Grindon and Thorpe Thewles Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th July, 2021 at 7.30 pm in Grindon Parish Hall, Thorpe Thewles.

Present: Cllrs. Gillson, Rees and Williams

In Attendance: M. Ireland, Clerk

Cllr Williams took the Chair in the absence of Cllr Davies.

1. **Apologies for Absence**: Cllrs. Davies, John and Lowson.

2. **Declarations of Interest**: None made.

3. **Public Forum**: No members of the public present.

4. **Minutes of 8th June 2021**: Cllr Williams proposed, with Cllr Gillson seconding, the approval of the minutes without amendment. Cllr Rees concurring, it was **Resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record.

5. **Matters Arising**:

(i) ***Litter*** – Cllr Rees had received no information from the Borough Council to his request for a copy of their Litter Management policy. The Clerk suggested the policy might be on the SBC website and agreed to investigate.

(ii) ***Bus Shelter*** – Cllr Rees reported that the interior of the bus shelter had now been painted and some remedial work undertaken on one wall. He was concerned that without ongoing care the bus shelter could be lost. The Clerk suggested this could be passed to the Maintenance & Village Improvement Committee, with a view to volunteers undertaking the painting. She reminded Councillors that they had a budget for such matters.

(iii) ***Middle Bank/Durham Road alterations*** – Cllr John had forwarded to the Clerk the response he had received from Ann McLone, SBC, in which she explained that this was not a priority issue for the Highways team, as evidence indicated a good safety record for this junction. The costs of realigning the junction would be large and unlikely to be feasible. After a brief discussion it was **agreed** to ask Cllr Gardener to organize a 'walk around' the village with himself, relevant Officers and Parish Councillors as soon as possible, in order that all involved gain a deeper understanding of the various issues within the village.

Action: Clerk to check the SBC website for Litter Management policy and to request Cllr Gardner to arrange a 'walk about'.

6. **Relocation of Stone seats:** The stone seats at the southern entrance to the village being relatively unused, Councillors wished to relocate them within the village. The Clerk suggested that, as the path through by the sump behind the new Mandale Homes development was now an attractive wildflower meadow, and was well used by villagers and visitors alike, this might be a good place for the two benches. Councillors informed that the land was still owned by Mandale Homes and was subject to a requirement of SBC that the land be levelled, therefore, whilst this was a sensible proposition, this would not be feasible until the future of the land was resolved.

7. **Annual Parish Meeting:** The Clerk informed that it was a legal requirement to hold an annual meeting of electors in a parish, usually in May. Where a parish council existed, the invitation to

the Meeting was normally sent by the PC Chairman. She had noted that the Parish Council had not held such a meeting since its inception, due to Covid restrictions. However, she asked, as these were now being gradually lifted, perhaps it was time to consider holding a belated Annual Parish Meeting? After some discussion about the style and content of such a meeting – brief reports from village organisations, the PC, the Borough Councillor, Police and so forth, and an opportunity for residents to contribute ideas for the Parish Plan, it was **agreed** to hold the Annual Parish Meeting at the Parish Hall from 6.30pm on 5th October; the event would be as much social as business, with coffee & cake, and wine & cheese, and a good opportunity to welcome new residents to the village.
Action: Clerk to draft a letter of invitation and circulate to Councillors for comment.

8. **Maintenance &Village Improvement Committee Report**: Cllr Williams spoke to her report, previously circulated:
    - Cllrs Gillson and Williams will be the PC representatives to the group.
    - We have received confirmation of acceptable and unacceptable locations for planting and planters from SBC. Having received approval, we are now able to apply for funding from Councillor Gardner's Community Participation Budget. Costings from Coxhoe Paving Centre to be forwarded to the Clerk.
    - The Parish Council's insurance will cover the activities of the group.
    - Litter picking took place in May and June, it is a scheduled activity on the 3rd Sunday of each month, posters are at the bus stop and on the Parish Council Notice Board on the Parish Hall. A large amount of litter has been collected to date however, it is a never-ending task. Between 7 - 12 residents have come together to tackle the litter problem. Litter pickers are aware of risks and have been wearing high visibility clothing, strong gardening type gloves, and have litter picking equipment. We need more litter picking equipment from SBC.
    - The group received a number of bedding plants from a resident, and these have been planted at the entrance to the village, around tree bases along Durham Road and outside the village hall. As mentioned above now that we have approval for the planting and planter locations, we should have the opportunity to make our village environment attractive welcoming.
    - Risk Assessments are in the process of being electronically written-up.

    Concern was expressed about the lack of 'line of sight' for drivers approaching Vicar's bridge from Carlton; the right of way is for vehicles from Thorpe Thewles, but due to overgrowth, line of sight is blocked, making it difficult to judge whether to move ahead.
    Cllr Rees voiced concern about the lack of dropped kerbs in the village. It was **agreed** to add this to the agenda for the walkabout.
    The access to the play area for those with pushchairs is an on-going concern; whilst Councillors accepted that there was no alternative access route, Cllr Gillson suggested a metal ramp might provide a cost-effective solution to the barrier created by the steep stairs.
    Actions: ALL **–** make a list of concerns in preparation for a village walkabout**;** Cllr Williams to forward costings for planters to the Clerk, Cllr Gillson and Clerk to research metal ramps, Clerk to write letter of appreciation to resident who donated the plants, to request litter picking equipment from SBC.

9. **Finance:** (i) ***Budget*** – The Clerk proposed a refinement of the budget headings to give greater transparency to expenditure. She had drafted a revised budget, keeping to the same overall costs, but had created new headings and amalgamated others, under two main headings, Core Costs and Activities. With one minor amendment, Councillors **resolved** to accept the revised budget. (ii) ***Payments*** - Councillors were asked to consent to payments for items identified in the budget to be deemed approved, without the requirement for further authorisation at a full PC

meeting, noting that two Councillors had to approve every payment made. The Clerk stressed that any expenditure not identified in the annual budget would still require approval by full Council. Councillors concurred and it was therefore **resolved** payments for items included within the budget should be made as soon as possible after receipt of an invoice, but any item required that was not within the budget, still required full council approval. (iii) ***Financial Reports***- the Clerk proposed a new format for financial reporting, moving to a monthly statement of Financial Transactions together with an Actual against Budget Report. This would give Councillors greater control of their finances. An Actual against Budget report for June had been provided to this meeting, to show how this would work. Councillors **approved** the new Financial Reporting system. **NB**: There had been no financial transactions since the May meeting.
The Clerk informed that she had made several attempts to complete the VAT reclaim form on the HMRC website but, once completed, the system would not allow the form to be downloaded, as required. A message appeared stating "This service is not currently available, please try again later" – very frustrating as all the information uploaded was immediately wiped! She had received notification from Wynyard Residents Association that they no longer needed the funding provided by the former Grindon Parish Council for a road traffic survey and wished to return £542.00 to Grindon & Thorpe Thewles Parish Council. The offer was warmly accepted. **Action:** Clerk to send relevant information to WRA Treasurer.

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

11. Correspondence:

- Copy of letter to a resident from SBC regarding overgrown vegetation – Noted.
- Invitation to a training session on Planning, 6.00-8.30pm, Thursday 7th October, at County Hall, Durham – to be circulated and any Parish Councillor wishing to attend to inform Clerk.
- Message from Lord Lieutenant of Durham regarding the lighting of beacons to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, 2nd June – Noted.
- Information on next Rural Crime Forum meeting, 10.00 – 11.30 am, 16 September at Cleveland Community Safety Hub– Cllr Rees to attend.
- Communication from Rachel Braithwaite, SBC Community Engagement Officer, regarding the Yarm Eaglescliffe and Parishes Community Partnership – Noted.
- NALC Conference, 'Future Communities' – Thursday 2 December – online event - Noted.
- NALC Chief Executive's Bulletins – Noted.
- 'Sling Your Hook' Campaign launched by Neighbourhood Watch to Tackle Scams – Noted.

12. **Planning:** No Applications received.

13. Items of Concern to Councillors: No further items raised.

14. Date of Next Meeting: 6.30pm Tuesday 14th September 2021.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Minutes Authorised By:

Minutes Seconded By:

Date: