



26th May 2020

TO: ALL COUNCILLORS

You are summoned to attend a Meeting of the Parish Council which will be held on Monday 1st June 2020 at 7.30pm

There will be no physical meeting in line with current government guidelines and therefore all communications will be conducted electronically via ZOOM. A link will be sent out to you in order that you are able to access the meeting.

Clerk to the Council

Susan De Luca

Members of the public and press are invited to attend this meeting

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE 🖐️

To **RECEIVE** any apologies for absence

2. OTHER ABSENCES

To **NOTE** any absences for which no apology has been received.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES 🖐️

📄 To **APPROVE**, as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 4th May 2020 as attached **Appendix 1**.

4. VACANCY – HASTINGWOOD WARD

Further to the details given to Members in relation the Vacancy for the Hastingwood Ward, it is understood that no election has been called for. Therefore the Clerk has sourced information that confirms the Parish can co-opt if they so wish. Members will recall that in the past they have always had a preference to interview in person any person who has put themselves forward as a candidate. The Clerk has had a couple of enquiries and has spoken to the Chairman in this matter. Members are asked if they wish to hold this matter in abeyance until the September Meeting when it is quite possible that ‘small gatherings’ could indeed be possible, or other ways of interviewing candidates for co-option could be looked at. If there are no changes to Government Guidance by that date then the Candidates would need to put in a CV and have an interview by ZOOM.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To **RECEIVE** any Declarations of Interest by Members.

A Member with a personal interest in a matter must consider whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Non Pecuniary or Other Pecuniary Interest, and declare it accordingly. A Member who is unsure as to how to declare their interest should seek independent advice

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC


To **RECEIVE** questions from members of the public for a *period determined by the Chairman of the Meeting*. **Please NOTE the Clerk may have to Note Questions and respond to them after the Meeting.**

7. REPORT OF THE CLERK

MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO NOTE THAT THE CLERK AND THE STAFF HAVE ALL BEEN WORKING ON ITEMS WITHIN THE AGENDA.

NOTE: Any Member wishing to have a communication brought to the attention of the Council should give prior notification to the Clerk.

8. REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

 Members are reminded that in order to ensure smooth and prompt running of the meeting it would be prudent to provide the Clerk with a written copy of their report in order that this can be circulated to all Members with the Agenda.

To **RECEIVE** any reports from Members who wish to give a report and/or who are representatives on Committees, Working Groups, Outside Bodies and other meetings that Members or the Clerk have attended and which, **if available**, will be reproduced at *Appendix 2 if they have been submitted by Members for inclusion*

MEMBERS REPORTS INCLUDED WITH THIS AGENDA

- a) Chairman's Report
- b) Vice Chairman's Report
- c) District Councillors Reports, District Councillors are Invited to Submit a Written Report if they are Unable to Attend the Parish Council Meeting
- d) County Councillor Reports
- e) Parish Councillors Reports
- f) Queens Hall Report – Cllr Wood has included a Reported in the Confidential Part of this meeting – as it relates to a Financial Matter
- g) Neighbourhood Plan Report – Neighbourhood Plan currently on hold
- h) EFDC Local Plan Report - No Report at the Moment
- i) Highways Report – To be circulated electronically prior to the meeting

9. FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts

To **APPROVE** the lists of payments which have been made up to the 31st May 2020 and **NOTE** the account balances at the end of the month - **this list will be circulated prior to the Meeting**

10. PARISH COUNCIL GOING FORWARD

Enclosed with this Agenda is a report together with other documentation in relation to the use of the Parish Office 'Going Forward.' As you can see from the report a number of concerns have been

raised regarding the use of the current office within the Library premises and the ability to Socially Distance and to adhere to the relevant Government Guideline in relation to new Cleaning regimes. A copy of the report is attached at **Appendix 3** together with a number of emails from ECC Library Services in relation to questions we have raised regarding the use of the space within the Library and Government Guidance surrounding this.

Neither the Clerk nor the Staff (after the Clerk has consulted with them as she is legally obliged to do) have confidence that Social Distancing or adequate cleaning could be carried out within the setting of the ECC Library Premises at the current time. Therefore, there is a real concern that this building would not be a safe building to return to for any work. The current Government Guidelines are that Employees should work from home if it is possible. Whilst the staff can fulfil the job working from home, there does need to be some sort of front line service for the public going forward and once the Government says it is safe to do so with the appropriate measures in place. Looking at all the options that have been detailed in the report, it that the safest option would be to 'Offer a Service to the Public' out of the Parish Hall in Thornwood. There would be a minimal cost to this Council, and the service could be easily offered with Social Distancing & Appropriate Cleaning easily maintained. It keeps the Hall used and the Caretaker employed.

Added to this EFDC will be reducing its service to customers as it will be closing some of its Receptions with over 400 staff working from home for a considerable time due to the Civic Offices being partially closed and renovated. The service to the public which the Parish Council may be able to offer from a base in Thornwood may indeed be of benefit to many local parish residents.

The main difference in the Parish Council service is that we would be based in Thornwood however we must remember that we are a Parish Council, and as such North Weald Bassett does cover the whole of the Parish. It may be that, as some of you who have been involved with the Neighbourhood Plan will have taken on board, that it may be possible to negotiate a premises for the Parish Council within the terms of any property building that is proposed within the Local Plan. When you take into account recent speeches by Government, house building and infrastructure do now seem to be a priority by the Government.

Despite numerous requests ECC is unable to advise when they will be offering a Library service, however as you will be able to see from the documents that have been included they will no changes to the current cleaning schedule. Taking all this into account Members are asked to **CONFIRM** if they are happy to move forward on a **TEMPORARY** basis with offering a Front Line Service from the Parish Hall in Thornwood, when Government Guidelines suggest it is appropriate.

11. PARISH HALL GOING FORWARD

Members are advised that as of 4th July, the Government Guidance is that Halls may be able to re-Open subject to the 'R' Rate being at an appropriate level. This council is also Guided by RCCE / EALC who are sending over their interpretation of Government Guidance. The Clerk has been sending this to the relevant Councillors where she has felt this appropriate. There has been an inordinate abundance of documentation that only the relevant documents have been sent to avoid 'document overload' to Members. However to ensure that the Parish Council Chairman and Vice Chairman, and the same for the Parish Hall, together with the relevant Ward Councillors know where they stand with the Parish Hall the Clerk has copied them into emails with regard to communications with groups who use the Hall,

The Clerk has contacted all the Hall users and it seems highly unlikely that any of the usual groups will return before September, and some may not even return then. It is expected that the Hall may lose around £7,000 in Hall users income between the start of the lockdown period and the 1st September. Unfortunately unlike other Halls who benefitted from the £10,000 EFDC Business Rates Grant in the area (such as Queens Hall, North Weald Village Hall and Hastingwood Village Hall), the Parish Hall at Thornwood did not receive this money as it is owned by a Precepting Authority, ie the Parish Council and therefore is not a beneficiary to this grant funding. It may be that the Parish Council may need to complete a budget virement to deal with any expected shortfall.

The Caretaker is still maintaining the hall and doing his other regular jobs around the hall. He has received an additional list of jobs to do to ensure that any additional time he has is kept to good use, which has including clearing up after socially unacceptable gathering and leaving detritus strewn all over the field and broken glass in the car park.

The Clerk has drawn up some Schedules called 'Restart For Hall & Caretaker' and 'Draft Cleaning Schedule' (some amendments may be necessary dependent on Government Guidance before any opening – however they are the current appropriate documents to work from in the absence of any other documents). These are attached at *Appendix 4* for Members information, and will give Members a brief insight into how the Hall will move forward into the next step towards opening .

12. OPEN SPACES SIGNAGE

After an in depth review of the Government Guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19):

Safer Public Places - Urban Centres and Green Spaces (circulated to all Members on 13th May 2020), the Clerk and Principal Finance Officer have reviewed the Parish Council Open Spaces that they are liable and responsible for and appropriate signage has been ordered. The Parish Council Contractor is currently undertaking erection of the signs in line with this guidance.

13. CEMETERY

Since the lockdown we have had 4 Interments, 3 Memorial Applications and 1 Application for a seat. However we are aware of a number of people who have passed away within the parish, who have plots in the cemetery. It is understood their families may wish to have their loved ones Ashes interred once the rigorous rules in relation to interments at cemeteries and the numbers that can attend services have been relaxed.

14. GDPR FILING

Good Progress continues, with inroads into the filing into the Container by Clerk, and into two of the Large Filing Cabinets in the Staff Room (these were delivered to the Senior Administrative Officer from the Parish Staff Room), one large Filing Cabinet is left to sort from the Staff Room and 15 plastic boxes from the Container.

15. AUDIT

The Internal Audit is being carried out remotely. The Clerk received notification from the internal auditor that due to staffing resources within his company he may be a couple of weeks behind schedule.

16. ALLOTMENTS

There has been a large uptake of Allotments on the Wheelers Farm Garden site, and a new temporary warden has been appointed, who has done an extremely good job in raising awareness off the

allotments and getting people to take up the allotments. However this has meant an expenditure on the allotments. This expenditure was made available from the Allotment/Handyman Fund and has represented good use of this funding.

17. CCTV PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD

The Chairman will give an update on CCTV at this location.

18. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

In the event that the Agenda contains Exempt (pink) pages, or an item needs to be discussed confidentially, to **CONSIDER** the following motion to be proposed by the Chairman:

“That the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, 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. However an item may be placed in the Confidential part of the meeting so long as it is accordance with the Statutory Guidance,

There is currently **ONE** confidential item to be considered

Agenda Item No 8f

Subject Queens Hall Charity

Exempt Item Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Section(1,2&3)