



DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: ANNUAL PARISH
COUNCIL

Date: 4th May 2020

Time: 7.30PM

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

PRESENT:

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

Officers in Attendance (3)

Susan Deluca - Clerk
Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer
Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

Also present (3)

ECC Councillor and Leader of EFDC, C Whitbread
District Councillor Miss H Whitbread
District Councillor L Burrows

Members of the Public (1)

Members of the Press (1)

The Chairman welcomed Councillors and the Member of the Public to the meeting.

The Chairman asked those in attendance to join with him in observing a one minute silence in memory of the late Councillor, Brian Eldridge.

The Chairman read out a statement regarding The Law and new regulations which had come into force on 4 April 2020 which allow councils to hold virtual meetings at which members attend remotely via video conferencing. The regulations, in response to the Coronavirus crisis and the need for social distancing and isolation, ended the previous requirement for voting members to attend meetings in person. These regulations are in place for a period of one year.

A full copy of the statement is attached to the minutes.

C20.001 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Clerk stated that Members were asked to **NOTE** that no Elections should take place if someone currently holds office, however Members could agree that the current Chairman remains in place until 6th May 2021, under the Coronavirus Bill.

Members **NOTED** that they could still choose to show their support and take an ‘informal’ vote for the Minutes during these unprecedented times. All Members **AGREED** that Cllr Buckley should remain in the Office of Chairman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council for the current Municipal Year.

C20.002 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman **PROPOSED** Cllr Mrs Grigg as Vice Chairman, the proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Ms Wood. There being no other nominations, Cllr Mrs Grigg was duly elected as Vice Chairman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council for the current Municipal Year.

C20.003 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (0)

None.

C20.004 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

None.

C20.005 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 2nd March 2020 were **AGREED**. Members **NOTED** that due to the Coronavirus outbreak, no Parish Council Meeting was held in April 2020.

C20.006 VACANCY – HASTINGWOOD WARD

Members **NOTED** the Vacancy for a Councillor in the Hastingwood Ward. A Notice of Vacancy had been placed on the three Hastingwood Noticeboards and the central North Weald Noticeboard, together with the Parish Council Website on Monday, 27th April. These will be publicised for 21 days, after which if an election is called then this will happen after 6th May 2021. Members **NOTED** that the Clerk is trying to ascertain the rules on Co-Options.

C20.007 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Bedford declared a non pecuniary interest in any agenda item concerning the Local Plan and by virtue of being a member of the Harlow & Gilston Project. Cllr Spearman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in any agenda item concerning the Local Plan. Cllr Stroud declared a non pecuniary interest in any agenda item concerning North Weald Scouts.

C20.008 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman read out a statement in accordance with Standing Orders. There were no questions from members of the public.

C20.009 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Members **NOTED** that a Report from the Clerk had been circulated with the agenda. The Clerk advised that she had not received any questions regarding the report prior to the meeting.

The Clerk advised Members that there was one additional item, which she had circulated prior to the meeting, regarding a poster to celebrate VE Day. Both Cllr Mrs Grigg and Cllr Tyler stated that they thought it was a very good idea. The Clerk stated that the poster would be displayed on the Notice Boards, on the Parish Council's website and promoted via a Press Release. All Members **AGREED**.

C20.010 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

Members **NOTED** that there were currently still vacancies on the Management Committee at the Parish Hall at Thornwood and the Trustees at the Queens Hall.

Members determined the membership of the Council's Standing Working Committees as follows:-

- a) Planning Committee (11 Members) to meet 1st and 3rd Mondays (usually) subject to plans being available.
- b) Environmental Committee (7 but Open to All Members) to meet monthly during the day, usually four times a year.
 - i) Allotments Sub Committee (3 Members of The Environmental Committee) to have delegated power to act on all matters relating to the allotments to meet weekly during the day (usually Wednesday mornings).
- c) Finance & General Purpose Committee (Open to All Members) to meet once or twice a year, but always to meet to set the Budget and Precept.
- d) Personnel Committee (Usually 5 Members) to meet as and when necessary.
- e) Emergency Personnel Working Group (3 Members of the Personnel Committee to meet at short notice.
- f) Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Blanks, Cllr Clegg.

The following changes were **AGREED**:-

- Cllr Mrs Hawkins to join the Environmental Committee, the Allotment Sub Committee and the Personnel Committee.
- Cllr Ms Wood to be removed from the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and to join the Planning Committee
- Cllr Stroud to join the Planning Committee
- Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, to join Environmental Committee
- Cllr Irvine confirmed that he would be happy to join any Committee that was in need of more members (other than Planning or Parish Hall)

Cllr Tyler referred to the Environmental Committee and asked if it would be possible to hold the meetings in the evening to allow those Councillors who are not available during the day the opportunity to attend. He suggested the meetings could be held after the Planning Meeting on the third Monday in the month. Cllr Clegg stated that he supported the suggestion. Cllr Clegg also mentioned that although he was happy to continue as a member of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Management Committee, he found it difficult to attend meetings on a Thursday evening due to prior commitments. The Chairman referred back to the possibility of changing the meeting times for the Environmental Committee and stated that as the Committee only meet three or four times a year he would be in support of a change. The Clerk confirmed that this could be accommodated.

Cllr Mrs Hawkins confirmed that she would continue to be a member of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Management Committee.

The Clerk referred to the Emergency Plan and stated that this was something that would need to be looked at in the near future and she would speak to both Cllr Clegg and Cllr Irvine moving forward. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, asked if each Parish Council had its own Emergency Plan. The Clerk confirmed that this Council did have an Emergency Plan, however it is down to its 'bare bones'. The Clerk advised that the

plan was recently put into place, despite lockdown, when there was a fire in Thornwood and the Parish Hall was opened up for anyone who had to be evacuated from their home.

C20.011 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Members **NOTED** that due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the Council would be issuing a Notice of Meetings Schedule once further information is available regarding the Lockdown Periods and whether these meetings would be held electronically or in a Meeting in Person setting.

C20.012 REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Members **AGREED** the Council’s representatives on outside bodies as follows:-

OUTSIDE BODIES	
Outside Body	Representation Council Year 20/21
Parish Passenger Transport Forum	Cllr Mrs A Grigg
Norway House	Chairman of Parish Council
North Weald Village Hall	Cllr Bedford
Epping Forest District Council Committees	
- Epping Forest Branch of the Association of Local Councils – two reps (clerks may also attend these meetings)	Cllr Mrs S Jackman MBE, & Chairman & Clerk
- Local Councils’ Liaison Committee – two reps (clerks may also attend these meetings)	As Above
- Joint Standards Committee – one rep (but only if your council is a member of this)	Cllr Bedford

Cllr Ms Wood referred to Norway House and offered her support.

Queens Hall Charity

Members **NOTED** that in the Governing Document the Term of Office is for One Year.

Parish Council Appointed Trustees for 2020 / 21	Dawn Wood – Councillor, Administrator & Treasurer Colin Kinnear – Resident Jamie Prior – Resident John Schlanker – Resident Stuart Greenhill – Resident Terry Blanks – Councillor George Mulliner – Councillor
Groups	Helen Gould – Red School Ian Cuthbert – UKA Karate Vince Curran – NWCC Diane Archer – Bowls Sarah Cook – Badminton

Members **NOTED** that a new date for the Annual Meeting of the Queens Hall Charity would be advised in due course.

C20.013 REGISTRATION OF COUNCILLORS INTERESTS

Members were **REMINDED** that they should review their Interests on a regular basis and that the Clerk was advising Members as such on behalf of EFDC's Monitoring Officer. Members **NOTED** that any updated forms must be submitted to EFDC within 28 days of any change and that it is a legal requirement. Cllr Mrs Grigg requested a new form, the Clerk confirmed that it would be sent via email.

C20.014 REPORTS AND MEMBERS REPORTS

a) Chairman's Report – The Chairman advised that he had been asked by Mrs Eldridge to pass on her thanks to everyone for their kind wishes.

The Chairman reported that the management team at Norway House are all isolated, therefore any projects have been suspended at the current time. The Chairman said that he would like to see the Sunflower Competition continue and Cllr Tyler confirmed that he had grown a number of plants from seed in readiness.

The Chairman referred to the Clerk's report and said that she had given her thanks to the office team for their efforts, however, he would like it recorded that the Clerk has put a tremendous effort in since the 16th March, adding that she had always been one step ahead in keeping everyone updated with Government Guidance and ensuring that things carry on as normal despite everyone having to work from home. The Chairman stated that he would like to register a huge vote of thanks to the Clerk. All Members **AGREED** unanimously.

b) Vice Chairman's Report – No report.

c) District Councillors Reports

Cllr Bedford reported that there had been problems with the forest, park guards have been employed to stop people from parking. There have also been problems in trying to ensure social distancing, Cllr Bedford stated that this will continue to be an issue, however it is being worked on. Looking at North Weald as a village, Cllr Bedford stated that he believed we had come through this rather well and asked that a letter of thanks be sent to the Co-op, North Weald Chemists and the Post Office for managing to stay open and serve the people of the village during this difficult time. All Members **AGREED**.

Cllr Miss Whitbread gave a brief update on her portfolio which is for Housing at EFDC. Cllr Miss Whitbread reported that a total of 9 rough sleepers were identified and placed in appropriate accommodation for the period of the lockdown. In terms of Sheltered Housing and more vulnerable residents, around 200 phone calls were made and a sustained ongoing relationship is being maintained. The Clerk mentioned that there was a concern with the allotment site at Queens Road and it is understood that the builders are still working, even though Cllr Bedford had enquired about this and had been told that the builders were not working. The Allotment Warden has confirmed to the Clerk that they are still working. Cllr Miss Whitbread confirmed

that she would look into this again.

Cllr Whitbread reported that he had good news with regard to the grants to local businesses and stated that 95% are now out and EFDC are ahead of all the other councils in Essex and in the Eastern Region. Cllr Whitbread said that there would be lessons for us all to learn at the end of this and he thanked the Parish Council and said that what has been done as a parish has been first class in dealing with issues locally. Cllr Whitbread said that we are making progress, however, his biggest concern now was the end of lockdown and how we move forward.

Cllr Tyler mentioned that he had seen that the car wash was open earlier today and asked if the District Councillors were aware. Cllr Bedford stated that he had looked into this previously and reported that the Police had visited there and the car wash had been stopped from operating. The Chairman confirmed that he had also seen that it was open at the weekend. Cllr Bedford stated that he would make further enquiries. Cllr Clegg advised that the car wash in Thornwood was also open on what appeared to be an intermittent basis. Cllr Bedford asked Cllr Clegg to send an email to him with further details following the meeting.

d) County Councillor Reports

Cllr Whitbread reported that Highways are looking to complete items, however, any works are taking longer as they are having to be completed in line with social distancing.

e) Parish Councillors Reports – No report.

f) Queens Hall Report – Members *NOTED* that this had been included under the Clerk's Report.

g) Neighbourhood Plan – Members *NOTED* that the Neighbourhood Plan is currently on hold.

h) EFDC Local Plan Report – no report.

C20.015 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts

Members *APPROVED* the lists of payments (these were emailed to Councillors prior to the meeting) which were made up to the 30th April 2020. Members *NOTED* the account balances at the end of the month.

b) Approval of Accounts 2019/2020

A copy of the Final Accounts for 2019/2020 had been circulated with the agenda. Members were asked to vote by raising their hands. Following a unanimous vote, the Final Accounts for 2019/2020 were *APPROVED*.

c) Appointment of Internal Auditor

Members *CONFIRMED* the appointment of Auditing Solutions as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the year 2020/2021. Members *NOTED* that the final Internal Audit for 2019/2020 would be carried out remotely.

d) Financial Risk Assessment & Business Continuity Plan

Members **NOTED** that the Council is required to undertake a review of the Financial Risk Assessment in place on a yearly basis. Both the Financial Risk Assessment and the Business Continuity Plan had been updated and were attached to the agenda. Members **APPROVED** both documents.

e) External Audit

Members **NOTED** that due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the deadline by which the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) together with any certificate or opinion issued by the local auditor must be published, had been extended from 30 September 2020 to 30 November 2020. Previously there had been a requirement for all smaller authorities to have a common period for the exercise of public rights, being the first 10 working days of July. Under the new regulations there is no requirement for a common period for the exercise of public rights. Smaller authorities are still required to set a period for this purpose, but the only requirement is that the 30 working day period for the exercise of public rights should start on or before 1 September 2020. This SI was issued on 7 April and is effective from 30 April 2020.

C20.016 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTH WEALD VILLAGE LIFE VOLUNTEERS

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had been working closely with June at North Weald Village Life with regard to the North Weald Volunteer Group, who are helping with Volunteer Efforts to vulnerable people. June had been in contact with another person within Thornwood to see if any help was needed in that Village. The Clerk has been in contact with Cllr Shirley Hawkins at least three times a week to ensure that any help needed can be passed on (Thornwood is being run on a stand alone basis mainly by neighbours for each adjacent neighbour, however June has advised that she has contacted a Thornwood resident who advised that she would run a group if necessary). The Clerk has contacted a Hastingwood resident who has advised that she is not aware of any scheme that is running or if there is a need for one, however she is aware that a number of residents are supporting one another with shopping and medicine.

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had drawn up a document, which was attached to the Agenda for Members perusal. The document detailed what has been happening within the Parish. June has had the opportunity to include the Volunteer input and has done so. The document will be published as a joint Parish Council and North Weald Village Life Document. The Clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman, made the Delegated Decision to grant the North Weald Village Life Volunteer Effort of up to £500 to spend on essential items such as Petrol, Hand Sanitiser, Gloves, Masks and small items of shopping that they cannot be reimbursed for. June will provide an Excel Sheet of what the money has been spent on and the first £250 tranche of this funding has been paid. Parish Councils have the power to make grants to community voluntary organisations. The gain must be commensurate with the amount spent and can only be spent where there is no other power available. Local Government Act 10972 sec 137 capped at £8.32 per elector in 2020/2021. The £500 granted is well

within that range.

Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE, stated that she was surprised at the title of the document as volunteers do not get paid. The Clerk advised that Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE was quite right in what she had said, volunteers do not get paid, however the money is for payment towards petrol, phone calls, etc., that volunteers cannot be reimbursed for. The Clerk stated that it may be the £500 is not used which is the reason only £250 is being released in the first tranche. The Chairman confirmed that June would be keeping a spread sheet and will detail exactly what the money is spent on. Cllr Stroud stated that he had been speaking to June about this and advised that he is one of the volunteers and is involved with dropping essential items to vulnerable people in the village. Cllr Stroud said that nobody is volunteering for any financial gain and stated that if the grant funding is used he believed it would only be a minimal amount. Cllr Stroud said that this situation is not going away and the longer it goes on for, the more vulnerable people who are isolating could become and added that the volunteers are doing an amazing job. Cllr Stroud mentioned that he had also discussed with June the possibility of setting up something to celebrate the birthdays of those people who are living on their own and are unable to see anyone or may not have any family around. Cllr Tyler stated that he supported what Cllr Stroud had said and advised that he had been delivering prescriptions around the village and had met a number of extremely lonely people who are finding that lockdown is a struggle. Cllr Tyler gave an example of one person whom he had met who had not spoken to another person for over a week. Cllr Clegg stated that he would like to support what both Cllr Stroud and Cllr Tyler had said and suggested that if this situation continues, the Parish Council should be in a position to review the amount of money in the future. Cllr Clegg stated that there are some excellent people in Thornwood who have been helping himself and his wife as they have been unable to leave their home for the past seven weeks.

The Clerk stated that by drawing up the document and putting aside the £500 it shows that the Parish Council are looking and listening and are actually doing something for the Parish. Cllr Bedford said that we should be congratulated as a Parish Council for initiating the £500 grant funding and going forward it should be an item on the agenda for the Emergency Planning Group. All Members **RATIFIED** the expenditure.

C20.017 PARISH COUNCIL INSURANCE

Members **NOTED** that the Parish Council's insurance is due for renewal on 1st June 2020. The price for renewal is £3,393.93, which represents a 4.5% increase on 2019/2020. It was noted that the increase was not unexpected due to the Storage Container now being insured. A copy of policy document would be made available for perusal if required. All Members **AGREED** to the renewal of the insurance policy.

C20.018 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE / POLICY DOCUMENTS

Councillors were reminded that in April 2019 the Council's Policy & Procedure documents were agreed after being amended. When the documents were last approved, Councillors advised that they did not wish to receive full hard copies of these documents and simply wanted to be advised of any changes. In October 2019

Members approved and adopted, at full Council, an updated version of the Parish Council's Environmental Policy. Members **CONFIRMED** that they were content to **ADOPT** the documents as listed on the attachment to the agenda, on block as Policy Documents with a review date of April 2021.

C20.019 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – HIGHWAY CONCERNS

As agreed at the previous full Council Meeting, Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had written a formal letter to Cllr Kevin Bentley at ECC regarding concern at a lack of response to a number of items raised at meetings with ECC Local Highways Officer Sarah Alcock. The letter was sent to County Hall by post at the beginning of April. At the time of this meeting, a response from Cllr Bentley was still awaited. The Chairman stated that he had noticed both Queens Road and Higham View had recently had new white road markings, he advised that neither of these side roads had been on the original list. Cllr Blanks stated that it would be a good idea to ask Cllr Bentley if he could also look at the drain covers as lorries are damaging them. Cllr Stroud mentioned the roundabout near to the Library and advised that there is a problem there as the road is always wet. Cllr Bedford referred back to the letter and suggested that Cllr Whitbread may wish to comment on the road issues. Cllr Whitbread stated that he understood the frustrations with regard to awaiting a response from the Local Highways Panel. He informed Members that the key issues he had been looking into were in Forest Glade and he has had meetings with Cllr Bentley regarding reducing the speed limit in the High Road in Thornwood. Cllr Whitbread asked the Clerk to email the list of concerns to him and he would pass it to Cllr Bentley.

C20.020 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY & CIVIC AWARDS CEREMONY

Councillors **NOTED** that it is a legal requirement that the Annual Parish Assembly has to be held during the 1st March to 1st June. This is the meeting which is open to all parishioners and those who are registered on the Electoral Role have a right to speak and question the Council over any matter that they may be able to answer. It is also the Platform at which the Council usually hosts its Annual Awards Ceremony. Robert Jenrick, the Minister for Communities and Local Government, has advised the Parish and Town Councils can agree not to hold this meeting this year, due to the COVID-19 crisis. All Members **CONFIRMED** that they accept to agree the ruling to defer the Annual Parish Assembly for this year.

With regard to postponing the Annual Awards Ceremony, Members **AGREED** that the matter be placed on the September full Council meeting agenda for further discussion.

The Chairman and the Clerk thanked everyone for joining the meeting and thanked Adriana for ensuring that the technology was in place to allow this meeting to be held.

Meeting closed: 8.45pm

Signed

Date