



DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 26th April 2021

Time: 7.00PM

Venue: IN LINE WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES, THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING

Prior to the start of the Meeting, the Chairman read out a short statement and asked those present to join in a 1 Minute Silence for HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh.

PRESENT:

Councillors (13) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs A Grigg, T Blanks, Mrs S Jackman MBE, B Clegg, R Spearman, Mrs S Hawkins, G Mulliner, A Irvine, Mrs P Etherington, N Bedford*, M Stroud*, A Tyler*

*For part of the meeting

Officers in Attendance (3)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer

Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (1)

Members of the Press (1)

C20.236 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

Apologies received from Cllrs Ms D Wood and Ms C Coop-Rodia

C20.237 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

C20.238 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 1st March 2021 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

C20.239 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mulliner declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item no. 11.

Cllr Mrs Grigg declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item no. 11.

Cllr Spearman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in any agenda item concerning the Local Plan.

C20.240 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was one member of the public present who had requested to ask a question under Item 29.

Members discussed the response to the member of the public (who had asked a question via email and who had requested it to be discussed at the meeting) and noted that the member of the public was not in attendance. Cllr Mrs Grigg suggested that as the member of the public was not in attendance, the response be appended to the minutes.

C20.241 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Councillors *NOTED* that all staff have been working on all items within the Agenda. The Clerk confirmed that any written reports submitted from Councillors had been distributed.

C20.242 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

a) Chairman's Report – The Chairman advised that his report would be covered under Agenda item number 27.

b) Vice Chairman's Report - The Vice Chairman mentioned the daffodils that had been planted around the parish and commented that they had been a lovely show this year. She said that the Parish Council had planted them in strategic places and they looked beautiful. The Vice Chairman said that it had been well worth doing by the Councillors who had planted them. The Vice Chairman mentioned the ditches between the Hastingwood allotment sites and commented that there was not so much litter.

c) District & County Councillors Reports – The Chairman stated that no reports had been received, however, asked Members if they would be in agreement to Agenda item number 14 being brought forward in order for Cllr Bedford to give his report. All Members *AGREED*.

Cllr Bedford firstly referred to the Highway Rangers and said that they were working quite efficiently now and he had seen them in North Weald a couple of times. He mentioned a couple of projects that he thought they could be involved with in the Parish, such as re-setting the bollards outside North Weald Library, cleaning signage and cutting away vegetation before it becomes too abundant. Cllr Bedford suggested that any requests should be put forward soon. Cllr Bedford asked Councillors to send their suggestions to the Clerk.

Agenda Item No. 14 FLAGS ON GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Following the recent government report that it would be good practice that the Union Flag should be flown permanently on Government Buildings, Members noted that Clerk had been contacted by Cllr Nigel Bedford who would like to make a request that a flagpole is purchased for the Parish Hall at Thornwood and the Union Flag is flown permanently on this flagpole. Cllr Bedford stated that he would like to see some patriotism brought back into the Parish and make people proud of where we live. Cllr Bedford said that his proposal was for a flagpole to be purchased for the Parish Hall in Thornwood and also to offer a flagpole to Hastingwood Village Hall. Cllr Bedford mentioned the basic costs for purchase and installation.

The Chairman asked Members for their comments. Cllr Mrs Hawkins stated that she would be in agreement to the proposal. Cllr Clegg read out a statement expressing his objection to the proposal. Cllr Blanks stated that he believed that the money could be spent on much better things. Cllr Stroud offered to second the proposal. Cllr Irvine said that he thought Hastingwood Village Hall would be pleased to receive a flagpole. Cllr Spearman suggested that if a low cost flagpole could be purchased, he would also agree. The Chairman asked for a show of hands,

which was recorded as follows:

- 8 For
- 3 Against

The Chairman said that he believed that the general consensus was that Members were for the purchase of the flagpoles, however, he said that he would like to include the matter for further discussion under Agenda item number 18 with Members approval.

d) Parish Councillors Reports – Members noted that Cllr Irvine would give a report under Agenda item number 15.

e) Queens Hall Report – The Chairman advised that a report would be given under Agenda item number 12.

f) Neighbourhood Plan Report – The PFO confirmed that a copy of the Draft Plan would be included with the agenda for the next Parish Council Meeting to be held on 10th May.

g) EFDC Local Plan Report – no report received.

h) Highways Report – the Chairman referred Members to the update on Potholes which had been attached to the Agenda. Cllr Spearman said that there was no mention of Silver Birch Avenue. The Clerk advised that she had received an email from ECC Cllr Jackson which stated that a lot of work had been carried out in Silver Birch Avenue and suggested that Cllr Spearman visit the road to check and report back to the Clerk.

Cllr Mrs Etherington reported that there were a number of large potholes along the A414 near to the nursery and expressed concern that they would be the cause of accidents. The Clerk confirmed that they would be reported to ECC Highways following the meeting.

The Chairman asked if Members would agree to Agenda item number 29 being brought forward as there was a member of the public waiting to ask a question. All Members **AGREED**.

C20.243 HASTINGWOOD B ALLOTMENT SITE

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had received a request from a property development search company in relation to whether or not Hastingwood B Allotment Site may be available for sale. It was noted that the Clerk had advised the enquirer of the decisions made at a previous meeting by the Parish Council. However, the enquirer had asked that the Clerk pass the documents on to Parish Council for consideration, even if this may be at a later date. A copy of the documentation had been attached to the Agenda. The enquirer spoke briefly with regard to the documentation. The Chairman asked the Clerk to remind Members of the decision made regarding this allotment site. The Clerk advised that the matter was discussed at the Precept Meeting and again at the Parish Council Meeting in February and it was agreed that the preference was to keep the site as an open space, with the possibility of using part of it as allotments. The Chairman thanked the enquirer for

his interest, and said that he believed the Council would be unable to commit itself at this stage, but would bear it in mind should any changes be made to their original decision in the future. All Members **AGREED**.

C20.244 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheque & Monthly Statement of Accounts

Members **APPROVED** the list of payments (circulated prior to the meeting) which were made up to the 31st March 2021. Members **NOTED** the account balances at the end of the month.

b) Bank Reconciliation

Members **NOTED** the bank reconciliation as at 31st March 2021 (circulated prior to the meeting).

C20.245 BARRIERS AT PARISH HALL THORNWOOD

Members recalled that over the last year there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour at the Parish Hall at Thornwood. This led to agreement being reached as part of the budget for 2021/2022 to install barriers at the entrance points to the hall, the sum of £1,500 being agreed. It was noted that anti-social behaviour had increased considerably over the last six months to include an incursion of travellers, the hall being used as a car park for people mending the road, lorries picking up vehicles ie., recovery lifts (even though the vehicle had broken down elsewhere), plus other more unsavoury anti-social behaviour that the Police are now interested in. Following this activity, the Police further recommended that barriers should be put in place to the front entrances to the hall and as such a small working group met, which consisted of all three ward councillors for Thornwood, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council, together with the Clerk and the Principal Finance Officer, to discuss the matter at considerable length. It was agreed at this meeting to purchase barriers as soon as possible to hopefully alleviate these problems. The cost of the barriers and installation was £5,463.56. All Members agreed to **RATIFY** this expenditure, which was deemed necessary for the safety and security of the Parish Hall. The Clerk confirmed that the barriers were scheduled to be installed on Wednesday, 28th April.

C20.246 NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODES: TESTING PROGRAMME

Councillors **NOTED** that Epping Forest District Council were unsuccessful in their bid for the Model Design Code pilot.

C20.247 LETTER TO PEER GROUP – ONGAR PARK ESTATE ACCESS ROAD REPAIRING OBLIGATIONS

Councillors **NOTED** that following the last meeting, the Parish Council took legal advice (verbally) from the Parish Council Solicitors in relation to the letter which had been sent to the Parish Council and other parties regarding repairing obligations. The advice received was with reference to documents provided by the Clerk to the solicitors, in relation to the Parish Council's responsibilities. It was noted that a copy of the email sent to Peer Group after receiving the advice was attached to the agenda for Members perusal. Peer Group responded by saying that they would send the email to their Legal Section. The Clerk had further contacted Peer Group to ascertain if there was any response from their Legal Section, or if there is any indication of

when any repairs will be carried out to the roadway. It was noted that no response had yet been received.

C20.248 FOODBANK GRANTS

Councillors noted that the current Foodbank Scheme came to an end on 31st March. Cllr Ms Wood had applied for and been awarded a number of other Grants. The Clerk confirmed that a copy of Cllr Ms Wood's report had been circulated prior to the meeting and commented that Cllr Ms Wood had done very well in obtaining the grants. The Clerk advised that Cllr Ms Wood had also been able to use some of the money to purchase vouchers and would be carrying on with the Foodbank Scheme. The Chairman said that he thought Cllr Ms Wood had done extremely well and commented that the report had made very good reading for the Queens Hall.

C20.249 TREE PROJECTS

Following on from the last meeting where two areas in the Parish had been planted on Weald Common and where the following had been discussed and agreed:

'That Cllr Tyler had suggested that both areas be named after Cllr Brian Eldridge who sadly passed away in 2020 and who had been an avid supporter of more trees in the Parish. The suggestions were as follows:

- Eldridge Wood, Eldridge Thicket, Eldridge Grove, Eldridge Coppice

*The Chairman advised that 90 trees had been planted in the old play area, with a further 50 planted in the smaller area. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE recommended that the two areas be named as **Eldridge Wood** and **Eldridge Coppice**. All Members **AGREED.**'*

Councillors noted that the Clerk was now pleased to report that the plaques naming the two tree areas had been installed in the boulders and were now placed in situ in the areas, which is in recognition of the many years of unpaid service given by Cllr Eldridge as a Councillor for the benefit of the community. It was noted that the fencing had also been put in place. The areas concerned are named as agreed at the last meeting:

- Eldridge Wood
- Eldridge Coppice

Former Councillor Eldridge's wife had been advised and was very pleased at the decision that was made by this Council and feels that her husband would have been "absolutely delighted" by this decision.

C20.250 REQUEST FROM GIGACLEAR

Members noted that a request had been received from Gigaclear who are looking to place an access point (POT) for the Parish Council on land within their ownership. They will be placing a POT on a grass verge just next to the entrance to the recreational ground (directly abutting the highway). A copy of a Network Access Agreement showing the location of the POT and the terms of it being placed within the Council's land was attached to the agenda.

Following a conversation that the Clerk had with a representative from Gigaclear it had come to light that that the access point would not only be for the Parish

Council owned Hall, but also for other facilities along Weald Hall Lane as well. It was noted that Cllr Irvine had investigated the matter on behalf of the Parish Council as the Clerk had concerns over whether or not a Wayleave or Payment was necessary.

Cllr Irvine's comments are reproduced below:

"I managed to speak to Mike Robey from Gigaclear today. I have spoken to his colleague Sophie winter many times. Unfortunately, I think he is correct on the point about the wayleave. I do see this as a potential benefit to the parish council in the future. The broadband speeds available via Gigaclear are very much higher than those offered by any operator using the current BT Openreach network. So, the village hall could get higher broadband speeds and it is good to have some competition. I think he is correct within the wayleave rules.

As you know there are wayleaves that offer a payment especially when they are crossing land to benefit many customers, but this is quite a small part of a bigger project with fewer or no other people benefitting from this POT. The bigger issue here is that it is good news that the residents of Thornwood will have access to a much better broadband service. The network Gigaclear are building will offer substantially better speeds than any service based on the current BT Openreach network.

I did say that I thought the flow of information between the Parish Council and Gigaclear could be improved. I said that they should offer a briefing on their plans for the area so that I could see if the Chairman, fellow Counsellors plus our much-valued team and The Staff would be interested in adding this to the agenda. What new services will they provide, where, when how many homes and business would benefit, what are the costs and speeds against current offerings, where next? What are the implications for the current BT network? I also said that whilst I understood that Gigaclear had many demands on their time I was finding it difficult to get answers to the questions I had raised about other parts of the Parish. Mike asked me to reiterate my questions to him and to facilitate getting an answer. There are various parts of the Parish that would benefit if we can get a bit more assistance from them. To be fair Gigaclear are not great on the communication front but Openreach are even more opaque".

Cllr Irvine brought Members attention to his additional statement, dated 8th April, regarding Fibre Broadband which had been circulated with the Agenda. The Chairman asked Cllr Irvine if he could make enquiries to gain some clarification with regard to BT's intentions for Hastingwood and North Weald.

All Councillors **AGREED** that they were content to allow Gigaclear to have access and place a POT on the Parish Council's land.

C20.251 PLAY IN THE PARK 2021

Councillors **NOTED** that a request had been received to provide funding for EFDC Play in the Park 2021. The Parish Council has provided funding for two events for a number of years. It was noted that last year's events were not as successful due to children not being able to attend a face to face event (attendance involved picking up

packs to take away). The Clerk said that her suggestion would be to have one session only this year. The Clerk advised that there had been an increase in the cost of each session, which is now £95.00. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE said that she believed that the sessions were very valuable and commented that it was an unfortunate year last year due to COVID. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE suggested that Council agree two sessions, as usual, for the sake of the children. Cllr Stroud said that he agreed and suggested that the sessions could be promoted via local schools. The Clerk advised that leaflets are always put up on the noticeboards and additional leaflets could be requested. The Chairman asked if all Members were in support of two sessions this year, one to be held in Thornwood and one on the Memorial Playing Fields in North Weald. All Members **AGREED**.

C20.252 PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD – COVID TESTING CENTRE

Councillors **NOTED** that the testing facility continues to operate 4 days a week. Following a number of conversations with the NHS/MCHLC, who were the initial contact for the site, the Clerk has been advised that they are not willing to pay any fees whatsoever for this site, not even a contribution to the Caretaker's salary or cleaning costs. Members decided at the last meeting that the Council should '*continue to offer the site up until such time as Government Guidance says that Community Halls would be able to reopen, however we should look for some reimbursement for the Hall Running Costs*'.

Councillors **NOTED** that the Hall would re-open in its 'usual' manner on the 21st June 2021, subject to there being no changes to Government Guidance. The Clerk reported that she had spoken with a Manager at the testing facility who had said that on average less than 20 tests were being carried out per day. In light of this, the Clerk suggested that Members may feel that it is appropriate to write formally and confirm that the hall would be unavailable after the Spring Bank Holiday, which is 31st May. This would allow enough time to ensure that everything is available and in place for re-opening. The Chairman asked Members if they were in agreement. All Members **AGREED**.

C20.253 GOING FORWARD – PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD

Councillors **NOTED** that following on from the Prime Minister's Roadmap out of Lockdown, a **REVISED** date for opening of the Hall had to be organised. The expected date that the Parish Hall will re-open is now **Monday 21st June**, subject to there being no other changes in Government Guidance. The Parish Council office and staff will operate from the hall from this date. The opening hours for the Parish Office will be 10am to 1.00pm on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Clerk will write to all regular users to advise that the hall will re-open from this date. Notices will also be placed on the Website and on the Noticeboards advising of the same. Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had received confirmation from both the Epping Spiritualists and Mums and Tots that they no longer wished to hire the hall. It was also noted that the Thornwood Seniors may only have half of their members returning in September.

The Clerk advised that, since March of last year, the hall had been managed by the Parish Council and said that Councillors may wish to consider changing the Management Committee to a Liaison Committee. This suggestion would be

discussed in more detail under Agenda item number 31. The Clerk said that she believed that the hall was in need of a makeover and that a good advertising campaign was required to attract potential hirers. It was noted that the outside of the hall was last painted in 2015 and it was now starting to look 'shabby'. The Clerk suggested that it could be repainted and to help make the hall look more welcoming planters could be placed outside.

The Clerk reminded Members that the hall is the only asset that the Parish Council has. It is a pre-fabricated building which has been there since 1962. The Clerk said that she would like to look at getting the hall upgraded over the next 3 to 5 years, however, she believed that the cost could be in the region of £300,000 and grant funding would need to be applied for. The Clerk said that in order to do this, a feasibility study would need to be carried out. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE mentioned that she knew of someone who may be able to assist with drawings. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE mentioned the Parish Office being in the hall and the Clerk confirmed that although the office would be open on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, Cllr Ms Wood had also offered the use of the Queens Hall to provide an outreach service in North Weald on a Wednesday morning, free of charge. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that she would have reservations about spending a great deal of money on the hall which is a pre-fabricated building and has an 'end of life' time and said that she hoped that a feasibility study would take this into account. Cllr Tyler said that when looking at a feasibility study, Councillors would need to work out exactly what they wanted to do, ie., upgrade the existing building or knock it down and rebuild a much more attractive, energy efficient building. The Chairman summarised what had been said. Cllr Blanks suggested that Countryside Homes be approached. The Chairman suggested that it may be best to plan for a feasibility study and if need be co-opt a working group of Councillors to look at ideas. The Clerk said that she could put the matter on a future agenda for further discussion.

The Chairman referred to the earlier discussion regarding Cllr Bedford's suggestion to consider the purchase a flagpole to fly the Union Flag at the Parish Hall at Thornwood and to ask Hastingwood Village Hall if they would also like a flagpole. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE agreed to **PROPOSE** the suggestion. Both Cllr Mrs Hawkins and Cllr Stroud **SECONDED** the proposal. The Chairman asked Members to raise their hands if they were in favour. The vote was recorded as follows:

- 9 For
- 3 Against

The Chairman asked the Clerk if she could obtain costings for the flagpole. The Clerk confirmed that she would circulate these to Councillors as soon as they are received.

C20.254 MEETINGS FROM 7TH MAY

Councillors **NOTED** the Report that had been prepared by the Clerk, also noted that the result of the court hearing that was awaited, and this should be determined by the end of the week. The Clerk explained that whilst the result may be that Local Government Meetings could resume in person from the 7th May the documentation attached to the Agenda would give Members an idea of the thinking and comments that many Clerks and Councils were currently thinking and considering (as per the SLCC Forum and Clerks Community Network). If the decision of the Courts decided that meetings in

person should go ahead then there were other factors that Councils would need to take into consideration, such as Health and Safety and Employees Concerns (as detailed in Government Guidance and all as detailed within the report). It was therefore **AGREED** that the way forward would be as follows, if the decision was that meetings should go ahead from the 7th May then this council would operate under a Scheme of Delegation until the Parish Council Meeting in September 2021 and any decisions made, at any meetings held before this could be ratified at that meeting, subject to any necessary review.

Members were asked to make a decision on extending meetings electronically for a further 3 months, when the risk of the virus would be less and then go back to public Meetings in September 2021. Not all staff had had both vaccines, and staff were not yet aware as to whether or not all Councillors had had taken up the offer of vaccines yet.

The Meetings will be held in the Parish Hall at Thornwood. The Hall will be open by this time and will be Covid-19 secure. Social distancing will be possible. These decisions were also based on the fact that that the Hall and Car Park are still being used currently as a Covid-19 Mobile Testing Unit and the Hall takes a minimum of 3 hours for a full Covid clean after the MTU has been in situ.

Therefore, the earliest date for returning to face to face public meetings, if we wanted to continue with the MTU Testing Unit, would probably be for the July Meeting. It was noted that the Parish Council Standing Orders state that there are no meetings in August (due to Summer recess). Therefore, the next meeting would be held in September in any regard.

Following discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to the above and to continue meeting electronically until September.

C20.255 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Councillors were reminded that this is the Annual Meeting of the electorate, not a meeting of the Parish Council. Parish and Town Council's simply facilitate this meeting each year. It was noted that under the current Government Legislation, this meeting may be cancelled this year. Members were reminded that every year the Parish Council holds an Annual Allotment Meeting and also an Annual Civic Awards event. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Clerk recommended that the Annual Parish Assembly is not held this year as it must be held between 1st March and 1st June and still may not be safe to do so. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council could hold a specific meeting to cater for these items and that it be held later in the year, after September, when it is safe to do so. Whilst this meeting would not be called the Annual Parish Meeting, all electors in the Parish would be invited to attend and the Council could then ensure that they would be in a safe environment. It was suggested that this meeting could include the Allotment Meeting and the Civic Awards and any other items that Members felt to be relevant. It was noted that some initial work had already been carried out for a short presentation as to what the Parish Council has achieved, and the activities of the Parish Council, since March 2020. This would be shown as a rolling Power Point presentation during the Community Days with hard copies for residents to take home with them, together with an extra-large copy of the Annual Report which

would cover two years.

C20.256 COMMUNITY DAYS

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk would like to arrange a series of short Community Days. It was suggested that these could be held for a couple of hours in each of the Villages in the Parish as a way to bring people together and let them know what has been going on over the last year and what the Council's aims are for the next year. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE asked the Clerk what she had in mind. The Clerk said that she would like to hold three Community Events in each Village. The Clerk said that she would like to have a Councillor Surgery at each event and, as mentioned under the previous Agenda item, have a rolling Power Point presentation depicting what the Parish Council has achieved over the last year. The Clerk said that it would also inform people as to what had been happening with North Weald Airfield and also with the Local and Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk said that she would also try to include the Civic Awards. Dates for the events are yet to be decided, but it is hoped that they would be held in September / October.

C20.257 PURCHASE OF IT EQUIPMENT

Following on from the last meeting, Councillors **NOTED** that the IT Equipment had now been ordered. The PFO advised that Councillors would be contacted to arrange a suitable date and time to collect the equipment from the Parish Hall.

C20.258 CCTV – WEALD COMMON

Councillors **NOTED** that the CCTV at the Weald Common Play Area had now been placed under the control of the Parish Council's contractors and is no longer EFDC managed or maintained. The Chairman asked if arrangements could be made for one of the cameras to be repositioned to cover the area which had recently been planted with saplings.

C20.259 GRANT FUNDING – UP TO 31ST MARCH 2021

Members **NOTED** that all grant funding which was applied for and due to be completed by this date had now been carried out, this includes the following:

- £2,260 - Winter Covid & Foodbank Grant
- £1,000 - Community Garden NW
- £3,000 - Community Garden Thornwood (Grass seed is still growing)
- £2,000 - Renovating various Items & Basketball Post in Play Area
- £500 - Reflection Bench NW & Rainbow Stones (Plaques due to be installed)
- Additional funding that had been received by the Cllr Wood to be added.

C20.260 KICKSTART ESSEX

Councillors **NOTED** that the Government is offering companies the opportunity to take part in a new scheme called 'Kickstart'. This is being offered to companies and Local Authorities in Essex as well as other counties. The scheme is for an unemployed person to be given the opportunity of training by a 'well established company' for 6 months. The scheme actually lasts for a period of 2 years, and trainees are with the company for a 6 month period. During the 2 year period companies can take on other trainees once the training has finished. There is no cost

to the company involved. The start up grant is £1500 and this would cover initial costs such as training being given by the Kickstart Organisation and mentoring and monitoring. The Government will pay the living wage for the employee, so the company is only investing 'its time' in the training. Members were asked if they would be interested in joining the scheme and offer this opportunity to a local person between the age of 18 and 24. It would be for approximately 25 hours a week, which would include mentoring and monitoring. Cllr Mrs Grigg said that she would be interested, however the staff time and commitment that would be invested in the scheme is something that is not marked up in plans and events, however, she does believe that it is a worthy cause. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE said that she would not agree to the scheme at the present time. The Chairman asked the Clerk if the opportunity would be for someone to undertake admin or manual work. The Clerk confirmed that it would be admin, however she would need to investigate the scheme in more detail. The Chairman suggested that the matter should be held in abeyance for the time being and looked at again in a few month's time.

C20.261 SCHOOL GOVERNOR POSITION – ST ANDREWS SCHOOL

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk had received an invitation from the Head Teacher of St Andrews School for the Parish Council in relation to a Vacancy for a School Governor. A copy of the letter had been attached to the Agenda for Members perusal. Following discussion, Cllr Mrs Etherington said that after 22 years of being a School Governor, she would like to stay involved with the school and offered to act as a Liaison between the Parish Council and the school. Cllr Mrs Etherington said that she believed this would help maintain a good rapport with the school and also mentioned the interest that she had in the school in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Plan. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the school and suggest that Cllr Mrs Etherington acts as a Liaison.

C20.262 MEETINGS WITH EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL (EFDC)

Councillors **NOTED** that the Chairman and the Clerk have had meetings with EFDC and Cllr Chris Whitbread over the last 6 weeks regarding the following:

- HMRC Site
- Illegal Bikers

With regard to the HMRC Site the Chairman reported that the most contentious area of concern is HGV usage of Vicarage Lane West. The Chairman advised that he had a meeting with EFDC and Essex Highways on the 8th April and he put a proposal forward for a '10 point plan'. It had been agreed that additional signs are needed at Thornwood (to stop HGVs leaving the B1383), signs at Wellington Road (to stop HGVs turning left or right into Church Lane), a sign on the Merlin Way roundabout (to prevent HGVs from heading towards the Church or the Garden Centre). The Chairman said that Highways had also agreed to signage on the A414 just before the exit on to Vicarage Lane West which will state 'No Entry to the Border Facility'. The Chairman said that he also complained about the general state of the area, trees and foliage have been cut down in Rayley Lane and there is a large amount of litter. He advised that EFDC have agreed to arrange a litter pick. The Chairman also mentioned the possibility of road narrowing restrictions being put in place at both ends of Church Lane to prevent HGVs from using it. The Chairman advised that Alex Burghart MP had also been active and had written to one of the Commissioners at HMRC, who are fully supportive of the 10 point plan. They are looking to stop

vehicles from parking around the Cemetery and are looking to keep the area neat and tidy. The Chairman advised that although Vicarage Lane West is still designated as a Clearway, as there are no Clearway signs and the services of NEPP have been withdrawn, people can park on Vicarage Lane West without the risk of receiving a parking fine. The Chairman said that other good news is that the Parish Council has now received its first tranche of £40,000 from EFDC. The Chairman reminded Members that EFDC had agreed to pay the Parish Council £40,000 per annum for however long HMRC use the site.

The Chairman reported that, together with the Clerk, he had attended a meeting regarding the illegal bikers. The bikers are still gaining access to the golf course via Shooters and also via the footpath adjacent to the Cemetery and by St Clements. Cllr Chris Whitbread has agreed that a letter would be written to the owner of the golf club stating that there would be no access whatsoever for vehicles (including bikes and quad bikes) via Shooters. EFDC had also agreed to put up two styles at either end of the footpath which runs adjacent to St Clements. The Chairman advised that EFDC would also be reinstalling the CCTV by the Cemetery.

C20.263 THORNWOOD OPEN GARDENS

Councillors **NOTED** that the Parish Council had received a request for the use of the Parish Hall at Thornwood's Car Park to be used for Thornwood's Annual Open Gardens Event. This is to be held on 11th July 2021. All Members **AGREED** that the Car Park could be used.

C20.264 WHEELERS FARM GARDENS ALLOTMENTS

Councillors **NOTED** that the relevant letter has been sent from the Solicitor and that no further action is necessary at this time.

C20.265 POLICIES

Councillors were reminded that, once per year, Council is asked to review the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments, and Policies and Procedures in place for this Council. Councillors recalled that it was agreed at the April 2019 meeting that the procedure for all future reviews of Policy Documents would be that 1 copy would be printed off and retained in the Parish Council Office, and that after reviewing these Parish Councillors would be asked to sign a cover sheet stating that they have appraised themselves of the current policy papers. As a result of lockdown measures, this is not possible. Councillors were directed to the Parish Council's website to review the current policy documents contained on the website. Councillors were advised that the only changes since the date they were last approved (April 2020) were as follows:

- **Parish Council CCTV Policy** – new policy, created June 2020, amended September 2020
- **Parish Hall at Thornwood Management Committee** - Suggested that this Committee is now changed to THE PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD LIAISON COMMITTEE and the Terms of Reference are changed accordingly. This suggested change is due to the fact that over the last year it has been the Clerk, the Vice Chairman of the Parish Hall and the Chairman of the Council who have been undertaking all the Management of the Parish Hall,

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and Operating Decisions, with the assistance of the Ward Councillors, when necessary. Going Forward, it has been felt that all the decisions and functions of the Parish Hall would be best managed in this manner, at the current time, and this can be reviewed annually.

- **Data Retention Policy** – new policy. Report from Principal Financial Officer.

A copy of the above stated Policies were attached to the Agenda. It was noted that the remainder could be found on the Parish Council’s website. All Councillors **AGREED** to the changes to the policy documents listed.

All Councillors **CONSIDERED** and **APPROVED** the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments, and Policies and Procedures in place for this Council.

Meeting closed: 9.16pm

Signed

Date

Reference C20.240 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Response to a Member of Public Question who was not in Attendance at the Parish Council Meeting Held on the 26th April 2021.

Question from Member of the Public

I would like the following Questions asked at the April Parish Council meeting under the "Questions from the Public" agenda Item.

Clerks Response to Councillors:

Members are asked to note that it is the usual practice for Members of the Public to be in attendance to ask Question at Parish Council Meetings. Since I have been a Clerk I have never known any Question be put to Council by either a Member of the Public or a Councillor who was not in attendance at a meeting.

As the resident has advised that he will no longer accept emails from myself or the Chairman, and as Clerk and Proper Officer to the Parish Council, we have three options to advise him of the above:

- We could write to where we think he lives – however as he is not on the Electoral Register we are unsure of his actual address and cannot confirm this.
- We can send an email and simply hope he gets it
- We can ask any one of the Councillors he has written to and ask that they advise him that he should attend in person via Zoom

I have some suggested answers on his questions which I will forward to Councillors, as ultimately it will be for them to answer. These will be available for the meeting if members wish them to be.

1. Nepotism in the Parish Council

What is the Parish Council Policy on Nepotism with regard to the Parish Council Staff and Councillors ?

Suggested Response

The Parish Council does not have a Policy on Nepotism. Staff are appointed via an Interview System, Councillors are Elected or Co-Opted.

2. Naming of places after members of the Parish Council

I note from various meeting Minutes of the Parish Council that the PC is involved in the naming of a Road after an ex-Chairman and an area of woodland after an ex-Councillor

Suggested Response

Firstly we believe the road that is being referred to is Cyril Hawkins Close. If this is the case, then this road was named by EFDC and not the Parish Council. The Parish Council initially suggested the name Queen Elizabeth Close which was rejected, then suggested Elizabeth Close in recognition of the Queens Diamond Jubilee. EFDC changed the name and then named the road. Therefore any concerns in this matter should be directed to EFDC, however the Parish Council were notified of this decision and fully supported this.

The area of woodland referred to was first discussed at a meeting of the Environment Committee where Cllr Tyler made the following suggestion:

‘that both areas be named after Cllr Brian Eldridge who sadly passed away in 2020 and had been an avid supporter of more trees in the Parish. ‘

Therefore an item was placed and agreed at the March Parish Council Meeting: where it was agreed

C20.227 TREE PROJECT

Following on from a meeting of the Environmental Committee on 22nd February, Members had noted the 200 free trees that the Clerk had been able to secure. Cllr Buckley had advised as to where the planting would take place. Two of the areas which would take the largest amount of planting were on Weald Common. One being on the site of the old wooden play area and one being in between the small football pitch and the Weald Common play area. It was noted that Cllr Tyler had suggested that both areas be named after Cllr Brian Eldridge who sadly passed away in 2020 and who had been an avid supporter of more trees in the Parish. The suggestions were as follows:

Eldridge Wood, Eldridge Thicket, Eldridge Grove, Eldridge Coppice

*The Chairman advised that 90 trees had been planted in the old play area, with a further 50 planted in the smaller area. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE recommended that the two areas be named as Eldridge Wood and Eldridge Coppice. All Members **AGREED.***

3. By what powers do the Parish Council believe they have the right to do this?

Suggested Response

The Council has a Number of Powers that it could use, however as North Weald Bassett Parish Council holds the General Power of Competence, this would be the most appropriate.

The General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011 Sec 1 (1) gives local authorities, including eligible local councils, “the power to do anything that individuals generally may do” as long as they do not break other laws. It is intended to be a power of first, not last, resort.