

MISTERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Review Committee, held in the Church Room on Tuesday 14th July, 2009

Present: Councillor I. G. Keat, Chairman. Councillors Adams, Burton and Flower

There were nine members of the public present, together with District Councillor Simpson.

09/10/124 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Brand (unwell), Harwood-Gray (private commitment) and Marsden (work).

09/10/125 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following standing declarations of personal interest were made:

Cllr. Adams	Joint Burial Committee NALC Northern Area Cttee. Misterton Adult Swimming Club	Parish Council Representative Substitute Rep. Secretary
Cllr. Burton	MAP Ltd. Misterton Sports Social Club South-east Misterton The Newells Terrace Mgt. Co. Safer Neighbourhood Group Administration	Member Member Resident of the area Director Parish Council Representative Is reimbursed costs of purchasing various small items
Cllr. Flower	Amenities Joint Burial Committee MAP Ltd. Safer Neighbourhood Group South-east Misterton Amenities	Carries out small jobs occasionally Parish Council Representative and Chairman Trustee Director Parish Council Representative Resident of the area Carries out small jobs occasionally
Cllr. Keat	Poors Fund Standering Charity Wells Charity	Parish Council Nominated Trustee Parish Council Nominated Trustee Parish Council Nominated Trustee
All Members	Training, Etc.	Entitled to Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

All Members declared a prejudicial interest at agenda items 5 and 6 referred to at Minutes Nos. 09/10/129 and 09/10/130 below, insofar as they were all affected by the investigation report, but did not leave the room (Liverpool Case).

09/10/126 COMPLAINT BY THE PARISH COUNCIL TO THE MONITORING OFFICER ABOUT FORMER COUNCILLOR A. STEAD

Councillor Keat reported that the Standards Committee had agreed with the Deputy Monitoring Officer that former Councillor Stead had not breached the Misterton Code of Conduct.

09/10/127 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Resolved: That, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be excluded, and they are requested to withdraw.

09/10/128 PUBLIC RELATIONS – PRELIMINARY REVIEW

Pursuant to Minute No. 09/10/89 of June, 2009, the Clerk reported that, at the end of office hours on 11th July, 2009, there were only 14 acceptors for the planned Public Relations event on 12th August, 2009, including Members. Some of the 14 acceptances were qualified as being subject to availability.

The Clerk referred to a positive email from two residents, unable to attend, which made the following points:

- They were most impressed that the Parish Council was currently being run on such a professional basis.
- There always were, and would be, a small number of detractors, for whom nothing would ever be right, to which there probably was no answer.
- Thirty or so years ago, a suggestion to buy a property for a council office was met by some, with ridicule. Now, at last, the village had one, and, whilst the objections still trickled in, the village had a valuable and functional centre for the management of local affairs.
- Communication was excellent, as was budget management.
- No changes were needed. The Parish Council should carry on the good work and leave well alone.

A discussion ensued, when consideration was given to cancelling or postponing the event. The possibility that August was not a good month, owing to holidays, was considered. The likelihood that the Parish Council would be criticised by its critics for cancelling or postponing was also considered.

Resolved: That the event be cancelled for the present, and instead a questionnaire would be issued to every household in the village, with further copies available in The Misterton Centre. The questionnaire would broadly cover the same topics proposed for the consultation event. It would also ask whether residents might be prepared to attend a future consultation event.

09/10/129 COMPLAINT BY THE CLERK AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE ABOUT ALLEGED MALADMINISTRATION IN RESPECT OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST FORMER COUNCILLOR WHITE

Pursuant to Minute No. 09/10/92 of June, 2009, consideration was given to an email from the Deputy Monitoring Officer, in reply to the Parish Council's detailed letter to the Chairman of the Standards Committee regarding the Parish Council's complaint about the damaging and defamatory content of the investigation report. The email said, "The request is duly noted but is not to be actioned".

Further correspondence was considered, including an email from the Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Clerk, and letters to the Deputy Monitoring Officer by Councillors Burton, Harwood-Gray and Wheewall. The Deputy Monitoring Officer, in his investigation report, said that these councillors, who gave evidence, had said certain uncomplimentary things about the management of the Parish Council. The councillors, in their letters, strongly denied the truth of such suggestions.

Councillors Batty and Wheewall had since lodged complaints under the District Council's Complaints Procedure that the investigation report contained misrepresentation, and damaged Members' reputations.

09/10/130 COMPLAINT BY MR. D. WRIGHT UNDER THE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE ABOUT ALLEGED MALADMINISTRATION IN RESPECT OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST FORMER COUNCILLOR N. WHITE

Pursuant to Minute No. 09/10/93 of June, 2009, the Clerk reported that the Bassetlaw Chief Executive had since confirmed that he did write the letter of 20th May, 2009.

The Clerk had since had a lengthy and cordial discussion with the Chief Executive about the matter, when the Chief Executive said that the Monitoring Officer had advised that the administration of standards matters was outside the scope of the Bassetlaw Complaints Procedure. The Chief Executive had, therefore, advised that the only realistic form of address was a direct approach to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Chief Executive had not read the investigation report on advice from the Monitoring Officer.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer had informed the Chief Executive that the observations made by the Clerk on the draft investigation report were incorporated into the final report. The Clerk informed the Chief Executive that that was not the case – hence his complaint.

The Clerk advised on his future action.

09/10/131 PUBLIC DISCUSSION - MR. A. STEAD

Consideration was given to the attack on the Clerk's integrity by Mr. Stead earlier in the meeting. The Clerk said he was not prepared to tolerate any more unacceptable behaviour by Mr. Stead, which had begun with a public attack on the Clerk, while Mr. Stead was a councillor, at the meeting on 10th June, 2008 (for which he subsequently apologised), followed by (a) his work on behalf of a resident who lodged a complaint against the Clerk, (b) his evidence in the N. White enquiry by the Standards Committee in which the Clerk was defamed, and (c) a barely veiled attack on the Clerk at the meeting of the Strategic Review Committee on 12th May, 2009.

Members fully supported the Clerk's stance. Councillor Keat, in particular, observed that it was a shame that so much of the Parish Council's time was being taken up in having to deal with a small, and probably unrepresentative, group of detractors.

09/10/132 STAFFING MATTER

Consideration of this item would be deferred to the next meeting.