

# ASHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF CLOSED MEETING

Thursday July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 – by Zoom – 7.30pm

### **Attendance**

Cllrs Phil Hughes (chair), Vaughan Lawson (deputy chair), Geoff Holder, Jane Bosley, Sarah Sampson, Mike Moss, Dale Hall (minutes secretary).

County Cllr Andrea Davies had received an invitation in error, but it was rescinded.

### **Apologies**

There were none.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **Status of the Meeting**

This is not a meeting in public and the proceedings and minutes are confidential.

## **1. Agenda: To Review the Situation with the Clerk**

- 1.1 The Chair noted that the single-item agenda covered several related issues, including (but not necessarily limited to):

Clerk's conduct with respect to her remuneration and other matters

Report of the Informal meeting of the Chair and Deputy Chair with the Clerk on 18/6

Advice received from DALC on 8/7

Clerk's resignation letter on 16/7

Chair's reply by letter on 16/7 – offering a discussion and a “second thoughts” period of seven days

Clerk's statement to the Closed Meeting received on 23/7.

Discussion and proposals.

## **2. Discussion**

- 2.1 There was a detailed discussion in which many views were expressed. The discussion focused on whether, based on this meeting alone, a fairly bland and general letter should be issued to the Clerk “to do better in future” without any formal action at this stage OR whether a more formal written warning was appropriate, which would require a disciplinary meeting.
- 2.2 The options arising from a disciplinary meeting were also discussed – ranging from a finding of “no further action needed” to “minor misconduct” to “serious misconduct” to “gross misconduct”. No one favoured the “gross misconduct” route. There was general agreement that the Clerk's “standards had fallen” and that there was an issue of trust about her handling of financial matters, and whether she had given the APC properly “informed advice” and always had its best interests at heart; it was pointed out that her offer to reduce her hours from 15 to ten per month was belated and would not have happened without the current circumstances.

### **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 Following the reports and a full discussion of the issues, the Council considered and voted on the following proposal:

**To invite the Clerk to a Disciplinary Meeting to review her conduct of financial affairs and any other relevant matters** – proposed by Mike Moss and seconded by Dale Hall.

**This proposal was passed unanimously / by a majority of X to Y PLEASE ADVISE FOR THE RECORD.**

Arising from the decision above, it was also agreed that:

The Chair and Deputy Chair will form the Disciplinary Committee with Dale Hall as a silent Note Taker.

The Clerk will be given sufficient notice of the meeting and she may be accompanied by a Companion of her choice (whom she may consult for advice but who may not normally speak for her)

For the time being, no further action will be taken in respect of the Clerk's precipitate resignation: the APC will not terminate her employment at the expiry of the seven days' thinking time.

### **4. Any Other Business**

- 4.1 There were no other matters.

### **5. Closure**

- 5.1 The meeting closed at 8.15pm