

**PLAISTOW AND IFOLD PARISH COUNCIL
CLERK'S REPORT
FOR MEETING ON TUESDAY 16th MARCH 2010**

4. Declarations of Interest by Members

Members may make any Declarations (personal or prejudicial) at this point of the meeting but they must, in any event, be declared before commencement of discussion of the relevant agenda item.

6. Finance

(a) Accounts for payment

A schedule of accounts for payment from 12TH January 2010 to 16th March 2010, also detailing monies received, will be available at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to approve payment of the accounts

(b) First Responders

7. Quality Status

Members are asked to note that this item is included on the agenda, following discussions between the Clerk and the Chairman.

The issue was last discussed by the Parish Council at the July 2009 meeting, where it was resolved that re-accreditation be pursued in May 2010.

Background

The Quality Status scheme was launched in 2003 with the aim to provide benchmark minimum standards for Parish and Town Councils. The Parish Council was awarded Quality Status on 4th May 2006 and re-accreditation is due in May 2010.

As previously reported, in order to achieve Quality Status, Parish and Town Councils must demonstrate, by way of a portfolio of evidence, that they have reached the standard required by passing several tests. These are –

Electoral Mandate
Qualifications of the Clerk
Council meetings
Communication and Community Engagement
Annual Report
Accounts
Code of Conduct

Promoting Local Democracy and Citizenship
Terms and Conditions
Training

The format of each section is, in the main, similar to the original application form. There are three new sections – (a) Promoting Local Democracy and Citizenship; (b) Terms and Conditions; and (c) Training.

Since the Clerk's Report in July 2009, there has been no further mention of 'Quality Status' from either SALC or the Government. The much talked about additional funding for Quality Councils has not materialised and in view of the current climate, would seem unlikely to be made so.

The taking on of additional roles and responsibilities by Quality Councils has also not materialised; and it could be that this is because of the County and District Councils not embracing the Scheme, as originally envisaged; but also because these authorities now have more pressing issues to consider.

This Parish Council is the only Council in the area to be a Quality Council and it has not, therefore, been possible to form a 'cluster Quality Council group' as has happened in Mid-Sussex in respect of, for example, minor highway works. The advent of the South Downs National Park will also have an impact on the three other 'corner' Parish Councils in West Sussex; and the other small Parish Councils bordering the National Park, none of whom are Quality Councils.

A conversation took place not long ago during which the question was posed as to the validity of re-accreditation. The response was that having Quality Status showed the electorate that a 'bench mark' had been attained; that the Parish Council was properly managed; and that the Parish Council's stationery would have to be changed.

This Parish Council has worked extremely hard over the years to provide the services and facilities that it does, especially for a small rural Parish Council. There are good and well-established links between the Council and the local and extended community, both with individuals and groups and organisations. The Council has an established grant system in place which enables local groups to grow and provide further valuable services to the community. These factors, together with the experience of both the Members and the Clerk, all measure up to the standards for Quality Status, without actually having the Certificate; and gives confidence to the local community, which is the core principle of the Scheme.

The previously reported financial impact on the Parish Council has not changed since July 2009. Indeed, Members commented that they considered that a Newsletter and Web Site would have been in place,

even if the original Quality Status application had not been made (Minute C/039/09 refers)

RECOMMENDATION

That the question of re-accreditation for Quality Status is re-assessed

8. Highway Issues

Members are reminded that at the last Council meeting, Members were invited to bring to this meeting specific details and locations of highway issues, resulting from the bad weather in January.

10. Planning

Members are asked to note that due to the fact that only two planning applications had been received following the 17th February 2010 Committee meeting, the meeting on 10th March was cancelled. The two applications are for discussion at this meeting.

Members will find enclosed the usual Schedule of Planning Decisions.

11. Parish Web Site Working Group

Councillor Wheeler will give an oral Report on the matters discussed at the Working Group meeting on 2nd March 2010.

12. Parish Council Newsletter delivery

The Council Chairman has requested that this item be placed on the agenda to enable Members to bring ideas for future delivery options to the May Council meeting

13. Annual Meeting of Electors of the Parish

This statutory meeting will be held on Tuesday 20th April 2010 at 7.30pm at Kelsey Hall, Ifold.

The speaker for the evening is Dr and has been arranged by Councillor Wheeler.

Would Members wish to have the traditional refreshments provided?

14. Situation Report on previously reported matters

(a) The Play Area on The Green, Plaistow

The Parish Council's insurers do not insure fencing and the cost of repair was £633.26, payable from the Village Maintenance Reserve.

Members are asked to note that an order has been placed for a new swing seat and will be installed, in due course by the original installers of the play equipment.

(b) Parish Action Plan and Village Design Statement

This item is being progressed

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note this section of the Report

- 16. Date of next meeting -
Tuesday 18th May 2010 at the Youth Club, Winterton Hall, Plaistow**

Sue Kemp – Parish Clerk
9th March 2010