Grindon and Thorpe Thewles Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 11th October 2022 at 6.30pm in Grindon Parish Hall, Thorpe Thewles.

Present: Cllrs. Gillson (in the Chair), McGee, Moffat
In Attendance: M. Ireland, Clerk, Ben Icke, The Vane Arms, James Stephenson, SBC Events Manager Mrs. Hillier, Chairman of Thorpe Thewles History Group and 4 residents

The Chairman of the meeting welcomed everyone, especially new Councillor, Ali McGee.

1. **Public Forum**: (i) ***The Vane Arms*** – Mr. Icke informed of a licensing application currently with the Borough Council; the aim of this was to bring into line with current practice. Currently, children have to leave the premises at 7.00pm if they are not eating and he wished to abolish that restriction completely. He explained that he became a Co-Director in 2022, having previously been a chef at the Vane; he felt his lack of experience had let the locals down; he had given no thought to how the changes at the pub would affect the neighbours; he apologised for the actions of his predecessors. He had recently met with many of these neighbours and hopefully was well on the way to resolving the issues, in that he had now banned ball games and music from the outdoor area. He accepted that the physical alterations to the pub had been made without permission, for which he again apologized, and he noted he would be applying for retrospective planning permission. The licence application had been submitted as a matter of urgency in order that he could continue his business, and the Planning Department had indicated they would expect an application be made to them within a reasonable time – say 3 months. The changes he wished to make to his current licence included: opening from 10.00am – 11.30 pm Monday to Saturday, 11.00am-10.00pm Sunday, although he anticipated these extended hours would only be required for 12 events each year and requested that villagers trust him to manage this. He further stated that he would expect all customers to leave the outdoor area by 10.00pm every night, even if the pub itself was open to 11.30pm. He confirmed that as part of his licence requirements he had a Safeguarding Policy in place, although a residents challenged as to whether this was always implemented. He stressed that he wished to do the right thing by everyone. The offer was made for him to have his excellent menu on the Village Facebook page, which he gratefully accepted. The Chairman thanked Mr. Icke for his attendance. It was noted that the closing date for representation on the licensing application was 12th October.
   (ii) *Village Duck Pond* – two residents, who had requested the previous month that the Parish Council consider the installation of a village wildlife duckpond, spoke through their proposal. They stated they just wished, at this stage, to start a conversation about the possibility of a pond, as an added attractive feature for the village. They thought a shallow pond might be placed on the land opposite the Christmas tree and Hamilton Russell Arms, owned by the Borough Council. The issues of the safety of small children, lines-of-sight for drivers and maintenance were raised for consideration. The Clerk suggested the next Annual Parish Meeting, to be held between March and May next year, would provide an ideal opportunity to engage residents in the idea, and give the proposers time to develop the proposal into something more concrete; in the meantime, she agreed to consult the relevant officers at SBC about possible issues regarding the proposed pond and keep the two residents informed of the outcome.
   Action: Clerk to contact SBC Officers about village pond.

2. **Apologies:** Cllrs Davies and Rees – noted.

3. **Declarations of Interest**: None declared.

4. **Events on Borough Council land**: Jamie Stephenson, SBC Event Production Manager, explained the process to be followed when wishing to hold an event on SBC land. Applications had to be made by November each year, to allow the Council to plan resource demand effectively for the following financial year. Applications should identify the type of event(s), numbers expected to attend, whether food and/or alcohol were to be sold and the resources to be used/requested; the latter could include crowd control barriers, traffic management, supply of electricity, marquees etc. The Borough Council was required to ensure the highest standard of public safety was met, which was why for example, before approving the use of a marquee, the land would have to be scanned for underground cables, an anemometer would be needed to record wind speed on the days the marquee was erected, (above a certain level, it would become dangerous) and so forth. Applications would also be screened by an Independent Safety Advisory Group. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would arrange a meeting between Mr. Stephenson and Councillors at the Play Park., with a view to making an outline request for up to 4 events in 2023, including the Coronation. **Action:** Clerk to arrange meeting.
Mr. Stephenson left the meeting at 7.35pm

4. **Minutes of 27h September 2022**: Cllr Gillson proposed, with Cllr Moffatt seconding, the approval of the minutes of 27th September. All concurring, it was **resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record.

5. **Matters Arising**: (a) ***Dropped Kerbs –*** Cllr Moffatt reported that a dropped kerb opposite the Parish Hall on Durham Road, was urgently needed by a wheelchair user. The Clerk noted she had yet to receive a drawing/map of the village from SBC, onto which the proposed dropped kerbs could be identified. She was tasked with requesting this again, noting the urgency and the willingness of the PC to contribute 50% of the costs of the first 6. (b) ***Refurbishment of damaged posts and notice boards*** – Cllr Gillson reported that the builder had agreed to undertake the repairs to the posts and refurbishment of notice boards by the end of the month, weather permitting. (c) ***Tree maintenance*** – Cllr Moffatt had obtained a written quote for the work required, from Wynyard Tree Services, in the sum of £845. Councillors were minded **to accept** the quote and requested the Clerk to action this. (d) ***Planters*** – the Clerk had circulated the information obtained from Fishburn PC; the costs of purchase and maintenance being fairly high, it was **agreed** to postpone a decision until more Councillors were present. (e) ***Land behind Astral Park*** – Cllr Gillson noted that no action had yet been taken by either Mandale Homes or the Borough Council to rectify the appalling state the land had been left in. He had been in contact with a reporter from the Evening Gazette/Teesside Live, who was keen to write a piece lambasting both organisations for lack of action. Cllr McGee noted that 'Rip Off Britain', a television show, might also be interested in covering the story; she knew several freelance reporters and would seek their advice/support. It was agreed that Alex Cunningham MP, all SBC Councillors, BBC Look North and any national agencies with an interest in rural/environmental issues be also notified of the villagers' serious concerns with a request they exert their influence on SBC to encourage enforcement action against Mandale Homes. It was agreed to ask villagers to write to the Council, MP newspapers, etc. about this 'Lost Village Resource' – what was a

lovely meadow used by everyone is now a dangerous, overgrown health and safety hazard. Mrs. Hillier noted there are Romano British settlement remains under the site, therefore Historic England should also be informed. **Actions:** Cllr Gillson and Clerk to draw up a list of bullet points for residents to use when writing about the land at the rear of Astral Park and post on the Village Facebook page, write to agencies and individuals with influence; Clerk to contact SBC about lack of village map for dropped kerbs, confirm acceptance of quote for trees, requesting a copy of operator's insurance policy and Risk Assessment before the work was undertaken

6. **Code of Conduct and Dignity at Work Policies:** The Clerk informed that she was undertaking an in-depth review of the Parish Council's policies and procedures; she had prioritised the Code of Conduct and Dignity at Work Policy as these were critical in support of the Civility and Respect Pledge, to which the Council had signed up. The draft documents had been circulated in advance and Councillors confirmed they had read them both. It was unanimously **resolved** to adopt both without amendment.

7. **Maintenance Committee Report:** Cllr Gillson reported that much of the substance of his report had already been covered, viz: posts, noticeboards, planters and trees. Some planters were yet to be relocated, though all were now planted up with spring bulbs; he noted that Mrs. Smith was already growing plants in her greenhouse for planting out in the spring.

8. **Social Activities Committee report:** Cllr Gillson reported that that a Murder Mystery Night was being organised for the end of October; Cllr McGee noted that, as insufficient interest had been shown in this event, it would almost definitely be cancelled. The Choir hoped to receive financial support from TESCO so would not now need the support of the Parish Council, though it was much appreciated. A 'Christmas Market' was to be held on Saturday 3rd December in the Parish Hall and the Social Activities Committee would be having a meeting the following week to move plans forward for this.

9. **Financial Reports –** the Clerk presented the statement of Financial Transactions and the Actual against Budget Report, which were **approved**. Mrs. Hillier, Chairman of the Thorpe Thewles History Group, tabled a report on the group's financial position, for information. She was concerned about whether the group could continue to pay subscription fees once they become a sub-committee of the Council's Social Activities Committee, and whether the PC insurance would cover volunteers attending history related events, such as the Durham History Fair, outside the parish. The Clerk agreed to investigate and, in the meantime, suggested the group continue to hold the restricted funds they already had for research, in a separate bank account, adding subscriptions to this fund, specifically earmarked for research work; the remainder of the funds and any non-restricted funds generated in the future should transfer to the PC and would be accounted for separately within the Cash Book and monthly reports. Councillors present strongly supported this approach. **Action:** Clerk to investigate insurance position as agreed.

10. **Ward Councillor's Report:** None received.

11. **Correspondence:** (a) Email from Open reach requesting photographs of the pylon wires - Clerk to forward; (b) Rev. Claire requesting Council's view on Remembrance Day service – Clerk to respond that PC had no issue with moving the service to 11th but were concerned about level of attendance; (c) Survey from Office for National Statistics – Clerk to complete and return.

12. **Planning:** No applications received.

13. **Items of Concern to Councillors:**

Cllr Moffatt raised the need for some sort of small cart to transport tools. Compost and water around the village; he suggested a solar powered 'golf cart' type might be suitable, possibly funded by the Solar Farm company. He was asked to investigate options.

Cllr Gillson noted that Care for Your Area had started work on the wall outside Hamilton Court.

Cllr McGee raised concern about vehicles speeding along Durham Road, especially heading eastwards towards Stockton, once past the Hamilton Russell Arms; this was making it extremely dangerous for walkers coming off the Castle Eden Walkway – could the Borough Council extend the 30mph zone further east and erect speed warning signs.

Cllr Gillson noted that Cllr Rees had expressed concern to him about the safety of children being dropped off in the village from school buses and asked if a zebra crossing were needed?

Action: Clerk to raise concern about speeding, the 30mph zone, and possible zebra crossing with SBC.

14. **Date of Next Meeting:** 6.30pm Tuesday 8th November 2022 at Grindon Parish Hall

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Minutes Authorised By:

Minutes Seconded By:

Date: