

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL (Draft Subject to Adoption)

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
ON THURSDAY 26 MAY 2011 AT 8.00pm

Present: Cllr Bennett in the Chair David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Amanda Taft – Minute Taker

Cllrs Baldwin, Brand, Dann, Isard-Brown, Jordan, Martin, Ridley, Seeley, Shafe and Vane

Voting Members: 11

Public: 14

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting.

CC917/11/S Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Brading, Edmunds, Getkahn and Wynne-Jones.

CC918/11/S Declarations of Interest by Members

The Chairman recommended that any declarations of interest be made throughout the meeting as necessary.

CC919/11/S Representations from the Public

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk advised that representations are limited to three minutes per person up to a maximum total time of 10 minutes or longer at the discretion of the Chairman.

Representations were made by four members of the public. The first resident stated:

“I have read all the 39 agenda items and made notes against each item, thus leading me to the following conclusions:

The cost of implementing many of the information searches could run into hundreds of pounds and take an innumerable amount of time. The existing staff would not be able to carry out their normal daily functions. I consider these items to be superfluous to the Parish Council and serve no useful purpose to the local residents.

As an alternative, the Council could employ an outside agency to research all matters and come back to the Council with their recommendations. The possible time for this could be 4-6 months with costs of around £10,000 - £12,000. Or employ extra administrative staff with cost to Council.”

The second member of public then spoke:

“Councillors, I am disappointed but not surprised by the calling of this extraordinary meeting by Councillor Ridley. He was, as some of you may be aware, the Council’s only vexatious complainant, prior to him rejoining the Parish Council and it would appear to me that he wishes to continue his vitriolic campaign against the Council, now he sits amongst you.

Councillor Ridley, this is not what we want from a Councillor who represents our ward. Let me repeat that for you. This is not what we want from a Councillor who represents our ward.

We want **you** to get involved with schemes to keep Croxley a great place to live in and to enhance its reputation as a family friendly, tolerant, and cohesive community. We want **you** to get involved with the British Waterways Adopter Scheme, we want **you** to get involved with the scheme you charged the Council tax payers of Croxley Green £10,000 the last time you sat on the Council, that being the kick wall in Barton

Way playing fields. We want **you** to get involved with the Community Led Plan. We want **you** to start supporting the people in the many groups, clubs and societies that give up their time for the good of the Community. We want **you** to volunteer your time and energy in promoting the Parish Council within the Community. We want **you** to stop wasting your fellow Councillors' time and start supporting their schemes and ideas to enhance Croxley Green even if **you** have no idea of what you want to do to make Croxley a better place to live in. We want **you** to stop living in the past, stop acting like a spoiled child and start acting like a Parish Councillor.

In providing the second signature on the notice to call this extraordinary meeting, Councillor Ridley has asked the one Councillor here to have been convicted of benefit fraud. That means he is guilty of either defrauding or misusing tax payers money." [An objection was raised by Cllr Brand who interrupted the resident's representations]. The resident continued: "By allowing this paper to go any further forward you could be providing him with another opportunity of doing so, that being in wasting the time and salary of the tax payer funded Clerk to the Council.

Councillors, I am sure that you did not join the Council to look into many of these matters. I believe you joined the Council to try and make Croxley Green better for everyone who lives, works or visits here. We ask that you treat this paper as a whole with the contempt it deserves, consign it to the bin of vexatiousness and go forward with your schemes and ideas for Croxley. Thank you."

The third member of public congratulated Cllr Ridley and stated that he had had numerous meetings with the Clerk and had never received a satisfactory response.

[Post meeting note from the Clerk: The then Chairman and I had one meeting with this gentleman on 13 March 2008 (see comment below), it is unfortunate he was not happy with the response.]

The fourth member of public asked the Clerk to write to him regarding the Capital Programme of money requested from Three Rivers District Council. The Clerk was also asked if the issues raised by the accountants in 2009 had been resolved.

[Post meeting note from the Clerk: For the benefit of those who are unaware, this representation refers to Audit matters in 2008/2009. Had the resident checked our web site for our Accounts for 2010, he would have seen that the Audit Commission's appointed External Auditor gave us a clean bill of health; a 'clean audit' so his attempt at undermining the Council was ill-founded. He, and his friend, had been afforded a meeting with both the then Chairman and myself to discuss their issues; the fact that he may not have liked the answers is a matter for him to address.]

CC920/11/S

Request for Extraordinary Meeting by Cllrs Brand and Ridley under Standing Order 6(d) – Chairman to call such a meeting

The Chairman explained for the benefit of the public and Cllrs (both re-elected and new) that an Extraordinary Meeting is called for matters of a time sensitive nature, ie for urgent items that cannot wait until the next meeting. The Chairman added that none of the 39 items had been discussed with the Chairman or Clerk prior to being handed to him immediately after the Annual General Meeting.

The Chairman added that The Good Councillor's Guide which had been included in the welcome pack explained the importance of Cllrs being fully aware of the matters to be discussed before the meeting in order that they can undertake their own research and make informed decisions. The Chairman added that Cllrs were welcome to come to the office to discuss matters although the office resources are as much a resource as the money collected through the precept.

Cllr Dann stated that he had asked the Clerk for an estimate for the cost of investigating the matters for which the Extraordinary Meeting had been called and the Clerk had estimated it to be 296 hours and a cost of £5,695. Cllr Dann added that this money would be money not spent on Croxley Green.

Cllr Seeley believed that the purpose of this meeting was unfortunate for new Cllrs and she believed they would not wish to troll back 5 – 11 years on matters in the past. Instead, she felt that if any new Cllrs had an interest in any of the points raised they could come in to the office and look at appropriate information. Cllr Seeley added that the office was still receiving frequent emails and telephone calls from Cllr Ridley and his vexatious behaviour continues. Cllr Seeley further added that she believed most of the items to be ridiculous and although some were worthy of consideration, she did not want to go over past matters.

Cllr Jordan was surprised at the Clerk's estimation of time and cost, believing £5,695 to be an underestimation although the cost of time was possibly the most precious. Cllr Jordan also considered that to ask for information that would not be held under the Freedom of Information would be a waste of not only our Clerk's time but that of the other Clerks' time. Cllr Jordan added that she was very disappointed at this in her first week of being a Cllr.

The Chairman asked Cllr Ridley why he had felt the need to call an Extraordinary Meeting and Cllr Ridley replied that he wanted to bring all new Cllrs up to speed. He believed that contracts should have been included in the new Cllr welcome packs. Cllr Jordan stated that she would expect these matters to naturally arise as they fall due. The Chairman failed to see that this was a matter of urgency warranting an Extraordinary meeting. He concluded that the 39 items do not advise Cllrs of what was to be discussed and what was proposed so therefore how could they prepare?

Cllr Martin proposed that Cllr Ridley and Cllr Brand take back their 39 items and look at them again and if necessary put them forward to the appropriate Committee in the appropriate, formal format. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Shafe. Cllr Ridley asked for a recorded vote;

Cllrs Baldwin, Bennett, Dann, Isard-Brown, Jordan, Martin, Seeley and Shafe voted for the proposal.

Cllrs Brand and Ridley voted against the proposal.

Cllr Vane abstained.

Resolved:

- that Cllr Ridley and Cllr Brand take back their 39 items and look at them again and if necessary put them forward to the appropriate Committee in the appropriate, formal format.

CC921/11/S

Closure

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.24pm.