

Assington Parish Council

Clerk Christine Hargan 4 Northfield Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 3HF
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Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 27th October 2021 at Assington Village Hall

Present; Cllrs Simon Thorogood, Andrew Hill, Bronwen Stacey
In attendance: Clerk Christine Hargan

The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for absence
Cllrs Jordan, Howcroft, Wallace, and White
2. Receive Declarations of Interest from Councillors
None
3. To consider the Public Interest Report issued by the External Auditor PKF Littlejohn, who have required that we hold an extraordinary general meeting to discuss the issue. The Chair had contacted PKF Littlejohn who informed him that due process was required to be followed.

Background the previous clerk had erroneously sent an application for exemption for audit to the external auditors PKF Littlejohn in July 2020. This error came to light when the current Clerk sent over the audit papers in July 2021 and the audit had shown that the previous year's books should also have been subjected to a full audit. The Clerk investigated the previous accounts and found them to be factually correct, however, the existence of the exemption certificate could not be explained. The Chair contacted the previous Clerk who was unable to help as she no longer had access to any of the Parish Council's documents. We believe that the existence of the certificate was a genuine administrative error.

Mitigating circumstances, the country was in the midst of a pandemic and situation of lockdown where the entire nation was required to isolate and a high proportion of the population were required to work from home, therefore access to councillors was restricted to telephone or video conference. As the Parish Council was working in unusual circumstances the Chair did not have access to all of the documentation pertaining to the accounts. We believe that a simple administrative error is forgivable under the circumstances.

Having considered the Parish Council's procedures the Clerk was instructed to make enquiries relating to annual audit services and related costs from Heelis and Lodge and also Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), as used by other Parish Councils so that an informed decision relating to choice of internal auditors can be made at the next full Parish Council meeting to ensure that moving forwards all of the financial transactions are recorded in a clear format.

As there were no members of the public present the Parish Council continued to consider the following routine matters

4. Questions to the Chair

Payment of table tennis tables to the Village Hall. The proposed payment of £2000 had not been approved as there is no document trail. The Village Hall committee has been asked to invoice the Parish Council and we will pay their invoice.

5. Invoices to be approved for payment

- i. PKF Littlejohn £288 approved
- ii. SALC Provision of payroll services £27 approved
- iii. Suffolk County Council £8217.16 deferred to November meeting

Purchase of computer and scanner equipment for Parish Clerk

Cllr Stacey recommended purchase of a

- Lenovo IdeaPad Si Pro 14" laptop Intel Core product code 578513
- Microsoft 365 Home and Student lifetime for 1 user - purchase price £119.99
- Macafee internet security purchase price £14.99

Following discussion it was felt that backup using an external hard-drive, or pen drive would be more secure than using the internet based Cloud

Cllr Hill had researched an alternative computer which was cheaper and had a larger screen he would forward details to the Clerk. It was agreed that the Clerk would arrange purchase of her preferred computer from the options provided and arrange payment via internet banking.

• Purchase of Scanner

- Cllr Stacey recommended purchase of a Printer/scanner HP Envy 6032 all in one wireless inkjet printer along with affordable printing/instant ink cost in store £59.97. Following discussion the clerk said that she already has a Colour Laser Printer which is economical on ink and does not need or have space to store another Printer. A compact scanner would be more compact to store and would have no ink to dry up. It was agreed to the Clerk to look into the purchase of a suitable scanner.