

Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council

7.30pm Monday 18th May 2020

To be held via Video Conference
(Due to Coronavirus Restrictions)

Draft Minutes (Ver 190520)

PRESENT:- Councillor B Chandler (Chair), Councillor R Pugh (Vice-Chair), Councillors N Cole, R Gough, L Pugh.
No members of the public elected to join the Conference.

1. Chair's Introduction, Video Conferencing Protocol and Legal Issues

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Councillors to the video conference which had become necessary due to coronavirus-related restrictions on public meetings. She reminded Councillors that recent changes in legislation had enabled the Council to make lawful decisions during the conference as if Councillors were holding a normal public meeting. Councillor Chandler thanked Councillor Cole for hosting the Conference process on behalf of the Council, highlighted the protocol she would be adopting, and advised that the meeting would be recorded.
- 1.2 Councillor Cole confirmed the meeting was being recorded.
- 1.3 Councillor Chandler confirmed that the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Council had been cancelled, as permitted by the coronavirus-related legislation. This meant that both herself and Councillor R Pugh would therefore remain in post as Chair / Vice-Chair respectively, for an extended period of two years.
- 1.4 Councillor Chandler was hopeful that the Annual Meeting of the Parish could be held by the required date (30th June 2020) as still required by legislation. However, the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) had advised that in the absence of additional coronavirus legislation, the requirement to hold the meeting would probably need to be defied to protect the health of Councillors and the public.

2. Apologies and Approval of Absences

- 2.1 Councillor Noble was unable to join the video conference. Her absence was approved.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 No declarations were made.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (9th March 2020)

4.1 The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated. Councillor Chandler proposed that the minutes be adopted, seconded by Councillor Cole and agreed by Councillors participating.

5. Matters arising

5.1 Buzz Service (15.2)

5.1.1 The Clerk had passed on the proposal by Councillors for a Saturday service and received confirmation this would be considered. However, the Buzz service had been withdrawn during the period of coronavirus lockdown.

5.2 Signs – Bixhill Lane (20.2)

5.2.1 The Clerk had contacted the Highways Department but had not received a response. He undertook to continue his efforts.

6. Contributions from the Public (Maximum 30 minutes)

6.1 There were no members of the public within the video conference.

7. Coronavirus Crisis Update

7.1 Councillor Chandler outlined her own activities and highlighted a lack of knowledge by local residents of what the County Council was providing. She confirmed that the County's shielding hub for North Warwickshire area was based at Coleshill. She asked that the Village website be updated with any relevant information.

7.2 Councillor Cole advised that there was new Facebook Group – 'Shustoke Village 2020' - which could be used to keep residents informed.

7.3 Councillor Gough advised that Shustoke Reservoir would reopen on 20th May, and she presumed the car park would also reopen.

7.4 Councillor R Pugh added that local businessman, Mr E Draper had constructed a Village book and game share structure for local use.

8. Financial Report

8.1 The Clerk advised that the 2019/20 Council and Hall accounts had been subject to internal audit and found to be fully in order.

8.2 The Council needed to decide whether to certify itself as exempt from a full external audit. The Clerk had circulated the appropriate certificate. Following discussion, Councillor Chandler proposed that the Council certified itself as exempt, seconded by Councillor Cole, and agreed by other Councillors present. Councillor Chandler held up the unsigned form for Councillors to see, signed the form and held up the signed form in confirmation.

8.3 Councillors considered the internal auditor's report and noted its content. The Clerk was asked to offer the thanks of the Council to the auditor.

- 8.4 Councillors considered the elements of the Annual Governance Statement. Following discussion, Councillor Chandler proposed that that items 1 – 8 were endorsed as achieved, seconded by Councillor L Pugh and agreed by Councillors present. Councillor Chandler held up the unsigned form for Councillors to see, signed the form and held up the signed form in confirmation.
- 8.5 Councillors considered the Accounting Statement 2019/20. The Clerk had previously circulated the audited financial report for the Council and Hall accounts for 2019/20. Following discussion, Councillor Chandler proposed that the statement be approved, seconded by Councillor R Pugh and agreed by Councillors present. Councillor Chandler held up the unsigned form for Councillors to see, signed the form and held up the signed form in confirmation.
- 8.6 The Clerk advised that coronavirus-related legislation permitted a two-month delay to the period of ‘public examination of the 2019/20 accounts’. Subject to the views of Councillors, the Clerk proposed the period 23rd July to 4th September. Councillor Chandler proposed adoption of that period, seconded by Councillor Cole and agreed by Councillors present. Councillor R Pugh agreed that she would make the hall available for any such examination, subject to existing bookings.
- 8.7 The Clerk had previously circulated the unaudited accounts for 2019/20 but due to the requirements of the external auditor, the accounts for 2019/20 needed to end 31st March 2020 (rather than the previously used 4th April date) which meant there had been a slight amendment to the original version. Updated spreadsheets of the audited accounts had been circulated.
- 8.8 The Clerk had circulated a copy of the Council’s accounts for the month of April 2020. The Chair had received a copy prior to the meeting which she signed during the meeting.
- 8.9 Prior to the meeting, the Chair had been presented with recent invoices and two SPC payment schedules for the period to 31st March and to 17th May 2020 and one for the Hall account to 31st March, which she signed during the meeting.
- 8.10 The Clerk had circulated a copy of the updated budget for 2020/21. The Chair had been presented with the budget which she signed during the meeting.

9. Consideration of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations 2020/21

- 9.1 The coronavirus pandemic had exposed some restrictions on Council activity when public meetings could not take place. Parish councils had been advised to examine their standing orders and financial regulations to ensure that normal business might continue whilst ensuring but that accountability and public transparency. The Clerk had circulated proposals for minor changes to the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Following discussion, Councillor Chandler proposed adoption of the revised documents, seconded by Councillor L Pugh and agreed by all present.

10. Planning Matters

- 10.1 The Clerk continued to circulate summaries of planning applications but there had been no recent Shustoke application.

11. Recreation Ground Enhancements

- 11.1 Councillor Gough outlined the research she had carried out, but there would be delayed progress due to the impact of Coronavirus restrictions.

12. Horticultural Services

- 12.1 The new contractor had undertaken work during April and the Clerk had canvassed the views of Councillors prior to paying the April invoice. Councillors had been generally satisfied.
- 12.2 Councillor Chandler asked the Clerk to check that the Allotments Committee remained committed to maintain five of the Village's planters.

13. Road Safety Issues

- 13.1 The Clerk had received no response from the Highways Authority in relation to the issues submitted for consideration nor a response from Councillor Hayfield. The Clerk was asked to contact the Councillor once more.
- 13.2 Councillors reported a perceived increase in speeding through the Village during the lockdown.

14. Reports from County and Borough Councillors

- 14.1 No County or Borough Councillors had joined the video conference.

15. Report from Village Hall Management Committee

- 15.1 Councillor R Pugh advised that most bookings had been postponed rather than cancelled, and the Hall had retained the deposits. The first shed had been erected but the second required a number of helpers to work closely together and this had thus been postponed until the end of the lockdown.
- 15.2 Councillor Cole confirmed he had applied for the Coronavirus grant of £10,000 applicable to village halls but had yet to receive a response. NatWest Bank had postponed the opening of new accounts so the Hall still did not have its own account.

16. Reports from Parish Councillors

- 16.1 Councillor Cole reported an increased use of 'Laughing Gas' by young people using the footpaths in the vicinity of the Reservoir. The Clerk agreed to advise the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

17. Correspondence

- 17.1 Councillors discussed correspondence from a Bixhill Lane resident in relation to the course of footpaths near the Reservoir. Assistance had been sought from the Chair of Nether Whitacre Parish Council – an expert on local footpaths – who had been able to assist the resident.

- 17.2 The Clerk advised that he had received an invitation to renew the Council’s Insurance policy as part of an ongoing three-year agreement. Cover remained the same except for new exclusions relating to pandemics. Councillors agreed that the three-year arrangement should continue.