**FOULNESS ISLAND PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes** of the virtual meeting of Foulness Island Parish Council held on Wednesday 8th July, 2020, at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors F. Giles, A. Holyland and E. Pitts (Chair).

In attendance: County Councillor M. Steptoe, District Councillor J. McPherson, N. Uden (QinetiQ), J. Watson (Clerk).

**MINUTES**

1. **The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
2. The Chair declared the meeting open
3. **QinetiQ**
4. N. Uden gave a report.
5. **To receive notification from any persons present of intent to record the meeting.**
6. No persons present notified the meeting that they intended to record the proceedings.
7. **To receive apologies for absence.**
8. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bickford.
9. **To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct and with section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**
10. There were no declarations of interest.
11. **To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 13th May, 2020.**
12. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Holyland that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2020 be signed as a correct record. Carried unanimously.
13. **To receive a report from the District and County Councillors for the area on any matters of interest.**
14. Councillor Steptoe gave a brief but succinct report on the work that County were doing to support businesses and people during the Covid-19 pandemic.
15. Councillor McPherson also gave a brief report on the work that District had been doing to support businesses and people during the Covid-19 pandemic. She also referred to help given to people on Foulness.
16. **Financial Matters**
17. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Bank Reconciliation as at 30th June 2020 be approved. Carried unanimously.
18. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Accounts for the quarter to 30th June 2020 be approved. Carried unanimously.
19. Proposed Councillor Giles, seconded Councillor Holyland that the payments made since the last meeting and previously agreed by e-mail be ratified. Carried unanimously.
20. Proposed Councillor Holyland, seconded Councillor Giles that the payment requests for June/July 2020 be approved. Carried unanimously.
21. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Receipts for June/July 2020 be approved. Carried unanimously.
22. **Annual Internal Audit Report**
23. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Holyland that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20 in the Annual Return (Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20) be noted and approved. Carried unanimously. The Clerk was thanked for his work on the accounts during the year.
24. The Internal Audit Report from Auditing Solutions Ltd for the 2019/20 financial year together with the exchange of e-mails between the Auditor and the Clerk were considered and discussed at some length.
25. Whilst Council accepted that the Auditor was entitled to make recommendations they did not accept the recommendations made.
26. They particularly felt that the issue of items being loaded on the website in word format rather than pdf format was a particular idiosyncrasy of the Auditor rather than a legitimate requirement. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Clerk write to the Auditor advising him as such. Carried unanimously.
27. They noted the recommendations regarding Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Council were of the opinion that the Auditor had not interpreted these correctly. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Clerk write to the Auditor advising him as such. Carried unanimously.
28. Additionally, they felt that the narrative under “Budgetary Controls and Reserves” did not take into consideration the unique position regarding the Council in respect of the fluctuating income from the Burial Ground. This had been adequately reflected in the previous year’s Report. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Clerk write to the Auditor advising him as such. Carried unanimously.
29. It was also noted that, initially, the Auditor had issued the incorrect Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20 but did not appear to acknowledge that he had done so. Proposed Councillor Giles, seconded Councillor Pitts that the Clerk write to the Auditor advising him as such. Carried unanimously.
30. Council were particularly concerned about the exchange of e-mails between the Clerk and the Internal Auditor. They were of the opinion that, at best, the Auditor was condescending and, at worst, the Auditor was unprofessional, rude and dictatorial in the extreme. Proposed Councillor Pitts, seconded Councillor Giles that the Clerk write to the Auditor advising him as such. Carried unanimously.
31. **Appointment of Internal Auditor**
32. The appointment of an Internal Auditor for the financial year 2020/2021 was discussed. The general feeling was that Council should appoint a new auditor for the year but it was recognised that such a decision would cause the Clerk some embarrassment as he was employed as a contract auditor by the same audit company. Additionally, Auditing Solutions had provided an excellent service in the past. Proposed Councillor Giles, seconded Councillor Holyland that Auditing Solutions be appointed as Internal Auditors for 2020/2021 on the understanding that a different member of their team be appointed to undertake the audit. Carried unanimously.
33. **Annual External Audit Report**
34. The acknowledgment from PKF Littlejohn regarding the 2019/2020 Certificate of Exemption was noted.

1. **Ditches/Septic Tanks.**
2. The ongoing problem regarding the ditches on the Island and the problem with septic tanks was discussed. It was noted that STS were putting in place a septic tank replacement programme. Further details would be obtained and forwarded to Council.
3. **Google Maps**
4. The complaint received from a parishioner regarding the directions issued by Google Maps re accessing the Island was discussed. Councillor Steptoe commented that there were several issues with Google Maps which were being discussed with them at the present time. It was agreed that the Clerk would send details of this complaint to Councillor Steptoe.
5. **Clerk’s Report**
6. The Clerk reported that BT had started the consultation progress with Rochford District Council regarding the two telephone boxes on the Island that the Council proposed to adopt.
7. **The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Foulness Island to address the Council.**
8. No parishioners were in attendance.
9. **At the Chair’s discretion for Councillors to exchange information on matters relating to the Parish.**
10. No information was exchanged

Issued 11th July 2020