



Dodderhill Parish Council

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held at Dodderhill Parish Community Hall Monday 11th September 2023 at 7.30pm

Members Present: Cllrs S Howarth (Chair), P Evans, J Harrigan, A Joynes (**taking minutes**), A Keane, J Leah, N O'Leary and D Griffin.

Also Present: District Cllr Nicola Morris
Clerk Gwilyn Rippon (locum)
7 Members of the Public

1. **Apologies** were received from Cllrs L Joynes, D Mason, N Edge, R Deller, N Franks and T Miller. Reasons for absence were considered and approved.
2. **Declarations of interest** – Cllrs A Joynes and P Evans agenda items 4a in respect of village hall connection. Cllr Keane was asked to confirm if she was declaring an interest in item 20. Cllr Keane confirmed she didn't have a declared interest and had been advised she could stay in the meeting. The locum Clerk confirmed the legal standing on the matter. No dispensations.

Due to the number of members of public in attendance, the Chairman decided to suspend the standing orders to allow for members of the public to speak.

A member of the public spoke about her connection with item 4b on the agenda relating to a Zoom payment. The member of the public is known to current DPC councillors as an ex DPC Councillor. The member of public (and another member of the public introduced as the ex-councillor's daughter) spoke about their surprise that councillors didn't know about a Zoom payment coming from a personal account of the ex-councillor. The member of the public (daughter of the ex-councillor) made a comment about perjury and asked the council if they were aware that it was a criminal offence. The locum Clerk provided some assistance and advice on the perjury and it only being relevant whilst under oath. Further comments from the same member of public referred to fraud and deception. The Chairman and the ex-councillor provided some further context to the matter. The ex-councillor explained the reasons why she had used her personal banking to pay for the Zoom subscription, despite being against DPC policy and procedure. The reason provided was due to COVID. Cllr O'Leary confirmed no invoice had been received for this payment. Cllr Keane confirmed the invoice will have come into the 'invoices' email account (from Zoom) and then shared by the administration team for sharing with councillors.

A member of public wanted to discuss a matter but acknowledged the agenda was busy and he would be happy to come back at the next meeting. The locum Clerk welcomed the member of the public to also send an email in support of him speaking about it at the next meeting.

A member of the public asked another member of the public if she used to be a DPC councillor. He also wanted to pass on his and other residents congratulations to the council for their work, despite some negativity on the social media.

Scott



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3. Minutes

Cllr Keane commented on the several deferred payments not being on the minutes. The Chairman confirmed she would add a note to the minutes.

It was resolved to approve the Minutes of the last meeting held on 20th June 2023.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

4. Payments:

- a) The Chairman provided some background on the overdue Utility Warehouse bill. The council is trying to get hold of the May and June 2023 bill to try and resolve the matter. Cllr Keane confirmed the Utility Warehouse account has been closed. The Chairman asked Cllr Keane to confirm who closed the account. Cllr Keane confirmed the account is closed when the provider was switched under the instruction of the substantive DPC clerk. The Chairman asked why Cllr Keane why the council wasn't consulted about the change of providers. Cllr Keane advised the council that it is the responsibility for the management committee to change the provider as per the lease agreement. The chairman asked the council if it would be appropriate for this matter to be referred to the finance committee.

It was resolved to refer the matter to the finance committee.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Against								
No Vote						x		

- b) The locum clerk asked the ex-councillor present if she had stopped the payment. The ex-councillor confirmed the payment had been stopped and the bank should be able to get the money back from Zoom. Cllr O'Leary asked the ex-councillor if the payment was likely to be an automated payment. The ex-councillor agreed she believed it was. A member of the public spoke (introduced during the public session as the ex-councillor's daughter) advised the council that she had reported the matter to the fraud team for investigation. The same member of public made a comment about the chairman allegedly smirking at her. The locum Clerk made a point of order and advised the member of public that we have started the meeting again. Cllr Keane raised a point of order that if this matter is deferred to the finance committee it wouldn't come back to the committee until the next meeting. The chairman was advised by the locum clerk to delegate the matter to the finance committee.

It was resolved to delegate authority to the finance committee.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

Scott



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c) The chairman spoke about any other payments listed for this meeting. Cllr O’Leary noted she had difficulty accessing the Scribe account. Cllrs Leah and Harrigan checked on 10th September 2023 and didn’t see anything new outstanding. Cllr Keane raised a point that the finance committee terms of reference didn’t allow the committee to approve payments and it needs to be clear which payments should be paid. Cllr Keane provided some examples of regular payments. Cllr Evans provided a short statement on the finance committee, and it is about to have its first meeting, 4 months into the new council. Cllr Evans also spoke about how the transition from the previous council to the new council with access to information, in a smooth manner hasn’t been achieved. The locum clerk was required to speak to a member of the public for speaking to Cllr Evans. Cllr Keane asked Cllr Evans if the meeting was still going ahead on 13th September at 6pm. Cllr Evans stated he would advise accordingly on 12th September. Cllr Keane also raised a point that one item was for a padlock which was paid for by the chairman. The chairman confirmed she didn’t mind waiting for payment.

It was resolved to delegate authority to the finance committee to pay only regular payments that occur every month.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

5. The chairman confirmed that the council has to restart the public period for inspection of DPC accounts as the council wasn’t able to produce all the accounts asked for the two members of the public that requested them. The period required is 28 days and the members of the public to contact either the chairman or administrator.

It was resolved to restart the public inspection for the period 2nd October to 27th October 2023.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

Cllr Keane asked is dealing with the charge back if we are producing paper at 10p a sheet. The chairman confirmed there wouldn’t be a charge back for printing and that the chairman and other councillors are happy to print the accounts for the members of the public.

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6. Terms of Reference for Committees:

The chairman has received advice about strengthening the terms of reference. Cllr Keane spoke about not having sight of a special motion for each ToR. The locum clerk confirmed it doesn't need a special motion for each and that the '6-month rule' doesn't apply as there is new information. The chairman apologised if Cllr Keane hadn't received the details of the special motion – she did believe all councillors had been sent the information.

a.) It was resolved to approve the amended ToR for the Finance Committee.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Against								
No Vote						X		

b.) It was resolved to approve the amended ToR for the IT Committee.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Against								
No Vote						X		

c.) It was resolved to approve the amended ToR for the Staffing Committee.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Against								
No Vote						X		

7. The chairman confirmed an internal review policy had been sent by our current data protection officer, although it wasn't suitable for a parish council such as DPC. It wasn't appropriate for a small council. Cllr Keane ask for the chairman to explain why. The chairman confirmed there was no legislation requiring the policy, although it is recommended, and it is required to be confirmed if a FOI is made. Cllr Keane asked if we have any current cases. The chairman confirmed it was a good question and the answer is we don't know due to the difficulties making contact with our current DPO.

It was resolved to write and adopt an internal review policy at a future meeting.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Against						X		
No Vote								

Scott

Cllr Keane explained her reasons for voting against.



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8. The chairman provided some context about the service, including the monthly costs and additional costs per hour. The chairman confirmed the DPO is difficult to get hold of and has provided advice which conflicts with the workings of a council. Cllr O’Leary spoke about how expensive the company was. Cllr Keane asked if there was a contract clause. The chairman confirmed 40 days. Cllr Evans spoke about the need to review all contracts when a new council is in place. Cllr O’Leary stated there wasn’t anything in the budget for a DPO.

It was resolved to terminate the services of Hexad (DPO) as per the 40 days’ notice period.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For		x	x	x	x		x	x
Against						x		
No Vote	x							

9. The chairman outlined the role of the external person/body. Cllr Keane raised a point of order about the options provided and if that was the locum clerk. The locum clerk announced he would leave the room. Cllr Keane asked if the locum clerk who was taking notes if he was out of the room. The locum clerk advised about his role in the meeting and that he had delegated the note taking to a councillor due the need for him to provide advice. The locum clerk left the room. The chairman advised that Worcestershire CALC sent in three individuals. Three individuals replied, two of which replied at 1700hrs and 1800hrs respectively. It was noted Mr Rippon was the only one who replied straightaway. All documents and quotes were uploaded on SharePoint. The options would include take time to read through the three candidates or we vote someone in today. The chairman noted we don’t have a functioning clerk or DPO and the council needs someone to start work urgently. The chairman asked councillors for their views. Cllr Keane disagreed with the proposal and that it should be put off. Cllr Keane stated we need consultation for changing processes. Cllr Leah began to discuss his thoughts and was interrupted by Cllr Keane asking if the public should leave as councillors wouldn’t be able to speak freely. The chairman felt it wasn’t necessary for the public to leave. There would be no discussions in relation to HR and it was public interest. Cllr Leah spoke about the need to have a non-bias individual and lesson that need to be learnt from the past. Cllr Evans spoke about the importance of having proper, qualified advice to deliver what the electorate want – with greater transparency. Cllr Harrigan asked for confirmation on costs. The chairman confirmed despite costing money, it would save the council money in the long term. Cllr Keane spoke about being unhappy with the decision and that a formal job description wasn’t in place and that the finance committee hadn’t confirmed if there were sufficient funds to pay for an external individual/body. Cllr Evans confirmed the finance committee hadn’t met yet for the reasons that all councillors are aware of. Cllr Evans also noted (and wished to be formally noted in the minutes) the difficulty accessing information about the finance committee from the previous council. The chairman offered a compromise in that the council offer a temporary contract rather than committing to anything long-term. Cllr Joynes noted his thoughts about risk verses benefit and that nothing about this felt comfortable, however, noting the council wasn’t functioning appropriately.

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Cllr O’Leary noted the council didn’t have a budget for a DPO.

It was resolved to consider the employment of an external person.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Against								
No Vote						x		

The chairman provided the details of each of the three candidates, and it was it was resolved to offer Mr G Rippon a 6 month contact to support DPC.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Against								
No Vote						x		

10. The administrator for Scribe has asked the chairman who is the main contact. RFO will pass details onto Scribe and confirmed it was in the ToR for the finance committee. Cllr O’Leary wanted to confirm that all councillors had read only access for Scribe. Cllr Keane spoke about not sharing personal details. The locum clerk confirmed all councillors should have sight of all invoices from anyone who has provided a service. The locum clerk also asked the name (from Cllr Keane) of the ICO and he will speak to them personally. Cllr O’Leary spoke about not having access to invoices previously.
11. Cllr Joynes provided some background regarding the current IT support provision. Cllr Joynes confirmed we are currently out of contract. It was raised in the May 2023 meeting but was deferred. Rather than fixing into a long-term contract, the provider (John Finch Computers) has offered the council a 30-day rolling contract at £25+VAT per month. Cllr Joynes outlined three options as per his briefing paper:
 1. To do nothing, which is not a viable option.
 2. 30-day rolling contract
 3. Wait for the IT committee to meet to discuss a more permanent contract.

It was resolved to approve a rolling contract of 30 days until a more permanent solution is available.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO’L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

Scott



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12. The chairman suggested it might be useful to consider a rota and would be responsible to only stating facts. If there was a Q&A session councillors would bring back those questions. Cllr Keane raised her concerns about councillors being put on the spot and potentially answering a question they couldn't answer. Cllr Evans spoke being in favour of transparency and councillors should be able to attend. The locum clerk provided advice to councillors.

It was resolved for two councillors to attend Residents Association Meetings to provide a brief report and be involved in a Q&A session.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

The next meeting of the Residents Association Meeting is 3rd October – 18:45 at the Sports and Social Club. Both Cllr Leah and the chairman will attend the next meeting.

13. The chairman spoke about the two unexpected elections – not budgeted for and suggested saving money where we could. The suggestion was to print the poll cards ourselves and deliver by volunteers. The chairman confirmed the election officer would help with the wording of the poll cards. Cllr Leah asked if we knew how many people were standing. The chairman confirmed the first election had two candidates.

It was resolved to print the polling cards internally and hand deliver the cards.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Against						x		
No Vote								

14. The chairman confirmed the Postman advised there is no name or post-box for DPC. Cllr Keane confirmed she empties the post-box every day and there is very little mail for DPC. The chairman stated that we do have a postal address so we should have a secure and robust post-box.

It was resolved to purchase and install a post-box specially for Dodderhill Parish Council – adjacent to the village hall post-box, appropriately labelled.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

Scott



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15. The chairman confirmed all recording devices were personal ones. The locum clerk suggested about a device called an 'Owl'. Cllr Keane confirmed the device is £1000 and doesn't work well in the large hall due to echo. Cllr Joynes suggested just a simple handheld device for now until such time we have a more permanent solution.

It was resolved to purchase a recording device at no more than £60.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

16. The chairman confirmed this item was already delegated to the IT committee as per the ToR. No vote required.

17. The chairman provided some background to this issue. The chairman admitted this may be her fault as she politely asked the lengthsman to stop using glyphosates, but regrettably this has meant the weeds have taken over.

It was resolved to ask the lengthsman to use glyphosates on the current weeks going forward.

	PE	DG	JH	SH	AJ	AK	JL	NO'L
For	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Against								
No Vote								

18. It was resolved to enter into confidential discussions due to the sensitive nature. (Public bodies ACT 1960) and therefore the public were asked to leave the meeting.

19. Meeting closed at 9.48 pm (Councillors voted to extend the meeting by 15 minutes twice)

Amended Terms of Reference (Item 6 above)

Date approved by DPC: 11 September 2023

Date of review: 30 September 2025 at the latest

DODDERHILL PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

The Finance Committee will be made up of four members of the Council appointed by the full Council. The Committee will elect a Chair. The Parish Council Chair and Vice-Chair will be ex-officio members of the Finance Committee unless they are members of the committee.

Scott



Dodderhill Parish Council

Quorum

Three members will constitute the minimum number required for a meeting to proceed.

Meetings

The Committee will meet at least once every quarter or as required, and in compliance with Standing Order 3 (Meetings Generally).

Delegated responsibilities

- a) To collaborate with the RFO in their preparation of (i) and (ii) below:
- i) a detailed budget for its approval by Council;
 - ii) the annual precept to be levied for the Parish.

This will involve consultation with the Chairs of the Committees of the Council, the Chair of the Council and the Parish Clerk

- b) In conjunction with the RFO, to monitor income and expenditure and ensure that the Council receives reports at the end of each quarter on the progress of actual income and expenditure compared with budget.
- c) To draw up and periodically review a procedure for the making of grants and donations and to consider and make decisions on such requests made to the Council, in accordance with that policy.
- d) To assign 2 members of its committee to carry out quarterly accounting checks on a rota basis to be compliant with the Financial Regulations and Internal Control Policy.
- e) To conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit and Internal Control procedures, to be compliant with the Financial Regulations and Internal Control Policy.
- f) To review the Council's Financial Regulations and Financial Risk Assessment annually, in collaboration with the RFO and to take back any recommendations for change to full council for approval.
- g) The named members of the Finance Committee and the RFO and/or Clerk to be the main contacts with Scribe Accounts. Liaising with the Chair of the Council, read-only access to Scribe Accounts to be arranged for new and existing councillors. Access levels to be reviewed on a needs basis.
- h) To ensure that appropriate records are kept of all assets and that they are adequately controlled and maintained.
- i) The Committee may delegate any of its functions to an officer of the Council, as and when required.

Date ToR accepted by DPC: 11 September 2023

Review date for ToR: 30 September 2025 at the latest

DODDERHILL PARISH COUNCIL - IT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

The IT Committee will be made up of four members of the Council appointed by the full Council. The Committee will elect a Chair. The Parish Council Chair will be an ex-officio member of the IT Committee.

Quorum

Three members will constitute the minimum number required for a meeting to proceed-

Meetings

Scott



Dodderhill Parish Council

The Committee will meet at least once every quarter or as required, and in compliance with Standing Order 3 (Meetings Generally).

Delegated responsibilities

- a) To consider and implement any matters with regard to the provision, management and use of information and communication technology and CCTV provided for or used by Dodderhill Parish council, within budget constraints of £500. Any higher expenditure to be brought back to full council for approval.
- b) To review the computer firm providing councillors' emails and other support services (currently John Finch Computers) on a regular basis to ensure effective use of funds for any subscription services.
- c) To decide who should be the main contact/s for John Finch Computers or other computer firm should they be replaced by another firm.
- d) To advise councillors and staff on information technology matters when requested or when appropriate.
- e) To periodically review the IT and CCTV Hardware and Software owned and used by the Parish Council and ensure that it is up to date, whether it needs upgrading or replacing using a budget of up to £500. Any higher expenditure to be brought back to full council for approval.
- f) To carry out IT & CCTV security reviews and action anything necessary up to a budget of £500. Bring to the attention of the full Parish Council any identified risks including those of data breaches.
- g) To consider and take action on the Parish Council's online presence including the Parish Council website, Facebook page and any other online presence. To decide who should monitor, maintain and update these.
- h) To consider and make recommendations on the Parish Council's social media and CCTV policies, including ensuring that these are reviewed on a regular basis and provide input into the reviews.
- i) To ensure that appropriate records are kept of all IT related assets and that the assets are adequately controlled and maintained. Items include the laptop owned by the Parish Council and the microphone/speaker.
- j) To consider the use and renewal of any online accounts e.g. Zoom or similar including who should have access to these. To hold passwords for such accounts.
- k) The Committee may delegate any of its functions to an officer of the Council, as and when required.

Date approved by DPC: 11 September 2023

Date of review: 30 September 2025 latest

DODDERHILL PARISH COUNCIL STAFFING COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

The Staffing Committee will be made up of four members of the Council appointed by the full Council. The Committee will elect a Chair. The Chair of the Council will not chair this committee.

Quorum

Scott



Dodderhill Parish Council

Three members will constitute the minimum number required for a meeting to proceed-

Meetings

The Committee will meet at least once every quarter or as required, and in compliance with Standing Order 3 (Meetings Generally) unless confidential matters are to be discussed.

Delegated responsibilities

- a) To progress staff recruitment when required;
- b) To oversee individual contracts of employment and confirm terms and conditions for new employees;
- c) To arrange for the regular review of the Clerk's performance by one member of the committee as agreed by the Clerk;
- d) To arrange for the regular review of other staff line-managed by the Clerk, if any;
- e) To report the National Association of Local Councils annual salary awards, if applicable
- f) To consider any matters arising in response to the council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure and act appropriately;
- g) To appoint an Appeals Panel and its Chair, when required by the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure. If a grievance has been raised against a council member, that member will be excluded from membership of both the Staffing Committee and the Appeals Panel.
- h) To clarify the Terms of Reference for the Appeals Panel, which will include the requirement that all recommendations are directed in the first instance to the Staffing Committee;
- i) To consider recommendations from the Appeals Panel and act accordingly;
- j) To alter these Terms of Reference if there are insufficient 'untainted' members to form an Appeals Panel;
- k) To review all policy issues relating to staff at least every two years.

Staffing Committee members are reminded of:

1. The legal framework that exists for good practice in employment matters;
2. The confidential nature of employer / employee matters and that items for consideration may require the committee to resolve to exclude the press and public from the meeting;
3. The nationally negotiated (NALC and ALCC) model contracts and terms and conditions for the employment of the Clerk, adherence to which Dodderhill Parish Council has agreed;
4. The Member-Officer Protocol, available as a policy document; and other related staffing policies.
5. The Council Chair or Vice Chair is the Clerk's 'line manager' and the Clerk manages all other staff, if any.

Budget requirements

The Staffing Committee will not be required to establish a budget but will be expected to manage the financial costs involved when recruiting new staff. Funds for this will be agreed and made available by resolution of the full council

28 Sept 2023