

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 20th July 2020 Via Zoom

Present Jim Gillett, Adrian Keward, Paul Mundy, Neil Jackson, Pat Sutlieff, Roanna Collis, Claire Andersen and Jane Hartley.

Apologies for Absence

Absent

7441/20 Open Forum – Hilary Jones and Mike Heath joined the meeting to introduce themselves, with a view to joining the Parish Council by co-option in September. Francesca Hobson of Wokingham Borough Council joined the meeting to explain about the natural floodwater scheme for the river Loddon the Borough is exploring. Although the Environment Agency is responsible for reducing the effects of fluvial flooding, because not many homes are directly affected in the Borough, the area is not seen as high priority – the main problem is the flooding of roads. The idea that the Borough is exploring is to reduce the flow of the river south of the M4 in Shinfield, so that when it rains heavily, this area floods, rather than the villages downstream. A third-party landowner in Shinfield is happy to help as they were looking to do some research into wetlands, and this would provide the right environment. It may also be possible to have a small hydro-electric scheme. It would also improve the ecology of the area. The Borough is hoping to secure grant funding from central Government for this scheme, which will cost millions of pounds, as the Government are more interested in infrastructure than before, but applications are looked on more favourably if there is joint funding with the towns and parishes, which is why the Borough is asking the Parish Council for a contribution. Council asked for information as to how much other Parishes have committed to this project, and more detail on the feasibility of the scheme. Francesca Hobson is to send this information to the clerk. The Chairman thanked her for attending and she left at 8.28. The two prospective councillors then introduced themselves, each giving a brief biopic and reasons why they are interested. They stayed for the duration of the meeting.

7442/20 Declarations of Interest – There were no declarations of interest

7443/20 Minutes of the Council Meeting of the 15th June 2020 – These minutes were approved by Council.

FINANCE

7444/20 Finance Reports – It was resolved to approve these which was done unanimously.

7445/20 Authorisation of Payments – It was resolved to approve the following payments which was done unanimously:

- £48.08 to Grundon Waste Management Ltd
- £135.80 to A1 Locksmiths
- £37.34 to British Gas Services Ltd
- £142.45 to the Assistant Clerk
- £84 to CCB
- £247.76 to Aquacare
- £256.71 to the Clerk
- £1244.32 to Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd

£43.88 to Bowak
£30 to HAGS-SMP Ltd
£59.69 to Dual Energy
£30.62 to SSE
£31.10 to Village Warden
£3.75 to Opus Energy Ltd

- 7446/20 To consider the request for CIL funds to put toward the Flooding Alleviation project** – This was deferred until more information is provided.
- 7447/20 To consider a request from the Borough Councillor to contribute to the cost of improving the road surface on Milestone Avenue** – The Borough Councillor had explained previously that originally the funds were to come from the Borough Council, but on closer examination by the engineers, the work was going to cost far more than first envisaged. As most of the residents want the work done, they are prepared to pay for it themselves, but the Borough Councillor wanted to know whether the Parish was willing to pay £20,000 (which is 40% of the precept) toward the project. She explained that the road would not be adopted but would be maintained. The Parish Council felt that to spend such a large amount of money to benefit relatively few residents, who had chosen to live on an unmade road, was not the best use of Parish funds – if it were to benefit the whole of the northern part of Charvil, they may view it differently, but the Parish priorities should be on schemes that will benefit as many residents as possible, so it was resolved not to accept this request which was carried unanimously.
- 7448/20 To consider one S137 grant application from Keep Mobile and one ordinary grant application from Wokingham's Citizen's Advice** – It was resolved to give £500 to Keep Mobile and £700 to Wokingham Citizen's Advice. It was noted that the latter organization had been pivotal in the Borough's Covid response.
- 7449/20 To hear an update on the preliminary work on the CIL project** – Cllr. Mundy explained that the company he approached for giving an idea of the cost of the project estimated that it would be between £500,000-£750,000 depending on various unknowns. The question is, does the Council want to commit to such a large project, and the general feeling was that if WBC were happy to allow the changes to the lease, then given the population of the village is set to increase, and the needs of groups like the Scouts are to grow, then such an investment would be prudent. Cllr. Mundy, the clerk and the Chairman are due to meet with Mark Redfearn of WBC and they would report back at the next meeting.
- 7450/20 Planning, Environment and Highways Committee** – The minutes of the meeting via Zoom on 6th July were noted.
Cllrs. Hartley and Andersen have visited all the sites with planning applications this month. They are due to meet some representatives of Earley Orchards to discuss the viability of the Village Hall park site for an orchard and will report back in September. Wokingham have been approached about the possibility of the asset transfer of both this site and one off Mendip Close for vegetable plots. The Borough Councillor reported that the appeal for Newlands Farm is due to be heard in early August. If the appeal fails, then there is a fresh application that she has asked to be listed.
It was agreed that Mon 27th July was a suitable date for the Annual Parish walk.
- 7451/20 Amenities Committee** – The meetings of 13th July via Zoom were noted.
To consider and approve the quotations for gates at East Park Farm – it was agreed that the assistant clerk should ask for examples of previous work from the various people who have offered quotations, and that a decision would be made at the meeting at the beginning of August on one of the options up to the value of £3500, ex VAT.
- 7452/20 To consider whether Council should make the wearing of facemasks a condition for using the hall** – Given that every effort is being made to ensure the 2m social distancing rule, this is not necessary, subject to the change of advice/instruction from Central Govt.
- 7453/20 To hear an update on the water leaks in the hall and pavilion, and if appropriate, to approve the necessary repairs** – the Assistant clerk has been trying to get the

appropriate quotes for the repairs, but has had no success as yet, so this was deferred to the August meeting.

- 7454/20 Report from the Borough Councillor** – Fly-tipping continues to be a problem – if people see it happening, they need to note the number plate of the offender and report it to the Borough Councillor. The police are reluctant to come out to deal with drug taking, even though there is a likelihood that dealing is also going on.

Items for Consideration

- 7455/20 To consider a response to WBC regarding their call for councillors' views on their Covid response and how they worked with the parishes (what went well and what did not go so well)** – the clerk was asked to reply as follows:

First, what went well?

It is generally felt that the Borough was quick off the mark, getting help out there – and that the co-operation between the local voluntary sector and the Borough was impressive.

It was also felt that the recognition of the local Covid response efforts in the towns and parishes was welcome, and bodes well for future co-operation.

The co-operation with opening up local centres also went fairly well, with help being offered to those towns and parishes with shopping areas.

Communications – generally these have been good, and it is appreciated that getting the message out there is not always easy.

What has not gone so well?

Charvil is possibly in an unusual position given the Asset Transfer of East Park Farm, in that there is a symbiotic relationship between our facilities and those of Wokingham's Countryside service in the Charvil Country Park. So, when we were asked to shut our car park because it served the Country Park, we were offered no barriers or such like to do this. We were concerned that tape would not be sufficient. As it was, one of our staff had to put herself out there to put up plastic fencing to block the entrance and exit off, which was an involved process – the loan of a few barriers would have been much simpler.

The general feeling at this level was that where the Borough needed help, they asked and expected – and the Parish Council was always happy to work with it, but help the other way round has been not quite so forthcoming. This may be because of the redeployment of staff or because so many people were working from home, but it was not always helpful as in my example above.

Like so many areas of the Borough, Charvil has had a major anti-social behaviour problem, and while there is little the Borough could do directly to alleviate this, some pressure on the police to intervene would have been appreciated – the perception in the village is that they are not interested.

Finally, regarding the opening up of schools and encouraging pupils to walk/cycle to school. This is an area that needs direct help and intervention from the Borough, making road crossings safer, proper maintenance of the pavements and cycle ways etc. We understand efforts are to be made to improve things like this over the summer, and by the time the Scrutiny committee meet, these improvements may have been undertaken in Charvil, but as I write, there has been no action.

- 7456/20 To approve the re-advertisement of the Village Warden post** – This was unanimously approved.

- 7457/20 To consider whether Council should write to Theresa May to encourage the Government to support Parishes in need of extra funds due to the Pandemic** – This was approved.

7458/20 To Note the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan – The Chair needs to sign the application and WBC need to provide the parish map, and once these have been received by WBC, the process can start.

7459/20 To approve the risk assessment for the litter pickers – this was approved
The Chairman thanked Cllr. Keward for all his hard work and his resignation was noted

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.40pm

Chairman's Signature