MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD AT 19:30 ON TUESDAY 21st MARCH 2023

**Present:** Councillor Sharpe (Chair)

Cllrs Allen MBE, Bland MBE & Farnsworth

Helen Buckley (Clerk)

Anne Mains (Headteacher – Croft Primary School)

Lisa Howard (Fostering Support Worker – Warrington BC)

**Apologies:** Cllrs Campbell & Partington

Cheshire Police

Cllr Sharpe opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

**2023/200 Code of Conduct – Declarations of Interest**

None.

**2023/201 Minutes of the Meeting held 21st February 2023**

**Resolved**

Minutes approved.

**2023/202 Matters arising from the minutes**

No matters arising.

**2023/203 Cheshire Police February Report**

As there was nobody present from Cheshire Police, Cllr Sharpe read this out. The report was noted.

**2023/204 Clerk's Report: Correspondence**

From: Assistant Clerk at Lymm PC re: Environment and Climate meeting on Wed 5th April at 12:30. The clerk and caretaker to attend.

To/From: NetWise re: registering on the website. The clerk has advertised this on SM and has had some new subscribers.

From: Croft Carnival re: permission for use of Playing Field and for paying the insurance.

**Resolved**

Croft Parish Council grants permission to the Croft Carnival committee to use its Playing Field and it will pay the insurance.

From: Rawdon Jones at the Mersey Forest re: funding for the three trees by the play area. The agreement has now been signed and returned. The other four trees will be done by Platt’s.

From/To: Tony Hewitt of Prime Dekore re: repainting of playground and benches. He’s going to invoice what has already been done and will break down what still needs to be done. He has the materials ready to start the bench repairs and repainting but this job is weather dependent.

From: Andy at The Plough Inn re: installation site for new defib. The clerk is to meet with him to discuss in more detail.

Verbal request from the PTA at Croft Primary asking if we can provide anything towards their summer fair event on Saturday 24th June. The clerk has offered the use of the PA system and microphone.

From: RoSPA re: annual inspection. This will take place sometime in April. HAGS repairs due to take place Tuesday 21st March.

From: WBC re: dipped pavement on Mustard Lane. Cllr Allen confirmed that this is on the work programme for next year. She will try to push to get it done sooner. Cllr Allen also commented that it’s good to see that the Old Rectory is being renovated – hopefully this will stop antisocial behaviour.

**2023/205 Clerk's Report: Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

PCC John Dwyer visited Croft Community Centre on Tuesday 21st February to look at the kick rails and overhead barrier that he helped fund. He was met by Cllrs Bland and Partington and the clerk. Croft Parish Council is grateful to him for helping to fund this project. The fund starts again soon if we wish to reapply.

**2023/206 Clerk's Report: Drop-in Session**

The parish council hosted a drop-in session on Saturday 4th March for residents to discuss and look at the plans for Heathcroft Stud. It was a good turnout with around seventy residents attending.

**2023/207 Clerk's Report: King Charles III’s Coronation**

This is gradually taking shape. So far, there is a bouncy castle and an ice cream van booked to be there, and hopefully there will be some presence from both schools and the scouts. The clerk has applied for some funding from Warrington Borough Council so we will see if this brings anything. The Cllrs agreed to book John Edgar and his sound system for the event. The Cllrs also agreed to approach iBrand signs to create a banner for the event.

**Resolved**

The council will book John Edgar for his sound system and approach iBrand signs regarding a banner to advertise the event.

**2023/208 Clerk's Report: Financial Reports**

The financial reports were up to the end of January and February 2023.

The bank reconciliations were in balance, with the exception of 8 pence (in the parish council’s favour – this is a NatWest error).

The January creditor list amounts to £10,773.72 and the February creditor list amounts to £15,790.20.

There are no issues regarding the budget.

Members were presented with the creditors’ cheque payment list for March totalling £12,536.26.

**Resolved**

That the creditors' cheque payment list for March totalling £12,536.26 be approved.

**2023/209 Planning Applications**

Planning Applications for consideration at this meeting.

**2023/210 Application 2023/00288/FUL – Chestnut Cottage, Warrington Road, WA3 6BG**

Proposal: Proposed Change of Use of part of existing Storage Barn to form a self-contained annex to existing dwelling for use by the owner’s elderly relatives.

**Resolved**

No objection.

This application needed a response before this meeting:

**2023/211 Application** **2023/00155/FULH – 105 Mustard Lane, Croft, WA3 7BD**

Proposal: Proposed 2 storey rear extension.

**Resolved**

No objection.

The following applications were for information only:

**2023/212** **Application 2023/00225/DISCON – Oak Tree Lodge, Lord Street, Croft, WA3 7DB**

Proposal: Discharge of condition 4 (Privacy screen) on previously approved application 2021/40417 (House extensions).

**2023/213 Application 2023/00235/CLDP – The Old Rectory, Lady Lane, Croft, WA3 7AU**

Proposal: Proposed Single Storey Extension.

**2023/214 Application 2023/00259/CLDP – 4 Emerald Drive, Croft, WA3 7AD**

Proposal: Single storey flat roof rear extension.

**2023/215 Borough Councillor's Update**

1. At the most recent full meeting there was a proposed increase of 4.98% in council tax. The three borough councillors for the ward voted against it but it was approved anyway. A member of the public questioned how the council tax rate is decided upon regarding when a property is extended but remains in the same band. Cllr Allen will seek clarification on this.
2. Cllr Allen read out the following:

*Statement from Cllr Valerie Allen following a question regarding declaration of interest and code of conduct on joint matters between Culcheth & Glazebury and Croft Parish Council.*

*Cllr Allen sought clarification from the Council’s Solicitor on this matter:*

***Declaring an interest***

*The arrangement for funding planning advice between the two councils does not appear to be a disclosable pecuniary interest and therefore not something which obliges me to leave the room and not vote.*

*However, it then falls to be a matter which could be considered still as an interest but where I would use my own judgment and discretion as to my participation.*

*The advice for future similar matters is, in the first instance is to record my interest at the meeting for sake of transparency.*

*As I am not the only Councillor who may need to make such as declaration, then it is suggested this is a matter for discussion between the two respective Clerks.*

***Code of Conduct***

*The second part is to look at how such an interest is addressed in the* *Code of Conduct for each of the respective Parishes when I am involved in deciding on participation.*

*This scenario has appeared before, however, going forward each decision should be considered on its own individual merits.*

*The question is whether my membership of the other Parish Council means that I am unable to consider the matter objectively, however, as a long standing parish councillor on both parishes, I feel that my approach has been balanced, and, over the past years proved that the main aim of saving both parish councils money and ensuring that a joint approach to matters that concern the area as a whole, and that my intensions have been seen to be in the wider public interest.*

*It is notable that my membership of both Parish Councils is a democratic appointment and not a personal one as it would be to for example, to a private company and that I have no financial gain from any such decisions.*

*Going forward, If I do decide to take part then I will declare an interest and explain why I have chosen to take part and demonstrate that I have an open mind throughout.*

*The Questions for the Parishes Councils is, do we want to continue with this arrangement or not?*

*If so, then the two Clerks need to devise an agreement that works for both Parishes and enables those councillors on two parishes to partake or not.*

**2023/216 Supported Lodgings – Lisa Howard**

Ms Howard explained that Supported Lodgings falls within the Fostering Service and is aimed at 16–25-year-olds but mainly deals with 16–18-year-olds. You just need a spare bedroom and to be able to offer some low-level support approx. 10-12 hours a week providing some help with independence skills such as cooking on a budget.

There are only two hosts currently so the service is in desperate need of more.

They wouldn’t place challenging children in low-level support placements.

**2023/217 Anne Mains – Croft Primary School**

Mrs Mains told the cllrs that when the nursery was gifted to the school there were only eight children. The nursery is now at 65 children. Mrs Mains was asking for Section 106 monies to fund more nursery spaces and she needs £50,000.

Warrington Borough Council usually takes £8,000 per house.

Cllr Bland said to wait as it would be seen as a weakness if we were to ask for money now. If we were to lose the objection then we could ask for some.

Cllr Allen will ask if we can claim any S106 for the M62 services at J11. Cllr Sharpe said that £500,000 had been allocated already.

**2023/218 Recess**

A resident asked if there was any update from Mark Tune regarding the strips that were put out in the autumn. The clerk will contact him and invite him to the April meeting.

**2023/219 Members' Referrals**

1. Cllr Sharpe asked the clerk to email Dr Freeman regarding the hedge. It has been cut but a lot of mess has been left behind.
2. Cllr Farnsworth had recently done a tour around Croft and took photos of benches, a road sign (at New Lane) and a bollard (at Cornmill Court) that were in a state of disrepair. The clerk explained that the benches are already being dealt with but she will report the road sign and bollard to Nik Iddon at Warrington Borough Council.
3. The parish council and Cllr Allen wrote to the Inspector regarding the Spring Lane mast.

**2023/220 Date of next Parish Council meeting – 18th April 2023 at 19:30**