

SELLING PARISH COUNCIL
Parish Council Meeting
Selling Village Hall, March 6th, 2019 at 8.00pm

MINUTES

In attendance; Cllrs Rehal, Cook, Webb, Elvy, Hobson and Saunders, SBCllrs Bowles and Bobbin, and ten members of the public.

Cllr Rehal welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if anyone wished to speak on any agenda item. One member of the public wished to speak against items 11 and 15, and another against items 6iii, 7ii and 15.

In the absence of a Clerk, Cllr Cook took the minutes and Cllr Webb acted as RFO.

1. Apologies

None. Cllr Neame was absent.

2. Declarations of Interest and Update to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

There was none.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the SPC Meeting of 13.2.19 were accepted unanimously.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the SPC Extraordinary Meeting of 25.2.19 were accepted by 5 votes, with 1 abstention from a member who was absent. Despite reassurances from Cllr Rehal that the meeting was held in accordance with all protocols, Cllr Saunders insisted the validity of the meeting was compromised.

5. To receive an update about progress of resolutions from previous meeting.

Street Lights: Cllr Webb had responded to a letter from a parishioner, and the status quo remained unchanged.

Newsletter: Cllr Hobson reported that the Spring Newsletter was a work in progress.

Anonymous Donor: Cllr Webb confirmed that he had sought permission from, and had revealed the identity of the donor to members only.

Appointment of Clerk: Cllr Rehal reported that favourable references had been received, and that the appointment had been offered and accepted. The new Clerk will sign her contract on Thursday March 7th

6. Finance Matters

i **Payments** of £23.59 to SSE Energy, £40 to ICO and £1819.90 Swale Borough Council [By-election costs] were proposed, seconded and accepted unanimously. Payment of £191.00 to the Locum Clerk was proposed, seconded and accepted by 5 votes, with Cllr Saunders voting against.

ii Draft Levels of Reserves and payments were accepted by 5 votes, with Cllr Saunders abstaining.

A member of the public who wished to speak against this next item was informed his comments would be more properly addressed to Item 15.

iii **To Acknowledge the payment of £5000 from an anonymous donor toward replacement lighting.**

It was proposed and seconded that a letter of thanks is sent to the donor and the motion was carried by 5 votes with 1 vote against.

7. Planning Matters

i 19/500224/FULL - Land north of Perry Leigh, Grove Road, Selling.

Members were unanimous in rejecting this application on the basis of neighbours' concerns and comments, adverse environmental impact, disastrous visual impact on the edge of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the creeping industrialisation of an otherwise rural and unspoilt location.

ii 19/500768/FULL – Owens Court Farm, Owens Court Road, Selling

Members were unanimous in their rejection of this application on the basis of neighbours' concerns and comments; the disturbance to neighbours and the increased traffic on both Owens Court Road and Selling Road that would arise from a campsite of approximately 40 seasonal workers; the absence of provision in the plans or foul waste disposal, and concerns that this was only part of a relentless campaign of planning by the owner.

8. Newsletter Update.

See Updates. It was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously that distribution of the SPC Newsletter should continue as normal.

9. 'One Selling' survey

It was proposed that a new 'One Selling' survey be conducted during the spring of 2019. Cllr Hobson to prepare a draft survey to be examined by the council after the elections in May. Seconded and agreed unanimously

10. Setting of Dates for Annual Parish Meeting, Annual Council Meeting and May monthly meeting.

The date set for the Annual Parish Meeting is April 10th 2019; although the May monthly meeting was scheduled for May 1st, it was agreed unanimously to cancel the meeting until after the local government elections and the annual council meeting (AGM) be held on Wednesday May 15th.

11. Big Lunch

It was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously that Selling Parish Council once again sponsor The Big Lunch. Working groups comprising both councillors and parishioners to be formed. The date of June 2nd was agreed, subject to venue availability.

12. Local Elections

It was proposed that promotional material for the forthcoming elections should be put on both the SPV website and Facebook page. With caveats about electioneering, it was seconded and agreed unanimously.

13. Perry Wood

It was proposed that SPC undertake a fact-finding mission to identify the problems associated with cycling in Perry Wood. Cllr Rehal said that the Perry Wood Management Group was already investigating the same issues. It was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously that the issue be left to them.

14. Defibrillator Training

It was proposed, seconded and agreed unanimously that SPC should organise a day for demonstration and training in the use of the two defibrillators in the village. Cllr Hobson to contact the original trainer and First Responders.

15. Anonymous Donation

It was proposed and seconded, that Cllrs Rehal and Webb be required to account for "their reasons for withholding information from the corporate council" regarding a donation of £5000 from a donor who wished to remain anonymous.

In debate, it was agreed by all but one member that the proposal was based on a false and indemonstrable premise that information had, in fact, been withheld. Cllrs Rehal and Webb both indicated that they would like to make it public the accountability as the motion had asked for. It was put to vote and the vote was unanimous that Cllrs Rehal and Webb be required to account. In response to that, Cllr Rehal read out a statement, prepared by Cllrs Rehal and Webb outlining the events surrounding the donation. It was agreed that the statement will be made available to all councillors and to the public.

*Statement concerning Agenda Item 15
Selling Parish Council Meeting, 6th March 2019*

- 1 In May or June of 2018, Cllr Webb was approached by a local person, who asked, informally and by word of mouth, on behalf of another Selling resident, advice as to whether it were possible to make an anonymous donation to the Parish Council, for the purpose of off-setting the fee of the External Auditor, arising from the complaints raised by a councillor, in 2016.*
- 2 The matter was reported to the Chair of SPC, who consulted the Clerk, who in turn consulted the Legal Adviser of KALC and also our Internal Auditor. Both Clive Powell and David Buckett were of the opinion that an anonymous donation was permissible, and, in the case of one of them, that requests for anonymity "have to be respected".*
- 3 This was passed back to the intermediary of the resident who was seeking the advice, with the information that SPC would be setting its precept in December, and that this would be a good time to make any offer.*
- 4 On 31st October 2018, councillors were informed of the cost of maintenance and repair of Selling's street lighting. When the putative donor's intermediary again approached Cllr Webb, in early November, for advice as to whether the precept setting was drawing near, this cost of lighting was mentioned.*
- 5 On 5th November, a formal approach concerning a donation was received, with the understanding that no names be mentioned, and with the strict proviso that the donation was to cover the cost of maintaining and repairing Selling's street lighting. The formal offer was made to Cllr Webb, via the same local intermediary as before.*
- 6 This formal offer was conveyed to SPC forthwith, at the next meeting, on 21st November: "Cllr Webb reported that a resident, who wished to remain anonymous, had offered to*

cover the whole cost of the [street-lighting] work".

7 *SPC thereupon decided to approach the insurers, to see if the lighting was covered by insurance. The insurance company replied that they would not cover wear and tear, which was the case in this instant.*

8 *The donation was made by cheque, direct to the Clerk, in January of 2019, and was reported at the February meeting.*

9 *Street-lighting and the donation were on the agenda of 13th February meeting (Agenda Item 10). However, under Agenda Item 5ii, SPC voted to request that the donor reveal their identity. This the donor did and the councillors were informed of the identity by Cllr Webb via email on the 16th February. The donation has not, as yet, been formally accepted by the Council.*

10 *Any suggestion of withholding information is untrue, and, from the above, it will be seen that all was done carefully, with probity, in due order, and with respect for the wishes of the donor.*

-----end of statement-----

16. Precept.

On behalf of a member of the public, Mr Adam Ambrose, it was proposed and seconded that Cllr Rehal explain why "it was appropriate to impose on Selling tax-payers a 2019-2020 precept which represents an increase of more than 80 per cent on the 2018-2019 precept" Cllr Rehal explained that;

- a) the setting of the Precept was a corporate SPC decision rather than an individual one.
- b) the meeting at which the Precept was set was open to the public, and the minutes of that meeting, along with the figures of the Precept were freely available on the website.
- c) the main increase to the precept was due to the fees charged by the external auditor to deal with an unsuccessful challenge to the audit from a member of SPC.

At 10.00pm, it was agreed to continue the meeting in order to complete the agenda.

17. Correspondence

Election packs containing information and nomination papers had been received by the Locum Clerk and were available on request to members of the public if they wished to stand for election to SPC.

A request from Swale Borough Council regarding the naming of a lane in Selling had been received, but as it had not arrived within 3 clear days of the meeting, could not be discussed and was deferred until the following meeting.

18. Reports

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19. Date of Next Meeting was confirmed as April 3rd 2019

Signed.....

Ash Rehal [Chair]