

**Minutes of the Dunston Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting
Held on Monday 29th March 2021 on DPC Finances.**

PRESENT: P.Cllrs R. McLuckie (RM) (Chair), P. Moore (Vice Chair), L. Phillipson (LP), P. Duncan (PD) G. Armstrong (GA) & Clerk R. Boden (RB). A member of the public was also present.

1. APOLOGIES: Ross Churchwood and Wendy Haggerty.

2. Explanation of the current situation with respect to the notice issued by PFK Littlejohn - Chairman.

The legislation **states** 'Every councillor is responsible for the financial control and decision making at their council. The LGA of 1972 states they should make arrangements for proper administration of their financial affairs however it is recognised that the councillors may not well be financial experts and so legislation also requires that every council a named responsible financial officer and in most parish councils that is the clerk.

It is the councils responsibility to make sure that the RFO has a system of financial control and discharges her duties under regulations.'

The AGAR and exemption certificate should have been submitted by the 31st July 2020 but due to Covid 19 an extension was granted for the 30th November however this was also missed. A warning email in October 2020 was ignored by the then clerk but it is noted that the council should have been discussing this before then.

The latest letter that has arrived states that the council must submit a response and follow certain actions/ conditions. The response has been submitted but the council has not heard back from PFK Littlejohn.

Steps Outlined:

1. Email Acknowledgement – Already Actioned by RB. RB to chase up and make sure they acknowledge the acknowledgement.
2. Hold a public meeting. This is still possible via zoom due to Covid regulations.
3. Agree next steps.
 - Balance the account and receipts.
 - Complete audit and sign off and submit AGAR.
 - Accept costs – which at present are in the region of £240 plus due to paperwork, time and auditor's costs. **115/21**

3. Update on preparation to resolve outstanding issues – G. Armstrong.

The accounts for 2019-20 have now been Internally Audited and are acceptable. The Income and Expenditure balance and the figures are in place to claim the VAT back for the period of 2019-20. The AGAR forms have been requested from PFK Littlejohn for 2019-20 as the current ones on their website are for 2020-21. If the council have to fill in the current forms dates will have to be changed and a paper copy sent to PFK Littlejohn. **116/21**

4. Discussion for Clarity.

PM suggested that a letter of explanation was included with the AGAR as to why the forms were not returned time appropriately. A discussion was held and it was felt that PFK Littlejohn was not asking for reasons but just for the council to admit that they were late in returning their finances. GA questioned some of the statements that are on the AGAR form and was it appropriate to tick the 'YES' column. A discussion was held and it was felt that whilst the council were late and not on time they are on top of things now and the questions should be answered in the present and not the past.

PM asked if as the audit costs will be paid from the precept should the public be given an explanation. It was agreed that they were invited to this meeting and the minutes of the meeting will be made public.**117/21**

5. Questions (Public)

No public questions were asked.**118/21**

6.Proposal and agreement of next steps.

A proposal was made that we accept the recommendations, and we move forward with the actions that have been agreed.

GA asked to stay out of the proposal as he had handled the figures.

Proposed PD. Seconded PM **119/21**

Linda joined the meeting

Extra steps to be put in place for improved future financial control.

It was suggested that the financial accounts are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

A parish diary would have the dates timetabled for finance deadlines as well as PC meetings etc as there can be a high turnover of councillors.

A monthly spreadsheet will be produced and brought to the parish meeting rather than just the financial report.

With these steps put in place then the Parish Council should be in a stronger place.

PM suggested that the councillors attend financial training. PM and GA are interested. **ACTION RB** to find out information. **120/21**

This was the end of the extraordinary meeting connected to DPC Finances.