

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of  
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL  
held online on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020**

PRESENT: Cllrs. L Isko (chair), S Collins, A Toomey, G Nicholas and C Griffiths

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Maliphant (Clerk) and twenty-four local residents

1. The clerk began the meeting by sharing details of the parish council's protocol for managing online meetings
2. There were no apologies for absence
3. There were no declarations of interest
4. **Public Forum**

LI asked the clerk to present the answers to public questions already submitted by email.

The clerk advised that some questions that had come in had needed clarification, and others required further research and advice to answer fully.

The council would like to assure the questioners that these questions would not be lost, but returned to at the planned next meeting, which (as many people had requested) would be a face-to-face meeting in Longhope as soon as Government restrictions allow. No decisions would be taken at either meeting, and the Recreation Ground charity AGM where decisions would normally be taken would follow these meetings at a subsequent date to be confirmed. In the meantime the council would fulfil its legal responsibility as Trustee of the Recreation Ground by taking steps to deal with any outstanding health & safety and disabled access issues, as well as improvement plans previously agreed such as the children's swing seat.

A number of people had asked for a copy of the minutes of the last parish council meeting – the clerk advised that these minutes had not been drafted yet, but would be placed on the parish council website by June 10<sup>th</sup> for consideration at the next parish council meeting on Monday June 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### QUESTION 1

“If I summarise the position correctly, in 1947 the Charity Trusteeship should have been set up with the Parish Council as charity trustees, this was not done and went unnoticed until 1971 when the Recreation Ground was registered as a charity with the Recreation Ground committee as trustees rather than the Parish Council.

My questions are:

- Who on the Council has decided that the time has come to correct a position that has been (apparently) wrong for many decades?
- What has happened to make this the time to bring the matter to a conclusion after >70 years?”

## ANSWER 1

“The recreation ground was registered as a charity in July 1972, but it is not clear at what point the trustees came to be appointed via the recreation ground management committee rather than being the parish council as corporate trustee, as originally intended in the 1947 land conveyance.

No one person made the decision that the time had come to correct the position. Two representatives from the parish council attended a training day on February 11th about parish councils and charitable trusts, which led to further research that was then shared with the whole parish council.”

## QUESTION 2

“The details of The Longhope Recreation Ground charity as listed on the Charity Commission website give the area of benefit as the Parish of Longhope and gives the purpose as amateur sport.

Can you confirm that the recreation ground and pavilion will continue to operate in accordance of these principles on a not for profit basis?”

## ANSWER 2

“The classification and purpose of the Longhope Recreation Ground charity have not been changed, the object from the original 1947 land conveyance being for the parish council to hold the land as a public recreation ground.

The recreation ground and pavilion may not under charity law be run for private profit, but at the same time the parish council as trustee has a responsibility to maintain the facility, and so it is appropriate to charge even local amateur sporting clubs a fee for use of the ground – as has always been the case. All funds raised in this way must by law be used for the purposes of the charity”

## QUESTION 3a

“I would like to raise the outstanding issue of the installation of the basket swing at the Recreation Ground. I understand that a wooden support has been made for the swing but it is not sturdy enough to support it. Please could you advise of the current situation, when it is likely to be installed and whether the requirement for the manufacturer of a second suitable support means that more costs have been incurred.”

## QUESTION 3a

“With regards to Longhope Youth Fund. The youths of Longhope were promised a basket swing over 12 months ago. A grant of £2000 was awarded by the High Sheriff as noted in Parish Council minutes of July 2019. Why has this not happened, why is it taking so long, and what is the balance of the youth fund?”

## ANSWER 3

“There is a design for the support for the basket swing, agreed with the young people whose Youth Fund is paying for the equipment, but the timber suppliers who quoted for the support expressed concern that the initial proposal may not be sufficiently sturdy, and suggested getting further expert advice. Four different structural engineers have been asked for advice about a suitable size for the beams using oak wood, but their replies are

still awaited. In the meantime there has been no expenditure on the support, only on the basket swing itself which has been ordered and received, and the completed equipment will be installed as soon as possible.

The current balance of the Youth Fund is £5230.01.”

There was considerable further discussion about this question, minuted here for convenience. Points raised included:

- Why was the decision made to have a wooden support – SC replied it was what the young people who had raised the money had wanted
- A metal support would be a more suitable and sustainable option, could that be taken back and explained to the Teens Group?
- Should decisions on these matters not be made by adults?
- Two of the four structural engineers approached had responded they would be happy to help free of charge, but on contacting them again more recently, there had been no further answers
- A local resident offered their assistance in working out the necessary structural calculations
- Could the manufacturers of the basket swing be asked what they thought was the best support to use, might there be implications for the manufacturer’s warranty?
- Buying and installing a support commercially would be more expensive, the plan was to try to get a solution as cheaply as possible
- There had been a cheaply-costed proposal for a metal support from a member of the Recreation Ground Management Committee, which would have lasted longer

#### QUESTION 4

“Regarding Friends of Longhope Recreation Ground Committee. Who were the Friends? Were they also trustees of the Recreation Ground Management Committee (RGMC), was there a potential for a conflict of interest?”

This committee disbanded around the same time as the previous trustees of the RGMC resigned on mass in October 2019, funds were then distributed as noted in Parish Council minutes dated January 2020 as follows:

£250 each to:

- Longhope Church towards its organ fund.
- Longhope and district British legion.
- Hope Brook school.
- Macmillan trust.
- A local girl guide to help fund her trip to Canada
- £120 in rental fees

Minutes also state items purchased by the Friends have been given to the local Rainbows and James Hopkin trust. Having spoken with the Longhope Rainbows leader I can confirm Rainbows have received nothing, why is this?

Longhope Brownies, the one youth group that have been a regular user of the pavilion and rec ground for the past 11 years received nothing, why was this?

Whilst I’m sure these actions by the Friends were well intended and all of these causes receiving donations are worthy, it has to be noted that in accordance with the RGMC rules in place at the time, referring in particular to regulation 10 regarding sub committees such

as 'friends', which states 'all monies raised and works carried out must be for the same objective as the Charity'. The Charity in this instance is the Recreation Ground, whose objectives as per the charities commission website are as a 'public recreation ground'. Therefore should these funds raised and distributed by the Friends have gone to the 'public recreation ground' as per regulation 10 and not distributed as they were?"

#### ANSWER 4

"Friends of Longhope Recreation Ground was not a sub-committee of the Recreation Ground Management Committee, neither were they trustees. They were an independent group of likeminded people who formed together to help raise the profile of the Recreation Ground and Pavilion and to help improve the community spirit. They had hoped to achieve this by holding events, which would involve villagers of all ages. Profits made during these events were paid into a 'Friends' Account' and were used to re-invest in arranging more events, and the purchase of materials and supplies where needed. Following the events in October 2019, the group felt it could not continue its activities and decided to disband. The "Friends" met to dissolve the group, and vote on how to disperse the assets and the remaining funds. One of the group had connections to "Rainbows" and another to "The James Hopkins Trust". Assets were given to them to pass on."

There were some follow-up questions at the meeting:

- Had the church returned its £250, and if so, what had happened to that money? LI replied that the church had indeed refused the money, and it had been given to the Evergreens group instead
- Was the girl guide who had received some money a member of the village? LI confirmed that she was, but declined to answer any further questions on behalf of the group of twelve or more Friends, though she would be happy to try and arrange a meeting with them if a request came in by email

One long question was raised at the meeting covering a number of procedural points to do with meetings about the Recreation Ground. The clerk responded that these covered the same topics as the emailed questions already being researched, and so would be included for answering at the planned face-to-face meeting.

Two further questions were raised around a recent request for the parish council to organise a parish meeting. The clerk confirmed that this point would also be taken away for a response. CG added she agreed with the point made about a face-to-face meeting, some people were unhappy about the use of Zoom. She felt it was better to start the dialogue tonight with the questions that had been sent in, and some people with disabilities might not be able to get on the Recreation Ground, but this was the first of many sessions, and the parish council was keen to have the planned face-to-face meeting as well as the Zoom meeting as there were many questions and much confusion to address.

GN raised a point that had been discussed on social media about the tennis courts. He confirmed that no offer had come in to the parish council for anyone to hire the courts, and there was no agreement to rent them out, nor had any money been received. The courts remained open to the whole parish, there was no other intention. The clerk confirmed that a suggestion about the tennis courts had been made at the May 18<sup>th</sup> parish council meeting as part of a business plan discussion, mentioned in passing along with several other ideas, and the related detail would be included in the draft minutes of the meeting.

Many thanks were given to everyone concerned for the questions they had sent in. The clerk reiterated that any further questions that people would like to send in would be taken to the next meeting, as well as those currently being researched.

5. It was confirmed that further discussions about the Recreation Ground would take place at a future face-to-face meeting, date to be confirmed, and the chairman then closed the meeting.

Signed:.....Chairman. Date:.....