

**Wokingham Without Parish Council
Minutes of the Council Meeting
Held on Monday 11th May 2020**

Via Zoom Video Conference

Commencing 7:30pm and concluding at 9:14pm

Present: Councillors J Cannon, D Dye, R Fenny, L Foxwell, C Lancaster, D Latimer, N Martin, K Newland, A Plume, J Rogers, P Stephen and S Turtle. Katy Hughes - Clerk, Sharon Way – Assistant Clerk. Borough Councillors P Helliar-Symons, A Ross and C Bowring.

Apologies: Councillor B Gough.

At the time of this meeting both NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) have asked local councils to stop holding any physical meetings or gatherings. This includes full council, committee meetings, annual parish or council meetings. In order to comply with NALC guidance, this meeting was undertaken using Zoom video conferencing.

In line with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meeting) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Part 2, item 5: 5.—(1) A reference in any enactment to a meeting of a local authority is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

20/01 WELCOME

Cllr Newland welcomed everyone to the meeting.

20/02 ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Gough.

20/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20/04 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

a) Cllr Newland invited comments on the minutes of the meetings held on:

Monday 02nd March 2020

Monday 16th March 2020 (Annual Parish Meeting)

Monday 23rd March 2020 (extraordinary meeting)

Monday 06th April 2020

No comments were made. Following a proposal from Cllr Foxwell and seconded by Cllr Lancaster it was:

RESOLVED: Minutes of 2nd, 16th, 23rd March and 6th April 2020 were AGREED

b) Matters arising from the minutes of the above meetings

The Clerk stated that the request from the shooting club for funding associated with previously agreed works had been reviewed and it had been confirmed that an agreement was in place. The shooting club would be reimbursed for the remaining works to be carried out, up to the value agreed.

20/05 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

20/06 BOROUGH COUNCILLORS BRIEFING

Cllr Helliar-Symons stated that Wokingham Borough Council staff are working closely with CAB to co-ordinate and provide support for citizens. Road repairs are being carried out due to the reduction in traffic. It is also hoped that the local refuse centres will open w/c 16th May.

Cllr Bowring outlined the council's financial situation. The financial year started with a balanced budget. The Covid-19 has hit the budget in terms of the increased requirement for provision of adult services, rebates to business etc. Help has been received from Central Government. The capital programme is funded from CIL contributions which are not being received as house building is currently suspended. It has therefore become necessary to review the capital programme. Income has also been lost from car parks and leisure centres.

Cllr Helliar-Symons noted that some small businesses have not applied for the available grant funding, so if members know of anyone eligible, they should be encouraged to apply.

Cllr Bowring noted that central government money is also available for people having difficulty paying their council tax.

Cllr Foxwell stated that a communication had been received from BFC that Thames Valley Police were concerned regarding the traffic that would be generated when the tips re-open. Cllr Bowring and Helliar-Symons noted that the relevant authorities were now in agreement and it was likely that the tips would re-open later this month.

Cllr Latimer asked how people qualify for the council tax grant. Cllr Bowring will distribute details to the Clerk when this is available.

Cllr Rogers advised that CAB are helping people to reclaim council tax, so anyone in need should be advised to call the CAB – the Clerk will include the relevant phone number in the next edition of the Rainbow Times.

The Clerk noted that WBC are doing a great job - sharing information and updating parish councils, and the Clerk appreciates the value that Borough Councillors put in to disseminate information and directing people to support and assistance.

[Cllr Ross joined the meeting during the Clerk's report, however for clarity this discussion is recorded here].

Regarding Heathlake Car Park, Cllr Ross stated that he has opened a conversation with Simon Bartlam of Wokingham Countryside Services. Unless the funding is available there is no point in obtaining updated quotes, however all is not lost and it is hoped that this can be progressed.

Regarding planning, Cllr Ross noted that the SDL and SDR applications are expected to be received later this year (August / September). The first virtual planning committee meeting will be held on 13th May – public questions must be submitted in advance. Ravenswood have not yet formally submitted an appeal, but this is likely. Regarding 33 The Avenue, a decision is expected shortly.

Regarding cycling on public footpaths, byways and bridleways, Cllr Ross noted that there is currently minimal enforcement, but Andrew Fletcher is considering the use of notices. Cllr Ross also noted that bicycles should have bells, and it would be beneficial if they were used to warn pedestrians when passing. With regard to changes of use – this is in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan which has been approved by WBC, and which is a living document.

20/07 CLERKS REPORT

The Clerk advised that WWPC accountant Alan Harland visited the office to complete the year-end figures. These will be sent to the internal auditor and are expected to be circulated and brought to June council. Arrangements for sign off / completion will be determined by the Clerk, under guidance from the internal auditor, given current circumstances.

The Clerk sent out a summary document on 5 May regarding a potential request for CIL funding for a study to investigate options for cycle improvements between Finchampstead and Wokingham Without. The Clerk has subsequently discussed this with Andrew Fletcher (WBC public rights of way officer) and clarified that the study concerns a safer pedestrian and cycle routes over the railway bridge on Nine Mile Ride, at the junction with Lower Wokingham Road / Sandhurst Road. The Clerk requested an indication of cost for any subsequent works and was advised £80k-£150k.

Cllr Stephens noted that whilst a good cycle network should be supported, the problem should be better defined. Cllr Newland proposed that a full list of the routes should be developed and prioritised. Cllr Stephens proposed that a working group potentially including Finchampstead, Wokingham and other local parishes be formed to structure the decision making process.

Cllr Rogers noted that there had been previous discussions with Andrew Fletcher and that a list of routes / areas for work may already exist.

It was agreed that the Clerk would set up a working group with Cllr Stephens to develop a structured and prioritised list which could be presented to members.

Cllr Stephens asked whether the rules can be relaxed regarding cycling on a footpath and bridleway and byway. The Clerk stated that there was a complex process for the Borough Council to change the classification of a right of way.

Regarding Parish Newsletters, 5 have been sent out so far and the team are working to grow the subscriber list and Facebook followers. The newsletter is being used to share useful information from WBC etc, and the Clerk encouraged members to keep making contributions.

Work continues to progress on the website renewal and a meeting will be held via zoom this week. The Clerk is aiming for 'switch over' to the new site by end of July. If members have any imagery of the parish, they are encouraged to share it with the Clerk.

Regarding staffing, the Clerk confirmed that all administrative staff are working at home, and a rota will be drawn up for covering the office as and when we can move towards re-opening. Note, however, that we will be limited by when the schools return. The Clerk also noted that the litter warden is as busy as ever emptying our bins and reporting on fly tipping incidents.

The Clerk has emailed members to schedule dates for the Open Spaces Working Group and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

20/08 PINWOOD CYCLE SHELTER

Cllr Plume stated that the cycle shelter expenditure had been approved at the February meeting, but the requirements for the size and strength of the concrete base have increased, with associated increase in cost. It has therefore been brought back to council for approval of the additional cost.

Cllr Turtle requested confirmation of the additional costs and total costs. Cllr Plume stated that the council had previously approved an expenditure of £1780 and the new cost may be up to £3850. The final design and cost will be determined as soon as possible.

Cllr Newland invited members to indicate whether they did not agree with the decision. No further comments were made.

The additional sum was agreed by a majority vote.

20/09 COUNCIL POLICIES

Cllr Newland invited comments on the following policies:

a. Standing Orders

Cllr Rogers asked whether virtual meetings should be added. The Clerk stated that because the regulations permitting digital meetings is expected to be in place only in the short term, the consensus among other Clerks was that standing orders would not be updated to reflect this temporary situation.

b. Financial Regulations

Cllr Newland noted the limit for approvals has changed from £1,000 to £5,000 on the recommendation of the internal auditor. No further changes or comments were made.

c. Freedom of Information and Model Publication Scheme

No changes were proposed or comments made.

d. Press and Media Policy

No changes were proposed or comments made.

e. Arrangements for reporting back following outside meetings

No changes were proposed or comments made.

Following a proposal from Cllr Plume and seconded by Cllr Foxwell it was:

RESOLVED: The proposed policies were AGREED and ADOPTED.

20/10 GRANTS PROGRAMME 2020-21

- a. To review and approve a variation to the council's grants program, to allow flexibility for the grants working group to consider and recommend urgent grant requests ahead of the 31st October deadline / January payment date where required (appendix 10a of the agenda).
- b. To approve a letter to be sent to 2019-20 grant recipients to
 - Allow flexibility for unspent grants given in the 2019-20 program
 - Allow an extension of time to spend unspent grants given in the 2019-20 program (appendix 10b of the agenda).

The Clerk outlined the basis for this proposal, which was predicated by the unprecedented Covid-19 situation. Cllr Turtle suggested that the line '...this is likely to be acceptable to us' should be removed.

Following a proposal from Cllr Plume and seconded by Cllr Foxwell it was:

RESOLVED: The proposed variation and letter were AGREED.

20/11 DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The schedule of times, dates and locations of future ordinary meetings of the full Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the full council, circulated as appendix 11 to the agenda, was discussed and AGREED.

20/12 PLANNING

Cllr Lancaster had no comments on the decisions made by WBC, and the latest applications for comment are minor.

20/13 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr Newland noted that the planning application for the parish office has been approved. The Clerk stated that this was for the two-side wrap-around extension. A discussion was now needed on how to move the project forward. There are a couple of technical issues. A bat survey was carried out and reported in July 2019. The Clerk will contact the surveyor to determine whether a new survey is required to determine whether bats are roosting in the current season. Council also needs to make a decision whether the new design is agreed, and the Clerk would like to know what information members wish to see to make this decision.

The Clerk stated that because the value of the works is greater than £25k, WWPC are required to use the government contracts finder bid process. A quote has been received by Piers Maisey for the preparation of the specifications and documentation required for this process. Cllr Newland stated that the quote is below the amount requiring approval of council, however members were asked if they had any comments or objections to proceeding with approval. No comments or objections were given. Cllr Newland stated that the specifications will be prepared and the bid process initiated. The Clerk will prepare a decision paper.

Cllr Newland noted that rents have been waived for Pinewood clubs until the end of June, and it may be necessary to consider a further extension at the next meeting. Cllr Plume raised the issue of Romans parking. The Clerk will write to Romans regarding this matter.

Cllr Newland expressed his sadness at the death of Les Stevens.

Response to the draft leases has stalled. Cllr Newland asked the Clerk to write to the clubs to establish the status of their review of the leases and their plans to progress this.

20/14 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS:

Cllr Dye noted that the Clerk had asked the groundsmen not to mow the old playground in order to encourage wild flowers but it has recently been mowed. The Clerk stated that it is possible that the instruction did not get conveyed to all groundsmen, who are working in shifts to abide by social distancing requirements. Cllr Newland stated that this is the second time this has happened. Cllr Turtle noted a similar issue in the orchard, where the whole area was being mowed which was not desirable. Cllr Newland suggested that the Clerk should speak to the groundsmen. Cllr Stephens stated his view that any issues with groundworks should be raised at the working group.

Cllr Stephens stated that Pinewood looks good. The fence around the toddler and adventure playground needs looking at. This will be raised at the next working group meeting.

20/15 MEETING CLOSED AT 9:14 PM

Date of next meeting – Meeting of the Parish Council at 7.30pm on Monday 1st June 2020 via Video Conference (subject to there being no lifting of restrictions on meetings by this date).

Signed:

Date: 1st June 2020