**LITTLE HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL.**

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF LITTLE HOUGHTON**

**HELD ON THURSDAY 15TH MAY AT 7.00 p.m.**

**Present.**

Councillor Jeff Greasley, Chairperson of the Parish Council, presided over an attendance of 8 persons.

**Welcome.**

Mr Greasley opened the meeting and welcomed those present to the Annual Assembly.

**Minutes.**

This is the first annual assembly that has been held for a number of years because these meetings were cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID restrictions and with the sad death of the previous Clerk at that time many records including the minutes of previous Parish Assembly meetings were lost and the Parish Council was unable to function.

**Accounts.**

Mr Greasley presented a summary of the financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2025. This was accepted by the meeting.

**Chairperson's Report.**

Mr Greasley used his first Annual Report of the Parish Council to its residents to reflect on the work of the PC over the last two years and share as Chair of the PC its plans for the forthcoming year.

He explained that following Council elections in 2023 the new cadre of parish councillors for Little Houghton had a significant amount of work to undertake to bring the Parish Council back into carrying out lawful meetings and activities and to ensure finances were sufficient and effectively managed which was a particular challenge without the continuity of an experienced Clerk.

He reported that over 2023/24 and last year 2024/25 the PC’s processes and procedures and finances are now back on a firm footing and that it was a difficult decision increasing the precept but it had not increased for many years and the PC simply did not have the funds needed to run and to look after the PC’s assets for the village e.g. the play park and MUGA field for our children to enjoy let alone run any activities.

Mr Greasley thanked Amanda as unpaid acting clerk for her initial and ongoing work and Katie the new clerk in achieving an unqualified internal audit this last year.

He reported that residents could have complete faith that the PC’s finances now meet the requirements of Financial Regulations and having settled ‘overdue debts’ and undertaken a comprehensive budgeting exercise that he was pleased that the PC was able to reduce the precept down to a level that will afford a small reserve for the unexpected.

He also reported that parish councillors had undertaken training to ensure the PC continues to function properly and that they have been able to turn to improvements for the village ranging from poppies on lamp posts, litter picks, pick it up signs on pavements, supporting coffee mornings and seasonal local activities and particularly that they were successful in obtaining a grant just in excess of £7,000 to undertake significant work on the meadow down in Little Houghton to create a welcoming space for all residents and a habitat in which nature will thrive and he thanked all his colleague parish councillors and residents for their work so far on this project.

Mr Greasley finished by say that looking forward the PC aim to continue work on the meadow and to explore further small improvements where they can across our village.

**Parish Affairs raised by Residents**

A resident raised concerns over the cost of living and suggested that the PC might use its balances to reduce the precept further which gave rise to an extended debate over public finances, who funds what between the Parish and Borough Councils and who is responsible for maintenance and improvements within parished and non parished areas.

The Ward Councillor elaborated and explained that BMBC can only maintain and improve its assets and Mr Greasley and the Clerk that this was the same for the PC.

The children’s play area was used as an example, it is owned by the PC for the village and there is significant cost to maintaining it, it will cost several hundreds of pounds to repair worn play surface and it is essential to have money in the bank to pay for these eventualities.

The Ward Councillor spoke at length about grants, the process of applying and that whether the grants are money or BMBC time e.g. the Tidy Team they had to be matched by the PC in part or full with money and more often volunteer time. She noted that currently it is only parish councillors who generally volunteer.

This led to a lengthy debate about our society both in the past and currently, dependence across the country on volunteers and in Little Houghton how more people might be encouraged to volunteer.

Mr Greasley said the PC had done their best and would welcome any suggestions on how to gather more volunteers.

A resident suggested the PC should focus on things that matter to them and this gave rise to a debate that it was difficult to please everyone: what was popular with one resident wasn’t with another. Mr Greasley summarised that the PC was doing its best with the resources it had and the grant funding it was able to source explaining that grant funding came with conditions for example the Wind Farm grant was aimed at rewilding and looking after land and thus could only be used on the meadow.

A resident said that resources should be focussed on children in the village, a feeling shared by all present.

The discussion turned to future plans and an ambition for a village hall which would improve community engagement and cohesion, an ambition welcomed by all mindful this would take some time and resources to achieve.

At this point and having no further business, the Chairperson thanked all those present and declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm

**Chairperson: Mr Jeff Greasley**

**Date: 19/05/25**