

**Minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting, 6.00pm,
Thursday 3rd August 2023 at The Community Hub, The Rings, Ingleby
Barwick**

Present: Cllrs Irwin, (Chairman), Barnes, Rutland, Strike, and Watson.

In attendance – J McGeeney Town Clerk.

- 1. Housekeeping** - The Chairman advised those present of the emergency escape procedures. It was requested that mobile phones be switched to silent. If a call was received and had to be taken Members were politely requested to leave the room.
- 2. Notice of Meeting** - Public Notice has been given in accordance Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chairman noted the Notice of the Meeting had been published on the Town Council's website, the notice board at the Ingleby Barwick Community Hall, Beckfields and the Rings Community Hub.
- 3. Apologies for Absence** - Cllr Fryer.
- 4. Declarations of Interest** - Cllrs Barnes Strike and Watson declared a personal/non prejudicial interest as a Borough Councillor of Stockton Borough Council.
- 5. Stockton-on-Tees (Electoral Changes) (Amendment) (Order 2023).** The Town Council had been notified from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that the Stockton- on- Tees (Electoral Changes) (Amendment) Order 2023 had been laid in Parliament on 11th July 2023. This Order corrected the error in the original Order relating to Ingleby Barwick and its number of Town Councillors. Councillors were advised that this Order would be subject to the normal Parliamentary Scrutiny process, where it must lie unchallenged for 40 sitting days. The summer Parliamentary Recess would delay the process by a few weeks and would complete on 22nd October assuming there were no objections. On completion of the Order the correction would come into effect immediately and implemented at the next Town Council Election in 2027. In order for an election to take place prior to 2027 a Community Governance Review would need to be undertaken by the Principal Authority, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. At the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council held on 16 May 2023, the Town Clerk was requested to formally write to Stockton on Tees Borough Council to request that a Community Governance Review be undertaken. Councillor Strike, in his role as Borough Councillor, submitted a question to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council at its meeting held on 21st June 2023

“Following the major error by the boundary commission when they put through the boundary changes on Ingleby Barwick resulting in the town council representation being reduced from 12 to 6. This was despite the error being highlighted immediately and notified that it had been rectified. The town clerk has written to the boundary commission and SBC asking for a “Community Governance Review”. Whilst the town council wishes to be at full complement as soon as possible it recognises that this will be a long and costly exercise it is hoped that. the boundary commission is open to cover the costs due to their error. It is also recognised that there are other elections due to be held on May 2nd 2024 so would be willing to agree to the full town council election being held on this date to reduce cost and also

maximise elector turnout as well as the workload of SBC staff. Will this council be supporting our campaign to get this error corrected next year otherwise we will have to operate with just 6 councillors for four years through no fault of the town council?" The Leader of the Council responded with:- "It is a disappointing that the Boundary Commission did get this wrong. Ingleby Barwick is a large community and 6 Councillors for the Town Council is very low. Officers have made contact with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to discuss with them the options for remedying their error, what action the LGBCE will be taking and how any costs that may be incurred by Stockton Council will be funded. The LGBCE has the power to lay an Order rectifying the error and returning the number of Town Councillors back to 12. Once that error has been corrected then the Council can consider conducting a Community Governance Review. The CGR would consult on reducing the term of office of the 6 current town councillors which, if agreed, would then allow a new election to be held to return the Town Council to 12 councillors. As noted this is a lengthy process and is subject to the LGBCE taking steps to remedy their error. The decision as to whether to commence a Community Governance Review is a decision of the full Council here at Stockton and once the LGBCE confirm their approach a report can be brought for consideration. The Town Council is responsible for the costs of their elections and I would encourage them to discuss with the LGBCE how those costs will be reimbursed should it be necessary to hold a further election before the expiry of the term of office of the recently elected 6 town councillors. Councillor Ted Strike asked the following supplementary question:- "Can SBC keep the Ingleby Barwick Town Council clerk fully informed of the process please?" The Leader of the Council responded with;- "Yes, we will keep the Town Clerk and all the Councillors of Ingleby Barwick fully informed."

There had been no guarantee from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that they would be responsible for the cost of the Community Governance Review and subsequent Full Town Council Election. The Town Clerk had requested costings from Stockton-on -Tees Borough Council. The estimated cost for a full consultation with electors and subsequent election would be approximately £55,000. These costs could be reduced considerably if the Terms of Reference agreed by Stockton Borough Council restricted the Term of Office of the six current Town Councillors to then allow an election for 12 new Councillors and the Election was combined with the PCC and Mayoral Election in May 2024 which would result in a saving on Polling Station costs.

Town Councillors were of the opinion that the costings provided were extortionate and the money could be used elsewhere for the benefit of the residents of Ingleby Barwick.

The aforementioned does not preclude the Town Council from formally requesting an election before 2027. PROPOSED by Cllr Irwin and SECONDED by Cllr Barnes.
UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the request from the Town Council to Stockton Borough Council (Electoral Changes) (Amendment) Order 2023 be rescinded.

- 6. Exclusion of Press and Public:** Under the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 the public and representatives of the press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.
- 7. Town Council Website –** At the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 11th July 2023 Members agreed to advertise for expressions of interest for the re-design of the Town Council's website to a set specification. The deadline for receipt of proposals was Monday

31st July 2023. Two quotations in total had been received. Councillors considered both proposals. The Town Council had purchased a .gov.uk domain name. An email provider had been recommended to the Town Council who would undertake the migration of the current domain to the new one. PROPOSED by Councillor Irwin and SECONDED by Councillor Watson. UNANIMOUSLY AGREED the Aubergine be appointed to provide a new website and support services and Cloudy IT be appointed for the email migration.

The meeting ended at 7.00pm