

West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council

Draft Minutes of Extraordinary meeting held on

Thursday 10 September 2015 at St. Mary's Church, West Rainton

Present: Councillors E Bulmer, M Gilbank, A Swinburn, A Wallage (Chair)

5 x members of the public (MoP)

In attendance: Graeme Keedy, Parish Clerk; 3 x co-option candidates

NOTE:

Cllr Gilbank audio recorded the meeting throughout for use in a personal capacity.

Cllr Wallage audio recorded the meeting throughout for official purposes.

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received by the Clerk from Cllr I Clifford (prior leave commitment) and Cllr S Patterson (family illness). Parish Council resolved to approve the apologies.

2) Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3) Co-option of four councillors (casual vacancies) to serve on the Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk introduced this item. He explained that there had initially been six expressions of interest. He then summarised the position:

Candidate A – formally withdrawn.

Candidate B - advised they were unable to attend due to another commitment but had not submitted a supporting statement.

Candidate Stuart Graham - in attendance but had not submitted a written statement.

Candidate Ian Haddick - in attendance and had submitted a written statement.

Candidate Pamela Lowrie - in attendance and had submitted a written statement.

Candidate Peter Morson - was on leave and unable to attend but had submitted a supporting statement.

Parish Clerk advised Parish Council that immediately prior to the meeting, candidate S Graham had explained that ongoing difficulties with internet failure had prevented his submission of a supporting statement.

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Signed:

Date:

The Clerk added that candidate P Morson had emailed to advise him of only limited and intermittent internet access at his holiday location which impacted on his supporting statement.

After discussion, Parish Council resolved that the candidatures of the four named applicants would all be considered for co-option at this meeting.

Each candidate independently addressed Parish Council, with the two remaining candidates present leaving the room at this stage.

After hearing the aural submissions, Parish Council thanked candidates and requested they leave the room whilst they deliberated.

Cllr Gilbank suggested that three vacancies be filled by the three candidates present, and that the fourth vacancy be held over until the next full meeting of Parish Council, when Mr. Morson could attend.

However, this contradicted the approach already agreed at the meeting.

Cllr Swinburn proposed a vote be taken on each of the four candidates.

To aid the Parish Council in its' deliberations, the Parish Clerk provided guidance from the publication "Local Council Administration" (Charles Arnold-Baker). He cited 6.15 – "If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes."

The Parish Clerk was clear to Parish Council that the number of candidates equalled the number of vacancies.

Cllr Gilbank expressed a view that the co-option process was not transparent and that certain aspects had not been agreed by Parish Council. He added that he considered the person specification flouted human rights and equalities legislation.

In response, the Parish Clerk explained that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Legal Topic Note L15-08 "Co-option" which included a model person specification had previously been tabled and discussed at Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk added that the Guidance document he had circulated to candidates acted as an explanation to the co-option process and he did not regard this as requiring sign-off by Parish Council.

Cllr Gilbank then advised that he would take no further part in the decision making process.

It was proposed by Cllr Wallage and seconded by Cllr Bulmer that the four candidates be co-opted to Parish Council.

Parish Council resolved to co-opt Stuart Graham, Ian Haddick, Pamela Lowrie and Peter Morson to the Parish Council - subject to receipt of the signed declaration form confirming eligibility and non-disqualification.

The meeting closed at 19.50 hrs.

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Signed:

Date: