

Present: Councillors: - Armstrong, Hogg, Reynolds, Shaw, and Weaver.

In attendance: - Clerk, Unitary Authority Councillor Mallinson and 3 Members of the Public

**099/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – Cllr Wilkinson

**100/24 RESIGNATION OF COUNCILOR** – Cllr Shaw reported that he had received a resignation letter from Cllr Matthews and Council instructed the Clerk to communicate to Cllr Matthews their thanks for his service.

**101/24 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS – RESOLVED** No requests were received since the previous meeting for dispensations to speak and/or vote on any matter where a member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

**102/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – RESOLVED** No declarations by elected members of interests in respect of items on this agenda were received.

**103/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH JANUARY 2025 – RESOLVED** To authorise the Chairman sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2025.

**104/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – Members of the Public (MOP) asked a number of items regarding items on the Agenda including the efficacy of the Website and communications in general:

Firstly, it had been resolved previously that individual council members would scrutinise the Website and bring forward any suggestions as to how it and communications in general could be made more effective. The need for clarity on coverage for social events in conjunction with the Village Hall committee was noted but otherwise there were no further comments.

Secondly, the issue of the responsibility of the Clerk to sift e-mails and other communications on behalf of the Council had been placed on the agenda. Cllr Shaw supported by other Councillors confirmed that he had no issues with the current arrangements which reflect normal business practice. It will be for the new Chair and Councillors to change arrangements in the future by agreement with any new clerk if they desire.

Thirdly, Cumberland Council have made changes to Bin collections and now require additional payment for more than 1 green bin. As this is not a Parish Council matter, this was addressed by the Cumberland Councillor present as set out below.

Finally, a member of the public drew members attention to the Code of Conduct published on the Council's website. A member of the public present felt that Councillor Hogg had been rude and disrespectful towards her. Councillor Hogg refuted the allegation.

**UNITARY AUTHORITY REPORT** – Cllr Mallinson addressed the issue of the rubbish bins as part of his report. He indicated that the situation was as had been outlined by the MOP but in this particular case he would seek information regarding dispensation regarding the rurality of the area and the circumstances of the particular individual.

He then went on to advise that any works done to unadopted roads in the Parish, i.e. filling in potholes etc should not be funded out of the public purse i.e. by the Parish Council. As for the Unitary Authority, it has been determined that the Council Tax increase would be set at 4.99% and that in order to balance the Budget, Central Government had allowed further monies to be "transferred" from Capital to Revenue (at a cost of 6% interest payable for the next 20 years and that the Sale of Assets would be allowed to offset this. Difficult times would be experienced for a number of years.

Turning to the item of an Electoral Mayor, it was suggested that this change might lead to Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness becoming a single authority (Cumbria) again but Cllr Mallison indicated that he thought this would not happen.

The Clerk still to contact Clare Liddle in the Legal Services department of the Unitary Authority to progress with regard to the cast-iron signpost and ownership of it and the land on which it is placed.

#### **REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON THE VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT**

**COMMITTEE** (VHMC) - Cllr Weaver reported on progress around re-establishing the VHMC with a new Committee now in place an understanding of the relationships and responsibilities of the VHMC, any Social Committee formed and the Parish Council would be thought through and published in the Magazine.

Contracts for the Post Office and the Tea Rooms had been reviewed and confirmed and after a Fire Risk assessment emergency lighting has been repaired and quotes have been requested for other electrical issues. At the moment the Reading Room is unlicensed so should not be used.

A Budget for the coming year will be presented at the VHMC AGM and there may be further actions to be costed and financed. The chair asked that any request for support from the Parish Council should be made as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council appoint W Weaver and B Hogg as it's 2 representatives to the VHMC to serve on the new committee following the Annual General Meeting in May.

#### **105/24 FINANCE MATTERS**

The Clerk circulated Bank Reconciliations and Budget v Actual reports to council members.

Payments Authorised as per the following:

14/01/2025	223 A Dawes – Clerk Pay & Exp - January	£	243.36
14/01/2025	224 HMRC – Income tax - January	£	48.60
31/01/2025	D/D Unity Bank	£	6.00
21/02/2025	225 HMRC – Income tax – February	£	48.60
21/02/2025	226 A Dawes – Clerk Pay & Exp	£	255.61
21/02/2025	227 Walton and Lees Hill School	£	25.20
28/02/2025	D/D Unity Bank	£	6.00

#### **106/24 REVIEW OF THE WEBSITE**

Individual councillors reported that they found the current website acceptable for Council activities and reporting, however Cllr. Weaver indicated that the VHMC would be looking to establish a separate Website for their use (with potentially any Social committee as well).

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#### **109/24 RE-CYCLING BINS**

Representatives on the Villag Hall committee explained during a recent fire-risk assessment, the location of the recycling bins close to the Reading Room had been identified as an unacceptable risk. Councillors discussed whether the bins should be relocated or removed in their entirety in light of this fire risk and the new waste arrangements announced by Cumberland Council which will see additional wheelie bins given to every household.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk would indicate to the Unitary Authority its desire to have the re-cycling bins removed. An article will be placed in the coming Parish Newsletter.

#### **110/24 NEWSLETTER DATES AND CONTENT**

Council members **RESOLVED** to keep the current production and editing situation as is, and 2 editions per year [1 Spring 1 Autumn/Winter] would be produced. Council would like to have the next edition available for distribution by the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

#### **111/24 DRAINS**

Cllr Hogg indicated that the Unitary Authority had completed an action on the Village Green which whilst resolving an issue, had not resolved all the drainage issues. Council **RESOLVED** that Cllr Hogg would provide the Clerk with the what3words location for all the areas the Parish Council wish the Unitary Authority to resolve in terms of drainage.

#### **112/24 CO-OPTION PROCESS**

The Clerk outlined the process of co-option the Council may wish to embark upon after the May meeting, due to the fact that there will be 3 vacancies on the Council at that point.

#### **113/24 REPLACEMENT CLERK / RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER.**

**[Confidential Minute]** during which time the Clerk and Members of the Public were asked to leave

#### **114/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING(s) – held in Walton Village Hall at 7.00pm.13<sup>th</sup> May 2025** commencing with the Annual Parish Meeting followed immediately by the Annual Parish Council Meeting

#### **115/24 CLOSE OF MEETING 20.50**