Clerk to the Council

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Parish Room
Old School Centre
West End
PORLOCK
Somerset TA24 8NP

Signed: W. S.

Date: 12th July 2023

Minutes of the Porlock Parish Council Meeting Porlock Village Hall, Wednesday 14 June 2023, 7pm

Copies of minutes and non-confidential reports are available on request

Councillors Present:

Cllr L Bloys, Cllr S Colson, Cllr D McCanlis (Chair), Cllr S McCanlis, Cllr D Thornton, Cllr L Thornton (Temporary volunteer Clerk)

Also present: Annie Dallaway (Locum RFO and minute taker), approximately 21 members of the public, Cllr Frances Nicholson & Councillor Steven Pugsley (Somerset Council, both in attendance from 8.20pm)

1) Apologies for absence were received by the council

There were none received. Cllr S McCanlis was delayed.

2) Declarations of Interest and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dispensations

Cllr S Colson declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 13 as he owns a flat in Doverhay Place.

Cllr D McCanlis declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 15 as he has an existing High Bank car park permit.

3) To agree any items to be dealt with after the public, including the press, have been excluded. Council agreed that agenda item 21 will be a Part B item.

4) Parish Council vacancies

There are currently 6 vacancies. 5 vacancies are due to be filled by the forthcoming election scheduled by Somerset Council with nominations to be received from Friday 16th June to Friday 23 June. If contested, the election will take place on Thursday 20 July 2023. A further vacancy is available to be filled by co-option.

Cllr S McCanlis arrived at the meeting.

Public Participation – there were approximately 21 members of the public in attendance, some of whom were in attendance to speak regarding the Doverhay Place planning application. Cllr D McCanlis advised that the Planning agenda item 13 would be deferred until Cllr Steven Pugsley, Somerset Council arrived at the meeting. Members of the public were also reminded that the Public Participation session was restricted to 15 minutes with individuals having 3 minutes each.

PUBLIC (Michael Rowe): Acknowledged that some councillors were putting in a lot of effort and stated that this was commendable. Noted that the book stall at the Old School Centre had been identified as a fire risk and stressed that the book stall helps to support the Lovelace Centre which is an essential community service and deserves the support of the council.

PUBLIC (David Hancock): Expressed an objection to the proposed planning application at Doverhay Place on the following grounds: the potential threat to the protected trees on site, the mix of affordable housing and the access issues.

PUBLIC: Expressed concern that the Porlock Vale Newsletter had been censored by the Parish Council with certain articles removed.

COUNCIL: Cllr D McCanlis advised that this was not true. Cllr L Thornton advised that no articles had been removed at the request of the Parish Council.

PUBLIC (Nigel Lamacraft): Asked if there would be additional public participation time when Cllr Pugsley arrived to address any related planning queries.

COUNCIL: Members of the public were encouraged to express their views on the planning application during the Public Participation session. Any further public participation during agenda item 13 would be at the Chair's discretion.

PUBLIC (Maria Colson): Read out a statement of objection to the Doverhay Place planning application on the grounds of i) Over development of the site ii) road safety concerns. Letter available on the ENPA planning portal.

PUBLIC (Jenny Bridle): Read out a letter of objection to the Doverhay Place planning application on the grounds of i) road safety concerns ii) mix of affordable housing iii) threat to protected trees and wildlife on site and iv) scale of development. Letter available on the ENPA planning portal.

PUBLIC (Daniel Bishop): Read out a statement of objection to the Doverhay Place planning application on behalf of CPRE. Letter available on the ENPA planning portal.

PUBLIC (John Tong): Expressed an objection to the Doverhay Place planning application on the grounds that it does not conserve or enhance the natural beauty and wildlife and cultural heritage of Exmoor.

6) To receive reports from Somerset Council

Somerset Council representatives were due to attend the meeting later in the evening. The Chair advised that this matter was deferred.

7) To approve the minutes for the Full Council Annual Meeting held on 10 May 2023 Council RESOLVED to approve the Full Council Annual Meeting Minutes of 10 May 2023.

PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR (Clir S Colson did not vote as he was not present at the meeting)

The Locum RFO highlighted a matter arising regarding minute ref 18: Election of Trustees to the Recreation Ground CIO. As a point of clarification, council noted that the Rec constitution only allows for the Parish Council to approve Representative Trustees and Co-opted Trustees. It was also noted that the Rec constitution does allow for the Parish Council to veto nominations for an elected Trustee but this needs to happen at the nomination stage of the election process. The Chair advised that the Rec constitution needed to be amended so that their election process coordinated with Parish Council meetings.

 To consider publishing draft minutes on the website and amending Standing Orders accordingly Council RESOLVED to publish draft Full Council and committee minutes on the website in future and to amend the Standing Orders accordingly.

PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

8) To receive a report from the Clerk including the updated Action Log

- i) The new website is now live and it is possible to sign up to receive automatic updates. The council is keen to receive feedback regarding the accessibility of the site.
- ii) The council has renewed its subscription to the West Somerset Flood Group and attended the recent meeting.

9) Exmoor National Park Authority Elections 2023

Parish Councillors voted by email in a secret ballot and the ballot paper was submitted by the 3pm deadline today. Porlock Parish Council voted for the following 5 candidates out of the 8 who stood for election: Andrew Bray, Kevin Connell, Michael Ellicot, William Geen and Jeremy Holtom.

It was noted that although none of the Porlock Parish Councillors wished to stand in the ENPA election, the Parish Council is represented on the Local Community Network and Cllr D McCanlis attended the recent meeting.

10) To receive Portfolio reports

i) Assets & Property – report previously circulated

a) Annual Fire Risk Assessment recommendations:

To agree action plan re book stall and funding as appropriate.

The book stall was highlighted in the recent Fire Risk Assessment as a fire risk and the Fire Officer has recommended that the books be taken inside every day when the OSC is not occupied or that lockable, steel cabinets are installed outside to house the books, again to be locked when the OSC is not occupied. Clearly there are cost implications for any new cabinets or movable shelving, plus someone has to be responsible for locking away the books or moving them inside. Currently, the income from the books is collected by the PVTA to help cover the cost of the Lovelace Centre wages.

Council expressed support for the Lovelace Centre and recognised that it provided a valuable community service.

At the Chair's discretion, Deborah Stanyon, Visitor Centre Manager provided some feedback outside of the Public Participation session, commenting that the PVTA would have appreciated more notice to consider this matter and that she felt it was inappropriate for the Parish Council to be discussing the Lovelace Centre income in public. Cllr L Thornton reported that the book stall had been raised as a fire risk in previous Fire Risk Assessments and the Fire Officer was now highlighting it as a matter needing to be urgently addressed. Regarding the Lovelace Centre income, the council was considering only the income raised from the book stall (which had previously been publicly reported) and how this shortfall would be met if the book stall was removed. Deborah Stanyon also highlighted the value of the book stall being available 24/7 to local residents and visitors.

It was noted at the meeting that the Library Service (which helps fund Porlock Community Library) does not view the book stall favourably as it competes with the lending service.

In line with advice from the Fire Officer, council **RESOLVED** to propose the following options for further consideration and agree that any financial implications would be met by the council:

- 1. Move books inside when OSC closed (purchase movable shelving)
- 2. Purchase lockable steel cabinets to site in existing position of book stall (locked when OSC closed)
- 3. Remove books from OSC

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR. It was noted that the decision making would include consultation with the PVTA and the Lovelace Centre.

Council noted other suggestions from members of the public which will also be given consideration i) open cabinets sited well away from the OSC, for example by the railings to reduce the fire risk and ii) re-locating the second-hand books to the Emporium where they could be sold in aid of Devon & Somerset Air Ambulance/the Lovelace Centre.

b) Cemetery – report previously circulated

Cllr L Thornton attended a recent training course which highlighted various matters regarding cemetery management and administration. The Parish Council is responsible for Hawkcombe Cemetery and the closed St Dubricius churchyard. Quotes will be obtained to enable council to consider a full risk assessment for the cemetery site, the purchase of a fireproof cabinet for record keeping and the purchase of bespoke software to manage the burial administration. This will be an agenda item for July.

ii) Environment & Community – report previously circulated

a) Dog fouling at Porlock Picnic site – report previously circulated
 The site belongs to Somerset Council and there is currently no Dog Control Order at the site.

Council agreed to i) write to the Caravan Park to highlight the issue and stress the importance of visitors picking up after their dogs when using the picnic site and ii) write to Somerset Council to request signage at the site and ideally a dog bin.

b) To approve TOR for the Traffic Calming Working Group – previously circulated Council RESOLVED to approve the TOR for the Traffic Calming Working Group. PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR Members of the public were encouraged to join the Working Group.

11) Finance

i) To approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end May 2023 Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the bank reconciliation to end May 2023 PROPOSER: Cllr S McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

ii) To receive the Detailed & Summary Receipts & Payments to end May 2023.

The Chair signed the Summary Receipts & Payments to end May 2023.

iii) To approve Locum RFO's hours for May 2023

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Locum RFO's hours for May 2023

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

iv) To approve Library Officer's overtime for May 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve the Library Officer's overtime for May 2023

PROPOSER: Cllr D Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

v) To approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for June 2023

Council RESOLVED to approve and sign the final Schedule of Payments for June 2023

PROPOSER: Cllr S Colson; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

vi) To approve additional Fast Track book order for the library (£250 from Library EMR)

The Fast Track book scheme has been well received. Council **RESOLVED** to approve an additional £250 for a further 3-month trial of the Fast Track scheme.

PROPOSER: Cllr D Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

vii) To receive an update regarding the Ricoh photocopier payments

The Locum RFO reported that the council had taken advice regarding the VAT implications of the existing payment protocol for the photocopier. In order to ensure compliance with VAT legislation, the direct debit payments will in future be paid direct by the Lovelace Centre and no VAT will be claimed back on the invoices. The Locum RFO will ensure that the council is up to date with any outstanding VAT liabilities to HMRC. Council noted that the Lovelace Centre will now incur the additional costs of the VAT and the need for additional grant funding will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

viii) To receive an update regarding arrangements (including legal agreements) with other bodies

Dovery Manor – **Parish Council status as Custodian Trustee ceased 2017/18**. The Clerk has contacted a specialist charity law company for advice. See 11 viii) a below.

PVTA – **annual lease agreement for premises within OSC expired 2006.** The Clerk has contacted Thorne Segar to request a quote for the preparation of a new draft lease. PVTA will be kept updated regarding this matter.

Porlock Village Hall – Parish Council as Custodian Trustee. The Clerk has contacted Thorne Segar to clarify that the Parish Council as Custodian Trustee holds the title deeds to the Village Hall.

Lovelace Centre - photocopier agreement expires 2027. See agenda item 11 vii).

Somerset Council – lease agreement for Doverhay Toilet block expires 2052. The Clerk has contacted Thorne Segar for a copy of the lease.

Porlock Manor Estate – lease agreement for Village Hall car park expired 2000. The Clerk is in liaison with Porlock Manor Estate to clarify the updated lease.

a) To approve £600 plus VAT for legal advice to clarify the legal arrangement between Dovery Manor and Porlock Parish Council

Council **RESOLVED** to approve as above.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR.

ix) To consider the grant application from Dovery Manor Museum (£700 to develop a website)

Council RESOLVED to approve the grant application which meets the criteria of the Allotment Fund.

Proposer: Cllr L Bloys; Seconder: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR.

8.20pm Cllr F Nicholson and Cllr S Pugsley, Somerset Council arrived at the meeting

6) Somerset Council reports (deferred at the discretion of the Chair) Cllr Frances Nicholson:

Exmoor National Park Authority 2023 election results (parish nominations): William Geen and Jeremy Holtom representing Devon, Andrew Bray, Michael Ellicott and Nicholas Thwaites representing Somerset. The Secretary of State is required to sign off the election result in advance of the ENPA Annual Meeting in July.

The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2018 - 2023 is up for revision and consultation details are available on the ENPA website.

Clir Steven Pugsley reported that he had contacted Highways regarding the scaffolding in the main street and additional warning signage was recommended. However, the narrow footway and carriageway prohibits further signage and the contractor has pledged that in view of the safety issues, the repairs will be carried out as promptly as possible.

12) Office security – to receive an update regarding security of office records and consider purchase of security shutter

Council noted that as the Parish Office is shared with the Lovelace Centre and accessible by members of the public, provision needs to be made to ensure the security and confidentiality of office records as appropriate. The Clerk will obtain suitable quotes for consideration.

Cllr S Colson declared an interest and left the meeting for agenda item 13 as the owner of a flat at Doverhay Place

13) Planning

- i) To receive the Planning Committee minutes from 5 June 2023 and note consultation responses Council received the Planning Committee minutes from 5 June 2023 and noted the consultation response for 6/27/23/008 which will be submitted to the ENP Planning Authority. 6/27/23/007 was deferred to the Full Council meeting as the Highways report had not been received.
- ii) 6/27/23/007 Land at Doverhay Place, Porlock TA24 8HU Outline application for proposed erection of 4 dwellings. All matters reserved except layout and means of access to the site.

There are 15 letters of objection on the ENP planning portal and the Parish Council has received 7 letters direct from members of the public (3 of these also on the portal). Cllr D Thornton advised that he had contacted ENPA and clarified that previous applications can be taken into account as a material planning consideration. Council noted that the report from Highways was still not available.

The Chair invited Somerset Council representatives to comment on the application but Cllr S Pugsley advised that it was not appropriate for members of the ENPA Planning Committee to comment in advance of an application being determined. Cllr S Pugsley encouraged members of the public to register their views on the planning portal.

The Parish Council **RESOLVED** to object to the planning application for the following reasons:

ACCESS:

The vehicle access to and from the A39 does not meet with current regulations relating to splay and sight lines. There is not enough room for two cars to pass on the drive entrance causing tailbacks of traffic when turning from Minehead.

Pedestrian access to the site and pedestrian access to and from Porlock is not suitable due to the lack of pavements on a busy A-road and the rough terrain and steps of the path within the site.

The proposed 30% increase of property on the site will exacerbate the safety and access issues.

As yet, there has been no submitted report from Highways. Council recommends that a site visit is carried out by Highways.

LAYOUT & DESIGN

The proposed development fails to comply with parts of ENPA Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted on 5th July 2017. *Policy HC-D3 New Build Dwellings in Settlements* - a terrace of 3 houses is not in-keeping with the existing built environment. The proposed development will not conserve or enhance the character of the traditional settlement pattern and the character and appearance of the site.

Policy GP3 Spatial development in proportion – the proposed development represents over development of the site with 4 houses representing a 30% increase of property on the site.

The impression/statements made at the public consultation are not consistent with this application. The number and size of affordable housing is not consistent with what was stated at the public consultation and the Affordable Housing Viability Statement is not coherent. The site is not suitable for young families due to the safety issues highlighted above.

The proposed development also has root damage implications for the large number of TPO's present on the site. Council also noted that previous planning applications at this site have been refused for some of the reasons detailed above.

Should this proposal go to ENPA Committee, council recommends that a site visit is made by ENPA committee members.

Proposer: Cllr S McCanlis; Seconder: Cllr L Bloys. ALL PRESENT AND VOTING IN FAVOUR.

Cllr S Colson returned to the meeting.

14) Somerset Council Street Trading Licensing Policy – to receive a report

Somerset Council's new Street Trading Licensing Policy came into effect in March 2023. A Street Trading Licence is required for anyone trading on land which the public has access to. Council agreed to produce a policy for anyone who wants to trade on Parish Council property which is open to the public, for example the grounds of the Old School Centre. Cllr D McCanlis will produce a draft policy for consideration.

Cllrs D and S McCanlis declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting for agenda item 15 as they have an existing High Bank car park permit.

Cllr S Colson, Vice Chair stepped in to Chair the meeting for agenda item 15.

15) To receive an update on High Bank car park permit arrangements

i) To receive an update regarding the new permit arrangements

A series of 7-day permits have been issued to permit holders for display in vehicle windows. There are 16 bays with 4 currently vacant and 1 person on the waiting list. Council agreed to review the longer-term management of the car park in the autumn. The vacant parking bays will be advertised in the village.

ii) To review and approve the draft Terms & Conditions previously circulated.

Council considered the new draft Terms & Conditions, line by line at the meeting and made the following amendments: private and commercial vehicles are eligible but vehicles are required to fit into individual bays which precludes large motorhomes; eligibility is restricted to those who live, work or pay a property tax in Porlock; only one bay per permit holder. Council agreed that historic arrangements would continue for this year but eligibility would be reviewed at the point of annual renewal and permits would not be re-issued to any permit holders in contravention of the new Terms & Conditions. All new permits will be issued in line with the approved Terms & Conditions. The Locum RFO advised that all permit holders were liable for

Business Rates on the individual parking bays and that SBRR was available as appropriate – this will be included in the Terms & Conditions.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the draft Terms & Conditions subject to the amendments above.

PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir S Colson. ALL PRESENT AND VOTING IN FAVOUR

Cllrs D and S McCanlis returned to the meeting.

Cllr D McCanlis returned as Chair.

16) Policy review – to review draft policies previously circulated

- i) Grants policy defer to Fin Com and July Full Council meeting. It was noted that local organisations can still apply to the Parish Council for a grant using the existing grant application form.
- ii) Disciplinary & Grievance policy defer to July meeting.
- iii) Sickness & Absence policy defer to July meeting.
- iv) Communications policy defer to future meeting.
- v) Social Media policy defer to future meeting.
- vi) Co-option policy defer to future meeting.
- vii) Publication Scheme council agreed that single copies of all documents would be free and documents in Class 1 would be available hard copy in the Library. Additional copies of documents can be provided via the Lovelace Centre who will charge per copy.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the draft Publication Scheme subject to the amendments above.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

17) Strategic planning – to receive a report previously circulated

Council expressed support for the draft document circulated and **RESOLVED** to approve the preliminary steps outlined in the document.

PROPOSER: Cllr D McCanlis; SECONDER: Cllr S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

18) Reports from outside bodies – to receive reports previously circulated

Library – council noted items of expenditure under £200 for ID lanyards for volunteers, prizes for the Summer Reading Challenge and refreshments for volunteers.

Village Hall — a query has been raised regarding the jurisdiction of the car park and clarification of insurance. The Clerk will research and feedback regarding this matter.

Exmoor Local Community Network – the first meeting has now taken place.

19) Correspondence – to receive the Schedule of Correspondence previously circulated

Council noted correspondence received from The Ship Inn who wished to advertise events on the community noticeboards. Due to a lack of space, it was agreed that local businesses would not be able to advertise for the time being. Cllr D McCanlis suggested a policy for the use of noticeboards and requested that noticeboards be a future agenda item.

20) Dunster Steep footpath proposals

- i) To receive an update regarding the transfer of land for the footpath report previously circulated Council noted that the land owner had withdrawn the gift of the land for the Dunster Steep proposal and had advised that she would be pursuing the project privately.
- ii) To consider the request received to pay the land owner legal fees regarding the transfer of the land for the footpath

Council noted that the land owner was no longer asking for the Parish Council to pay her legal fees. The Parish Council will be obliged to pay the legal fees incurred to date by the solicitor engaged by the council.

Council **RESOLVED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION FOR AGENDA ITEM 21** as the council will be discussing confidential staffing matters.

PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

- 21) Staffing report & supporting documents previously circulated. Confidential Minutes filed as an appendix.
 - i) Library Officer
 - a) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the revised job description previously circulated.
 - PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir L Bloys. ALL IN FAVOUR.
 - b) To approve the revised contract deferred to July Full Council pending employment policy research.
 - c) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the revised pay grade at the rate advised by the Library Service, backdated to 1 April 2023 which equates to an additional £1561 for 23/24.
 - PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR
 - d) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the revised monthly hours of 36. A system of Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) will be used and any additional hours will need formal council approval.

PROPOSER: Cllr L Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

Terms & conditions for staff would normally be reviewed in December of each year as part of the budget setting process. However, due to changes in councillors and officers, the staffing review did not take place in 2022 and is being carried out now. Additional budget allocations are proposed to enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities as an employer and to ensure that staffing levels are adequate to deliver services. A budget review will take place at the Fin Com meeting in July.

ii) OSC Cleaner

a) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the revised job description previously circulated.

PROPOSER: Clir L Bloys; SECONDER: Clir S Colson. ALL IN FAVOUR

b) Council **RESOLVED** to approve the revised hourly rate.

PROPOSER: Cllr D Thornton; SECONDER: Cllr L Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

Council **RESOLVED** to offer the position of OSC Cleaner to an internal candidate who currently volunteers at the library. If the job offer is not accepted, the council will advertise externally.

PROPOSER: Clir L Thornton; SECONDER: Clir D Thornton. ALL IN FAVOUR

The Locum RFO left the meeting for this part of the agenda item and the Volunteer Clerk, Cllr L Thornton took the minutes for the remainder of the meeting

- iii) Parish Clerk/RFO revised staffing structure. A proposal from the Locum RFO had been previously circulated to councillors.
 - a) To consider offering a permanent part-time contract to the Locum RFO for the role of Parish Clerk/RFO (majority remote working) and to decide whether this revised role needs to be externally advertised
 - b) To consider the recruitment of a part-time Admin Assistant to work in the Parish Office to support the Parish Clerk/RFO and to allocate additional budget as necessary

Council noted that the Locum RFO had been working for the Council since September 2022, mostly remotely, supported by a volunteer Clerk/councillor and that this arrangement had worked very well. The Locum RFO already had a good understanding of PPC and the councillors, was a fully qualified, experienced Clerk who had proved to be very competent in the view of all the councillors. It was felt that a better candidate was unlikely to come forward and that the delay and further costs involved with advertising first were seen as an unnecessary disadvantage. Council noted that the two previous attempts to recruit a Clerk had been unsuccessful. Council agreed that the risk and cost of delay outweighed the small chance of a better candidate coming forward at the pay rate offered. Council agreed that the Locum RFO should be appointed on her proven merit.

It was agreed that the two positions outlined in a) and b) above were linked, so any decision to appoint the Locum RFO as permanent part-time Clerk/RFO (mostly remote) was also dependent on agreeing to recruit and appoint the admin assistant. The budget implications of the proposal were discussed and the core staffing costs, based on the suggested pay rates, were within budget. However, council noted that travel costs and a home working allowance for the Clerk were not currently included within the budget for the Clerk. An additional £1462 will need to be allocated within the budget for the remaining nine months of the year although the travel costs are variable and can be subject to on-going review.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve both a) and b) as outlined above. **PROPOSER: Clir L Bloys; SECONDER: Clir. S McCanlis. ALL IN FAVOUR**

Once the Clerk/RFO is in position (proposed start date 1 July 2023), the recruitment of the admin assistant can begin, to be taken forward by the HR & Staffing committee, with the Clerk/RFO closely involved.

The meeting closed at 22.15