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PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING

18 March 2013 – 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor T Wainwright (in the Chair); Councillors Jeal, B Walker, Pettit, Williamson and Linden.

Jane Ratcliffe (Chief Executive), Seb Duncan (Director of Resources, Governance and Growth), Dean Minns (Group Manager – Planning) and Mrs K Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

Margaret Greenacre and John Rudrum (Belton Parish Council), Trevor Greenacre (Burgh Castle Parish Council), Linda M Clarke and Alan Mendum (Fritton with St Olaves Parish Council), Peter Woolston and Ted Howlett (Bradwell Parish Council), Trevor Jones, Richard Starline and Diana Crane (Somerton Parish Council), Peter Parker, David Coe and Tom Andrews (Caister Parish Council), John Ledbetter (Ormesby with Scratby Parish Council) and Lenny Gent (Hopton Parish Council).

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2013 were agreed.

2. BUDGET 2013/14

The Director of Resources, Governance and Growth reported that Great Yarmouth Borough Council had set their budget and had frozen Council Tax. He reported there was a shortfall of £3m in February 2012 and that they were now working to close the gap as they had lost 22% of their funding. He reported they had looked at voluntary departures and over 40 members of staff had left and this had saved the Council over £741,000. They had also looked at other areas of saving such as:-

- Refurbishing the Town Hall building with a hope of securing functions and weddings as an income.
- Renegotiated their contract with GYB Services.
- Disposal of Trafalgar House and the Old Fire Station to Saffron Housing, this would then save maintenance costs and the upkeep.

It was reported that although they had secured some savings, they had growth items such as staff pay as they had not had an increase for three years along higher pension costs. He reported they had applied for an efficiency grant which would be worth £1.8m.

A Member of Caister Parish Council asked why the Council had sold the two buildings for 50 pence each and could they not have achieved more. The Leader reported that the buildings were costing Great Yarmouth Borough Council £130,000 per year to maintain and so this would be saved and that the Housing Association were investing in over £2m in the buildings and Great Yarmouth Borough Council would be involved in the allocation of the properties which would include 29 flats. A Member asked where people would park as parking facilities were not being offered with the flats. Dean Minns reported that Developments for Town Centres do not necessarily have to provide parking spaces as this is about a sustainable development in Sustainable locations and as the flats are in the Town Centre, near bus routes and a train station, they would not have to provide this.

A Member of Caister Parish Council stated they had heard rumours that Great Yarmouth Borough Council was looking to implement more parking permit zones around the Town Centre. Councillor Jeal reported that the Council was looking at Zone A and amending this and if this is successful they would then be looking to a Zone B.

A Parish Council Member asked if people from outside the Borough would be able to apply for any of the flats, it was reported they would not be able to do this as they would need to be on the current housing list.

A Parish Council Member asked if Great Yarmouth Borough Council currently has any reserves. The Leader reported that Great Yarmouth Borough Council currently has £5m preserves and that the legal requirement is £2m. A Caister Parish Council Member asked if the funding that Great Yarmouth Borough Council receives from the £1.8m efficiency grant, would this be spent across the whole Borough. It was reported that yes this would be spent across the Borough as this would be put into the Council's core funding pot and would be used to provide their services. A Parish Council Member asked if the flat business rate would be coming to the Borough. Seb reported that some of the business rates come to the Borough but the majority of the business rates is paid back to Central Government. A Parish Council Member stated they had heard that Great Yarmouth Borough Council was selling off Beacon Park and asked how much of this Great Yarmouth Borough Council would be retaining. The Director of Resources, Governance and Growth reported that eventually Great Yarmouth Borough Council would like to sell off all of Beacon Park.

3. COUNCIL RESTRUCTURE

Councillor Williamson reported that part of his role when he came in post back in May was to look at the Council's structure. He reported that in May when the Labour Party took control of Great Yarmouth Borough Council they took a decision to stop the shared service plan which would only save £145,000. Their new plan would initially save £72,000 but they had reduced over £300,000 from senior management roles. They now had three Director posts instead of seven Head of Department posts. They now have 12 Group Managers instead of 24 Service Unit Managers, each new Group Manager would now be looking to restructure their departments. Over the next two years the restructuring of these departments would achieve more efficiency savings. They had also looked at their IT programme and would now be looking to use iPads which would then enable less printing and postage costs.

4. LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PARISH PRECEPTS

The Director of Resources, Governance and Growth reported that DWP would be giving 100% of the Council Tax Benefit to the Council and that some residents would now be

required to pay a percentage of their Council Tax. The Director then gave an example of how this would work for the Parish Councils. He reported that the grant the Parish Councils would receive would put the Parish Councils in the same position they would have been if no changes were made. He reported that the Council Tax Base is set in December in each year, however, the Council needs to set their Council budget in February and would now require each Parish Council to submit their figures by January each year. A representative from Caister Parish Council suggested that the Council should train Parish Councils in educating them in saving money. A representative from the Parish Council stated that if the Council uses claw back on the Parish Councils they would lose goodwill because the representative currently runs a playing field and has not received any compensation recompense for this for a number of years. The Leader stated that Great Yarmouth Borough Council would try not to claw back any money but they would have to look at this.

A representative from one of the Parish Councils stated that the Council was going across the Borough and putting in new street lamps and that this was expensive just for energy efficient light bulbs to be installed. It was reported this was being carried out by Norfolk County Council and not Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Councillor Jeal asked for clarification from the Parish Councils if turning off the street lights was having any detrimental affect to the villages. Belton Parish Council stated that the Police had welcomed this as it was easier for them to find criminals in the dark because they would be using a torch. Councillor Jeal confirmed that the Parish Councils were then happy with the lights being turned off and this was confirmed.

5. INTRODUCTION OF DOG CONTROL ORDERS

It was reported that Bradwell Parish Council had raised this item, however, the Officer was unable to attend. Belton, Bradwell and Winterton stated they had received their forms to apply for these areas. Councillor Pettit stated that if she reports any areas of concerns across the Borough the Wardens and Rangers carry out patrols in these areas. Bradwell Parish Council reported they have their own dog warden.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Caister Parish Council - Bloor's Development, West Road, Caister

Caister Parish Council submitted the following question asking if the Borough Council would continue in their endeavours to achieve the required outcome concerning the problems with Bloor's Development on West Road, Caister regarding the much needed playing field land due to be handed over now the target number of houses had been built on the West Road site. At present, the state of the land in question is not up to standard agreed upon by both Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Norfolk County Council and had been rejected as unacceptable although some work has apparently been carried out on the site. After close inspection it is apparent that a great deal of dangerous debris is either on or just below the surface making it unfit for sporting activities. The Group Manager for Planning reported that the land should have been handed over when the trigger of 100 houses had been met. He reported that drainage had been installed under the site and that this was to the standard of Norfolk County Council. He stated there was nothing in the conditions about the condition of the land in the Section 106 Agreement which was agreed in the 1990's. He reported that the land owner had stated that he thought everything was Ok, however, the developer had stated that the land owner needed to agree the fencing between the site and agricultural land then this would be progressed. It was reported the land had been raised by 1.3 metres before they could build the houses, however, when they filled the site they had filled the pit with

rubbish and housing rubble so this now still floods. It was reported that in conjunction with Simon Mutton, Environmental Services, had agreed certain courses of action with the Developer regarding the open space land but these were limited by the terms of the Section 106 Agreement. The Group Manager for Planning asked if any Parish Councils had any further questions to contact him directly.

(b) Agenda Item for Next Meeting

Scratby Parish Council asked if an item could be put on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss the ramp at the bottom towards the beach as Scratby Parish Council had installed steps to the beach but this did not enable disabled people to get to the beach and under the 2004 Disability Act the Borough Council has a responsibility to allow all disabled people access to public services.

RESOLVED:

That this would be an agenda item at the next meeting.

(c) Flytipping

Somerton Parish Council wished to express its thanks to Great Yarmouth Borough Council for its prompt action in helping with flytipping problems, however, they expressed concern at the Broads Authority who they felt should be taking part and clearing up the rubbish as part of their area was in the Broads. Councillor Jeal stated that he would be meeting with them within the next couple of days and would discuss this issue with them. However, it was confirmed that Great Yarmouth Borough Council would look at all flytipping and would be looking to prosecute people for this.

(d) Agendas

The Chairman asked if the Parish Councils were happy not to receive hard copies of DC and Council agendas as these are on the Council website and the Parish Councils raised no objections.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed the next meeting would be held in October 2013 and details of this would be forwarded to all Parish Councils in the near future.

8. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.