



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 1st February 2021

Time: 7.30PM

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (13) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs A Grigg, T Blanks, Mrs S Jackman MBE, A Tyler, B Clegg, R Spearman, Mrs S Hawkins, G Mulliner, Ms D Wood, A Irvine, Mrs P Etherington, Ms C Coop-Rodia*
*Joined late

Officers in Attendance (3)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer

Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (4 – joined at different times as the meeting commenced)

Members of the Press (1)

C20.197 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1)

Apologies received from Cllr Stroud

C20.198 OTHER ABSENCES (1)

No apologies received from Cllr Bedford

C20.199 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 11th January 2021 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.

C20.200 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

C20.201 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

C20.202 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Councillors **NOTED** that all staff have been working on all items within the Agenda.

The Clerk reported that she has had a conversation with a solicitor in relation to 3 Food 4 U. This was following receipt of a letter from a solicitor working on behalf of 3 Food 4 U which was addressed to both the Queens Hall Charity and the Parish Council. The contents of the letter related to the non-availability of the Queens Hall Community Centre. The Clerk stated that Cllr Ms Wood would report further on the matter under Councillors Reports. Councillors **NOTED** that the Chairman and Clerk had taken a delegated decision in response to the matter and it would be the Parish Council's solicitor who would respond accordingly on behalf of

the Queens Hall and the Parish Council.

C20.203 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

a) Chairman's Report – The Chairman reported that the HMRC site had caused a number of problems since opening. There have been a number of complaints from irate residents. The Chairman advised that both he and the Clerk have a meeting to discuss various issues to do with parking and access by HGVs. Both the Chairman and the Clerk visit the site and surrounding areas at least three times a week (on alternate days), to look at parking, monitor litter, etc. The Chairman advised that himself and the Clerk will be asking for EFDC to meet with them on a fortnightly basis, rather than on a monthly basis. He stated that some of the issues raised require immediate attention and they need someone to take responsibility for getting vehicles moved and monitored properly. The Chairman mentioned the car park opposite St Andrew's Church and said that the Reverend had allowed some vehicles to park in there. However, rather than cars using it, HGVs have been parking there and the car park has been completely trashed. Some of the ruts created are 10-12 inches deep. The Clerk is in regular contact with EFDC to get them to take action.

The Chairman reported on the idea to look at the possibility of seeing if there are any premises in the vicinity of North Weald which could be used as a council office for a short period of time. The Chairman and the Clerk would investigate this.

b) Vice Chairman's Report - The Vice Chairman reported that it was still too wet to clear the ditch between the two allotment sites. The Vice Chairman mentioned that there are some small potholes starting to appear in Glovers Lane (by the Village Hall and opposite Gingerbread Cottage) and asked if these could be reported to ECC and added to the pothole list. The Vice Chairman contacted EFDC to report water flowing from the upper field at the flood alleviation scheme behind Thornhill. The water is not coming from the flood scheme, but from the higher ground to the east of it and is flowing down the road towards the Village Hall car park. The Clerk advised that she had been liaising over the past few weeks with Trevor Baker (EFDC Officer) with regard to inspecting the flood alleviation scheme, Weald Common park and the area around the park. The Clerk said that both herself and the Chairman hoped to meet with Trevor on site possibly as early as next week and said that she would also mention the upper flood scheme.

c) District Councillors Reports – none received.

d) County Councillors Reports – none received.

e) Parish Councillors Reports – Cllr Blanks reported on various matters concerning North Weald Airfield, which included the HMRC site and surrounding local area, and works being carried out to the Squadron building. He further reported on matters relating to Qualis and EFDC and advised Members it would make good reading and if they were interested they should go to the EFDC website.

f) Queens Hall Report – Cllr Ms Wood reported that there had been a few issues with 3 Food 4 U which had resulted in an emergency meeting of the Trustees, who voted to withdraw the offer of the Queens Hall with immediate effect. Cllr Ms Wood

said that the decision had resulted in some unpleasant repercussions and untruths being posted by the service provider on social media. As mentioned previously, the Charity received a solicitor's letter asking about the reasons why the Trustees had withdrawn the use of the hall. The Queens Hall Trustees have made it quite clear the reasons behind the decision, which were related to Covid issues and non-adherence to their requests. The Charity are now looking to bridge the gap as they are fully aware that it is a vital service, however, they will be looking for a different service provider for those that are in the parish. Cllr Ms Wood said that the Clerk and the PFO had been very helpful. The Chairman thanked Ms Wood for the report. The Clerk said that if anybody had any questions regarding this matter they would be best to send her an email.

g) Neighbourhood Plan Report – The PFO reported that the draft plan is currently being reviewed by one of the Steering Group members and will be in front of Full Council shortly.

h) EFDC Local Plan Report – The PFO advised that there was no update.

i) Highways Report – The Clerk mentioned that an updated list of the potholes submitted to ECC Cllr Jackson had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that some of the potholes had now been repaired, however there were still a number outstanding. The Clerk asked Members to review the document and report back.

C20.204 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheque & Monthly Statement of Accounts

Members **APPROVED** the list of payments (these were emailed to Councillors prior to the Meeting) which were made up to the 31st January 2021. Members **NOTED** the account balances at the end of the month.

Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE mentioned the payment of £1258 for the two benches and asked what this referred to. The Clerk reminded Members that the payment was for two Reflection Benches and confirmed that the Parish Council had been very fortunate to receive £500 grant funding for one of the benches. It was noted that one of the benches would be installed by the flagpole in North Weald and one would replace the small bench outside the play area at Thornwood. The small bench is to be installed in Cllr Mrs Hawkin's Community Garden at the Thornwood Allotment site.

Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE referred to the payment for Weald Common signs and asked what these were for. The Clerk reminded Members that it had been agreed at the Precept Meeting to purchase signs to identify the Parish Council car parking spaces at Weald Common. It was noted that the signs have been delivered and the Clerk is awaiting a date from the Parish Council's contractor for installation.

C20.205 EFDC AIR POLLUTION MITIGATION STRATEGY

The Principal Financial Officer gave a verbal report briefly explaining the reasoning behind Epping Forest District Council's introduction of an Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy. It was noted that further details, together with a copy of the strategy could be found on EFDC's website, a link to which had been included on the agenda.

C20.206 PARISH COUNCIL CEMETERY

The Clerk confirmed that the Annual Audit had been carried out in the Cemetery. This included the Annual Topple Test and a survey of the Memorials. It was noted that three Memorials need to have work carried out to them and the owners had been written to. The Clerk reported that, at the current time, none of these Memorials had been stabilised, however she had received notification that action would be taken on one. The Clerk reported that there had been an additional problem with another Memorial, however that had now been rectified. It was noted that a further update would be given at either the Environmental Committee Meeting or the next Parish Council Meeting.

C20.207 TREE PROJECT

The Clerk reported that 100 trees, which are from a free tree grant funding project, are to be collected on the 8th February. As agreed at a previous meeting, the trees will be planted by the Parish Council's contractor on the site of the old play area at Weald Common. The trees are to be supplied as whips. It was noted that the Clerk had also been liaising with ECC and EFDC on other Tree Projects. The Clerk reported that District Cllr Holly Whitbread had managed to arrange for some whips planted along the boundary fence by the entrance to the Queens Road Allotments. It was noted that other areas for planting within the parish had not been forgotten about.

C20.208 PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSES TO MEETINGS WITH OTHER PARTIES AND PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO LOCAL PLAN

Councillors *NOTED* that the Clerk had been in correspondence with a local resident regarding this matter and who had asked some very valid questions. The Clerk felt that the responses to the questions should come from the Council, as a body, rather than the Clerk, as the proper officer. A copy of the questions that had been asked, together with the Clerk's answers, was attached to the agenda. The Clerk advised that the resident had suggested that the Parish Council should inform residents of its responses to items such as the Local Plan. The Clerk said that although the Parish Council Minutes do contain quite a lot of information, the resident felt that the council should also be including details or links to where responses could be found on its website. Cllr Mrs Grigg agreed that the resident had raised some valid points about putting more items on the Parish Council's website which would give people an interest, as the minutes are not published until they are approved at the following meeting. The Chairman said Councillors needed to decide what items from the minutes which grasp people's attention could be put on social media. Cllr Blanks said that quite a lot of information from the minutes is picked out and published by David Jackman on Everything Epping Forest. He said that he would not be in support of items being published on social media. Cllr Mulliner said that he agreed with Cllr Blanks.

The Principal Financial Officer said that social media can be a very useful tool to engage members of the public, provided it is managed properly. The PFO mentioned that the council has a group of councillors who manage what is posted on social media, in conjunction with the Clerk. The Clerk suggested that

hyperlinks could be used to signpost items on social media. Cllr Mrs Grigg said that the council could try this to see if it would be helpful. The Clerk said that social media appeared to be the way forward, provided it is used properly. Cllr Irvine said that he believed it should be a general principal that if the council can publish something then it should, with the only exceptions being confidential items. The Chairman said that the council would need to be very selective.

C20.209 HASTINGWOOD ALLOTMENTS

Councillors recalled that the Parish Council was undertaking a de-allotmentisation process of Hastingwood B Allotment site, however this had been put on hold due to COVID-19. During the Precept discussions, in particular in relation to Hastingwood and the uptake in demand for allotment space in the parish, it was agreed that this matter would be placed on an Agenda and Members would be asked if the process should continue or if the site should be considered for allotment purposes, including possibly a communal orchard or such like.

The Clerk stated that the Hastingwood Councillors had asked if the de-allotmentisation of Hastingwood B site could be reconsidered. She said that as there are a large number of homes now being planned for the parish, Hastingwood Ward Councillors had asked if there was a possibility of using Hastingwood B for allotments, an orchard, part open space, etc. The Chairman asked if there was a waiting list for allotments at Hastingwood. The Clerk confirmed that there was a list, with one person waiting. Cllr Irvine said that it really wasn't about having more allotments it was more about using the space for the benefit of the community rather than giving the land up for housing. The Chairman asked how many standard sized allotments would fit into the area. The PFO confirmed that previously there had been 9 plots on the site, however, she said that she believed that there was not enough demand for allotments on the site at the current time. The Chairman summarised what had been said and asked Councillors what their thoughts were.

Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia stated that the idea of turning the space back into an allotment site should not be discounted as residents may not be aware that there are allotments available in their community. Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia mentioned the allotments in North Weald and said that when they were promoted on social media, there was an influx of enquiries. Cllr Clegg suggested that the site should be kept fallow in preference to it being used for housing. Cllr Mrs Grigg said that for a long time there had not been much new development in Hastingwood due to the Green Belt, however as new houses are now being built, she thought that there may more interest in the allotment site. She said that people may also welcome the idea of having benches there and an orchard.

Following further discussion, the Clerk suggested that Cllr Irvine may wish to put an article in CM17 magazine, to ask Hastingwood residents what they would like. Cllr Irvine said that, together with fellow Hastingwood Councillors, they would be quite keen to take this on as a project and what they are looking for is permission to do that. The Clerk advised that a resolution would be required for Members to state that they are happy for the de-allotmentisation to stop and for the Hastingwood Ward Councillors to look at what they could do with the site. Cllr

Irvine **PROPOSED** that the de-allotmentisation process be stopped and permission be given to Hastingwood Ward Councillors to explore the possibilities. Cllr Clegg **SECONDED** the proposal. All Councillors raised their hands in favour of the proposal.

C20.210 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – PROBLEMS WITH OBTAINING RESPONSES ON VARIOUS MATTERS

The Clerk reported that a number of Members had put forward queries in relation Essex County Council matters, to which she was not receiving any responses to. It was noted that some of the matters had been raised in June of last year. The Clerk said that she would like the Parish Council to ask her to contact ECC Cllrs Chris Whitbread and Anthony Jackson and to ask them (from the Parish Council as a body) to investigate the reasons why responses are not being received. The Chairman asked the Clerk if she had lists of the matters which were outstanding. The Clerk confirmed that that she did have a list of items, for example Highways matters and Public Rights of Way. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, suggested that if that did not work, the Clerk could write to David Finch. Cllr Blanks said that he was in favour and said that he would **PROPOSE** that the Clerk write to the Essex County Councillors on behalf of the Parish Council to investigate further. The proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Spearman. A vote was taken as follows: 12 in favour, 1 abstention (Cllr Tyler gave apologies as he had left the meeting whilst this item had been discussed).

C20.211 GOING FORWARD – PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had written to all groups and organisations to advise them of the current Government Guidance and what the situation is. It was noted that the COVID-19 testing centre is still in the Car Park and apart from a few ‘hiccups’ at the beginning, there have been many positive reports from the community of it being there. It was noted that the Clerk had been in conversation with the Clinical Commissioning Group with regard to the possibility of the hall being used as a Vaccination Centre, but nothing further had come from this, other than an email being received by the Clerk noting the conversation.

Councillors were asked to consider the purchase of a De-Misting Sanitizer, for Health and Safety reasons, for the hall. The product could be used to sanitize the hall and office overnight which would leave the building 99.9999% safe. The sanitizer works on a timer system. The Clerk advised that Cllr Ms Wood already had the product in her office at work. Cllr Ms Wood said that the Queens Hall also had installed the product and explained in further detail how it worked. The Chairman asked if she thought one sanitizer would be sufficient for the Parish Hall. Cllr Ms Wood confirmed that she thought it would be as the one at the Queens Hall was more than adequate. Cllr Clegg asked the Clerk if there was a fund available to purchase the product. The Clerk confirmed that there was and also advised that she was trying to make a grant application to EFDC. Cllr Clegg stated that he was in favour of purchasing the sanitizer and said that he thought it was a small price to pay to keep the facility up and running. Cllr Ms D Wood **PROPOSED** that the product be purchased. Cllr Clegg **SECONDED** the proposal. All Members voted in favour.

The Principal Financial Officer advised Members that the link on the Parish Council's website had not been working and offered apologies to anyone who had tried to join the meeting. The PFO confirmed that she would look into the reason why.

C20.212 PURCHASE OF IT EQUIPMENT & COUNCILLOR EMAIL ADDRESSES

Following a verbal report at the January Meeting by the Clerk and PFO, which was also backed up by the Internal Auditor, Members had seen the need for Councillors to have either an iPad, android tablet or Chromebook, together with use of a specific council email address, dedicated for council business. A quote had been sent to Councillors prior to the meeting. The matter was discussed at great length. The Chairman asked Members how they wished to proceed. A number of Councillors asked that the matter be expediated as soon as possible and for the Clerk to take further advice on this. Cllr Ms Wood **PROPOSED** that all Members have a specific council email address and that the purchase and selection of IT equipment be considered by Councillors at a future meeting. The proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia. The Chairman asked for a show of hands and the vote was recorded as follows:

12 in favour, 1 abstention.

C20.213 APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

a) Parish Council Planning Committee

Cllr Mrs P Etherington had expressed an interest in being nominated on to the Planning Committee. All Members **AGREED**.

b) Parish Council Environmental Committee

Cllr Ms Coop-Rodia had expressed an interest in being nominated on to the Environmental Committee. All Members **AGREED**.

c) Queens Hall Charity

Councillors **NOTED** that Parish Council Appointed Trustee Jon Schlanker had resigned as Trustee from the Queens Hall Charity. The Appointment of a new Trustee will be held over until the AGM of the Queens Hall Charity which is due to be held in the Spring.

C20.214 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

Due to the nature of the item to be discussed, the press and public were asked to leave the meeting and were excluded, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of the confidential report attached to the agenda and **AGREED** that due process is being followed.

Meeting closed: 9.50pm

MINUTES

Signed

Date