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**LITTLE BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY 11th JANUARY 2016 IN LITTLE BLAKENHAM
VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT : Wally Binder (Chairman), Barry Palmer, Mike Tarbard, Mary Whurr, Janet Gobey (Clerk).

One parishioner.

Kevin Welsby - District Councillor. John Field – District and County Councillor.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.32 pm with a welcome to those attending.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Clarke.

2. DECLARATION OF MEMBER INTERESTS

The Chairman reminded Councillors about the need to declare any interests they had in any matter under discussion during the Parish Council Meeting.

The Chairman disclosed a non pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5b.

3. OPEN FORUM

Councillor Whurr noted that the ditch running alongside the Beeches had overflowed during the recent heavy rain because it was blocked at the culvert.

ACTION: CHAIRMAN TO CONTACT BLAKENHAM FARMS TO ARRANGE FOR THE CULVERT AND DITCH TO BE CLEANED OUT

John Field confirmed that he would cover the 11.5% matched funding contribution if the application to SITA UK Trust for funding the new playground equipment was successful.

The parishioner stated that he felt that the Gipping Valley Trust was a worthwhile project for support. However, he queried whether it would be appropriate for the Council to spend money on an event to celebrate HM The Queen's 90th Birthday during a period of cuts in public spending and if such an event should be high on the council's list of priorities.

There were the following queries -

Had the application for funding from the Locality Budget for the new and replacement noticeboards been submitted ?

The Clerk confirmed that it had and the District Councillors confirmed that they had received it. The application is on the list for consideration.

Had been any progress on straightening up the street sign for Little Box Meadow ?

The Clerk explained that the sign was very worn and MSDC had agreed to replace it free of charge. Also, the new sign would also be placed much closer to the road to improve it's visibility.

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4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS - Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting on 2/11/15 and Parish Council Meeting on 9/11/15

The minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 2/11/15 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 9/11/15 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4a. ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The estimate from SCC Street Lighting for the work recommended to replace the columns and change the light fittings to LED units was circulated and discussed. Councillors queried whether the estimate covered the costs of removing the debris and whether it would be more cost effective to have all the lights replaced at once, rather than over several years.

It was also noted that the estimate included two street lights on Leather Bottle Hill, although there is only one there.

ACTION: CLERK TO FOLLOW THESE POINTS UP WITH SCC.

The Chairman proposed that the issue should be discussed at a Parish Meeting, as this would be a large financial outlay for the Parish. This was agreed.

To begin to prepare for this, the Clerk will research the possible options for grants and loans to cover some of the costs.

ACTION: CLERK TO RESEARCH GRANTS AND LOANS

SCC Street Lighting are also arranging for some remedial work to be done - cutting back branches around the street light at the bottom of Valley Road and moving the pole in Little Box Meadow, as it is too close to overhead power cables to be safely maintained.

The Chairman said that he felt the immediate priorities for the Parish Council should be the playground refurbishment, obtaining a longer lease on the glebeland and modernising the Village Hall. This was agreed.

4b. The Draft Standing Orders were approved by Councillors and signed by the Chairman.

4c. The Draft Financial Regulations were approved by Councillors and signed by the Chairman.

PLANNING

5a. Update on the Sterling Suffolk Greenhouse project.

Councillor Wright was not present to give his report.

5b. Consultation on Planning Application 4060/1

Councillors raised no objections to this application.

6. FINANCE

6a. CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT.

The Clerk reported that the agreed General and Earmarked Reserves had now been added to the accounts. This still left a healthy balance, but there were a number of cheques to be signed which would reduce the balance. The Chairman reminded Councillors that these cheques included the Clerk's salary from April to the end of December, as this could not be paid until a payroll system had been set up. Also, there will be a requirement for money to be spent on Parish assets in the near

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future, including the Village Hall and the playground.

6b. PAYMENTS TO BE AUTHORISED.

These were approved by Councillors.

6c. BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2016/17.

The proposed budget for 2016/17 was discussed. After some discussion, Councillors agreed to increase the total 2016/17 budget to the same figure as the total 2015/16 budget - £5250.

The Precept form was signed by the Chairman and Councillors Palmer and Whurr.

6d. CLERK'S SALARY AND EXPENSES

These were approved.

6e. UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDITS

The Clerk circulated a list of the action points and the current position for each action point. The outstanding ones were risk assessments for the Parish Council's assets and activities, annual review of controls and registration with the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Chairman proposed that there should be an Extraordinary Meeting in February to approve the risk assessments, as well as the Contracts of Employment and job descriptions for the employees of the Council. This was agreed and the Clerk will organise a date for the meeting.

ACTION: CLERK TO ARRANGE A DATE FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING.

7. VILLAGE HALL

7a. FINANCIAL REPORT

Bookings have dropped off, presumably due to the winter weather. The electricity bills continue to exceed the amount being banked from the coin meter, so the Clerk will attempt to alter the charging rates on the coin meter to see if this makes any difference.

ACTION: CLERK TO ADJUST THE RATES ON THE COIN METER

A cleaner has been employed for three hours per month. The arrangement is that she will do 1.5 hours twice a month, cleaning the Hall twice each month. The phone box and the bus shelter will each be cleaned once a month.

The Chairman reported that he had found a contractor to repair the guttering on the Hall and the bus shelter, paint over the graffiti on the fire door and the bus shelter, cut back the vegetation on the Hall and the bus shelter and put up some boards in the phone box so that items of Parish and local interest can be displayed.

8. RIVER GIPPING TRUST – PROPOSAL FOR THE COUNCIL TO BECOME A MEMBER.

It was agreed that the Council would become a Lifetime Member of the Trust. The payment of £100 was approved by Councillors and the Clerk drew up a cheque, which was signed at the end of the Meeting.

9. HM THE QUEEN'S 90th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The proposal to organise an event to celebrate this, while promoting the Parish Council, was discussed. The Clerk has contacted local Parish Councils to see if they have any plans, but they do not appear to do so. The possibility of amalgamating the event with the village fete was raised, although it was noted that this would mean it was no longer a purely Parish Council event.

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10. POUND LANE

Councillor Wright was not present to discuss this, but the Clerk said that she had previously contacted him and the issue was the state of the road surface, particularly where the road had been repaired before. It was agreed that the Clerk should contact Highways regarding repairs.

ACTION: CLERK TO CONTACT HIGHWAYS

John Field presented his report and a copy was circulated to the Councillors present. He and Kevin Welsby were also asked whether there was any news on the Snoasis development, but were not aware of anything.

The Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.02 pm with thanks to all attending.

Date of next scheduled Meeting – 14/3/16. A date will be sent out for the Extraordinary Meeting in February.

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