £900.00.

## 2015/024 Councillor Portfolios

Councillors were invited to take on responsibility for and oversight of key areas of Council business. It was resolved that the following be appointed:

- ◆ Parochial Church Council - Cllr Cousins;
- ◆ Allotments - Cllr Harbutt;
- ◆ Playing Field - Cllr Hembra;
- ◆ Village Hall Management Committee - Cllr Thurlow; and
- ◆ Footpaths - Cllr Munford.

## 2015/025 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Councillors were made aware of the Code, effective from 1 April, as applied to all councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000. Full implementation was required by 1 July. As demanded by the Code, more Council information was expected to be made available on the Web for the

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benefit of parishioners and others, including financial data, audit reports, lists of assets; and the minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings. It was agreed that the implications of the Code needed to be addressed as part of a review of how the Council presented information on the village Web site and that this would be an agenda item at the next meeting.

**2015/026 Correspondence**

There were no issues arising. Correspondence had either been actioned or addressed under other agenda items.

**2015/027 Matters to be Brought to the Attention of the Council**

**027.1 Playing Field/Cherry Tree Rise:** It was noted that the area along the fence at this location needed strimming. Cllr Hembra, as the new portfolio-holder for the Playing Field, agreed to see what might best be done to deal with the situation. **Action: Cllr Hembra**

**027.2 Register of Interests:** The Clerk noted that a new automated system had been introduced by Mid Suffolk District Council and that those councillors with e-mail accounts should expect to receive a communication containing a link to the electronic form required to be completed. A hard copy version of the form would be available and sent to councillors without an e-mail facility.

**2015/028 Next Meeting:**

It was noted that the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council would be held on Monday 6 July at 8.00pm in Drinkstone Village Hall.

**The meeting closed at 9.10pm.**