# NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL

7 Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA
Telephone: 01707 875825


## MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 2021, 7pm

| **Members in attendance** | |
|---|---|
| Cllr B Knichel (Chairman)<br>Cllr B Cheetham<br>Cllr M Clark<br>Cllr S Harden | Cllr P Singleton<br>Cllr B Stubbs<br>Cllr P Wagg<br>Clerk to the Council, Ms L Chaplin |
| Due to the nature of virtual meetings, it is noted that members of the public may join and leave without notice so only Councillors leaving and joining the meeting will be documented. | |
| **Other attendees**<br>4 members of the public and the Northaw & Cuffley Office Manager. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **20/21-94** | **APOLOGIES & ANNOUNCEMENTS**<br>There were no apologies required, although Council noted the apologies of Councillor Bernard Sarson, Borough Councillor for Northaw & Cuffley.<br>A member of the public requested to record the meeting. |
| **20/21-95** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**<br>Cllr Cheetham declared his membership of the National Liberal Party.<br>No other conflicts were noted but should any conflicts become apparent that they would be raised at the appropriate time in the agenda. |
| **20/21-96** | **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**<br>*7.02pm Standing Orders were suspended so members of the public could ask questions/make statements to the Council. All attendees were unmuted to allow them the opportunity to ask a question.*<br>A resident raised a point on the recording of the meeting by a member of the public and the requirements for retention.<br>*7.03pm Standing Orders recommenced* |
| **20/21-97** | **ANNUAL ACOUNTS 2019/20**<br>The papers circulated included the draft response to the resident letter. The deadline for response was noted as 30th April 2021.<br><br>The Chairman gave background and confirmed that this issue related to the accounts from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 only. These accounts remain unaudited, and this process was to provide a response to the request from the external auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP who had received a complaint regarding the governance of the said years' accounts. The Council was required to respond in full with evidence held on the matters raised.<br><br>The Chairman made it clear that<br>1. The resident letter was not the subject of the meeting and the only matter under consideration was the report from the Clerk.<br>2. There will be no discussion or questions from the public on the contents of the resident's letter.<br>3. The objective of the EGM was to review and approve the report from the Clerk that needed to go to the external auditor by 30th April.<br><br>There were no issues of conflicts of interest raised or discussed. |

# NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL

7 Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA
Telephone: 01707 875825


Should anyone have any evidence they wished to send to the auditor they were free to do so directly, and this was welcomed as part of the investigation. The Chairman confirmed that out of the 8 assertions required to sign off the accounts he was only able to confirm one of them for last year's accounts.

It was confirmed that there was a window built in to the auditing process for Local Government that allowed residents to review, question and complain about the Parish Council submitted accounts. A letter from a resident had been received raising several of these matters and questioning the governance and management of the accounts.

Cllr Stubbs confirmed that he was the author of this letter and he had not been privy to any information held solely by the parish council nor received any assistance from any councillor or employee. All the information included in his letter was in the public domain or witnessed at public meetings.

Cllr Stubbs confirmed that issues were attempted to be raised throughout the year both as a resident and also as a Councillor, but these had not been addressed or even acknowledged. It was well known and mentioned on several occasions that this would be raised with the auditors at the appropriate time, and this is the time.

There were issues with regards financial process and irregularity reported to the Welwyn Hatfield Monitoring Officer, but although this complaint was regarded as proven was beyond the remit of the Monitoring Officer although she did recommend urgent training along with other recommendations which were initially withheld from councillors was subsequently ignored by then serving Councillors or officers.

It is the belief that the RFO and Deputy Clerk actively participated in the activities listed throughout the letter and assisted the councillors in running a clique where the failure and mismanagement of public funds was allowed to continue, the employees were deemed unqualified and incompetent allowing councillors to run without any checks or balances. This was not accidental these were deliberate acts.

Recovery of monies may well be sought in the future along with charges issued for misconduct in public office. This was public money, and the Council had a responsibility to spend it appropriately.

The Council were keen to reassure the electorate that steps had been taken to ensure this would not happen again with a qualified Clerk/RFO in post and a group of councillors who know their role and are accountable to the public in all matters.

The following motions were duly proposed, seconded, and **RESOLVED** by a show of hands:

**To issue the response to the external auditor as drafted by the Clerk and reviewed by councillors, confirming that this is the official response from the Council to the resident letter.**

**To delegate authority to the Chairman and Clerk to produce and issue a press statement on the matter, councillors would be sent a copy prior to it going to press.**

**To issue the drafted and circulated social media article for the next edition of**

# NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL

7 Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA
Telephone: 01707 875825


| | |
|---|---|
| | The Chairman asked for any further comments.<br><br>The only comment was on the recording of a meeting where a councillor believed that if you are recording a meeting you should remain on camera as a courtesy if you have asked to record.<br><br>Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7.32pm |

***Meeting closed at 7.32pm***

L Chaplin LCGI PSLCC CPFA CiLCA
Clerk to the Council
Drafted 29/04/2021
Approved at Council 04 May 2021
Reapproved and signed at Full Council 17/06/2021

Signed by Vice-Chairman
Councillor Sue Harden
17/06/2021