

Chiddingly Parish Council
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21st July 2020

Minutes of the Chiddingly Parish Council meeting held on 21st July 2020 at 1930 hours via Zoom conferencing.

Present: Cllr Richards (Chairman), Cllr Tolhurst, Cllr Allan, Cllr Mikelis, Cllr Best, Cllr Marchant, Julie O'Donnell (Clerk)

No members of the public were present online at this meeting.

Minutes

1. Apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies and reason of absence received from Cllr Newham, Cllr Welsh, Cllr Draper and Cllr Bennett

2. The Chairman will invite Councillors to declare any interest they may have in the following agenda items.

No interests declared

3. Minutes of 16th June 2020 Parish Council Meeting to be agreed and signed as a true record.

Resolved: Minutes were agreed and will be signed by Cllr Richards

The meeting was not suspended as there were no members of the public present.

4. Clerk and Councillor reports arising from the minutes 16th June 2020 not covered elsewhere in the agenda: None

5. Council vote – motion to conduct Agenda item 17 as a closed session and exclude the public from attendance as confidential employment matters to be discussed.

Resolved: All agreed to conduct the matter as closed business.

6. Councillor Reports:

6.1. Cllr Draper (WDC).

None – apologies received

6.2. Cllr Nick Bennett (ESCC)

None – apologies received

7. Correspondence: Nothing received

8. Financial Matters

Due to the current Covid 19 situation, the end of year audit was delayed. Until this process was completed, we were unable to provide RBS reports for the current financial year.

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Until the financial year end procedures were completed, any payments for the new financial year could not be input to RBS, so there was a document of payments produced by the clerk, and not an RBS payment report.

The end of year audit has now taken place, so council need to approve the Bank reconciliations from April, May and June 2020.

8.1. To approve the Bank reconciliations for April, May & June 2020

Resolved: the parish council reached a majority decision to approve the bank reconciliations for the current account, CIL account and savings account for April, May & June 2020

8.2. To approve and authorise accounts payable for Jul 2020 (as detailed on the payment list)

Resolved: The council reached a unanimous decision to approve payments of cheque numbers 102496-102505 totalling £2359.73

8.3. To acknowledge the RBS reports circulated by the clerk – Summary of receipts and payments and Cash and Investment Reconciliation for Apr, May & June 2020.

Resolved: The council acknowledged receipt of the RBS reports from the clerk.

9. NALC Code of conduct consultation – The Code of Conduct for members is currently being reviewed by Local Government Association. The proposed draft Code aims to be more effective, user friendly and easier to understand. NALC has invited all councils to respond to the consultation document. Council to consider the draft and comment if necessary.

Action: Cllr Richards to respond stating that the council are happy with the current code of conduct model which is fit for purpose and feel that this is not a necessary exercise.

10. Website update – To discuss the steps that local (parish and town) councils need to take to be compliant with accessibility regulations relating to public sector websites.

The clerk explained that she had contacted the original web developer and that he no longer builds Parish websites. From a brief look at the council website using Microsoft Insights evaluation tool the website does require updating to conform with the new legislation. From the brief assessment the website is partially compliant, but it seems the colour contrast would need adjusting, tab settings and the search facility would not be completely accessible either. The website needs a full assessment which may take some time.

Cllr Allan advised there are many companies offering template packages that also include full hosting, email and domain. Cllr Richards advised we need to find an independent who can look at the website and advise what we should be doing and how to do it.

The website needs to be easy to use and compliant.

Action: Clerk to contact Mike Goss for further advice and send the proposals already received to the council.

11. ICUK Contract/charges – to consider the clerks report and discuss any contract changes if required.

Cllr Allan believes that the charges are excessive for the service being provided. He does not understand why the council is being charged for extra mailbox space when, as an example, Gmail offer 5GB for free. Now we have a list of costs he can see that the charges are excessive. The extra downloading charges and the extra mailbox charges seem unreasonable.

The clerk explained that the current IT support contract fee was based on using ICUK, and if we changed to another host the support charge may change.

The clerk recommended paying an extra £24 for the year to upgrade the current ICUK contract which would stop the extra data transfer charges.

Cllr Mikelis asked whether we could ask for less mailboxes and more data for the same price. It is unlikely as they are package prices. Cllr Best agreed and suggested we at least ask.

Cllr Richards suggested the clerk speaks to Mike and ask why he recommends ICUK as a provider.

Cllr Mikelis agreed, but also stated the council should pay the extra for now and review as part of the website updates too.

Cllr Allan asked why the Parish Council were paying for broadband at the village hall, Cllr Tolhurst explained that it was there for the councils use when normal meetings took place. Cllr Allan does

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not believe the council should be paying this charge. The broadband is for the use of users of the village hall. Cllr Best suggested that we could use CIL money to fund this. There is very little reception in the village.

Action: Clerk to contact Mike to discuss the points raised and arrange for the upgrade fee to be paid. This will then be discussed at the next meeting.

Cllr Allan will research other options and prices and feedback at the next meeting.

12. Adult exercise equipment

Cllr Best has put together a survey for the council to consider. This will be sent out to the parish via the mailing lists. It asks for feedback relating to the adult exercise equipment but also what else the parish may want.

Cllr Best to edit as per the suggestions of the council and circulate to the village.

Action: Cllr Best to forward to Mike Goss to circulate the survey. It will also go on the website and the Parish noticeboard.

13. Stream Mill bridge update

Cllr Mikelis updated the council and advised as follows –

Cllr Draper brought me in contact with the Senior Heritage Officer at Wealden District Council, Mrs Jo Tucker.

I spoke to her on the phone and then wrote her an email and sent her a number of photos. I suggested that I meet her to show her the bridge and explain the situation. Nevertheless, a few days later she visited the bridge on her own. We then spoke on the phone again and she agreed that some action is needed to be taken and that she would contact Historic England to seek their help and also she would look to find who the owner of the bridge is, in order to request him to take action by serving a "Repairs notice". She explained that if the owner ignores this notice, then WDC would repair the bridge and claim back from the owner.

Then on 15 June we received a disappointing email from Mrs Tucker saying that having communicated with Historic England she had found out that they do not have the resources to get involved. She suggested that the Parish Council could take on and manage the bridge, or perhaps support a local community group, or create a small charitable trust to take over the structure. She also suggested possible sources where we could try and seek funding. It appeared at that time that WDC was not interested to get involved in helping restore the bridge.

Mrs Tucker also sent me a contact with a voluntary action group for Eastbourne, Lewis District and Wealden, called 3VA. I spoke with Helen Preston there who is the officer responsible for helping action groups in Wealden: to organise themselves; to seek funding; and to have their voice heard. I have spoken with her on two occasions and she is very willing to help us organise such an action group by constituting it in the most efficient way.

On the 25th June five interested parishioners, including our Chairman met in my garden to discuss what can be done. Some caution was advised by one of us, in case our actions might result in the closure of the bridge by East Sussex County Council. However, the alternative of taking no action, is also not safe for the continuing existence of the bridge. The informal group reached the following two conclusions:

Firstly, we need to evaluate the damage to the bridge and the necessary works and costs to repair it. We agreed that this would be work for a surveyor that is experienced in historic bridge structures. We realised that the question of funding for a survey would also need to be addressed.

Secondly, as we cannot survey the bridge without the knowledge and consent of its current owner, it was agreed to ask Wealden District Council again to communicate and request the involvement of the owner of the bridge.

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Having communicated the above to Mrs Tucker of WDC on the 26th June she responded by saying that she was seeking her Manager's advice. I contacted her again on the 13th July and she explained that she is "pursuing matters in relation to the bridge" and is looking to identify the owner of the bridge.
Action: Cllr Mikelis will continue to pursue a response and update the council of the progress.

14. To consider the purchase of a hand sanitiser for Jubilee Field.

Now that the play park is open it was suggested the council should consider purchasing some sort of hand sanitiser station. The cost of this varies greatly, with some being up to £7000. The council decided that there are clear signs up in the park asking that the equipment is cleaned before and after use and that it was the parent's responsibility.

15. To approve the revised Finance Reserves policy

Resolved: The council approved the amended version for adoption.

16. Update on Parish councillor vacancy – consider extending the application timeframe due to the current situation.

There has been some interest in the vacancy with one application form being sent back to the clerk. The vacancy is open until 27th July 2020.

The co-option meeting will take place in September when the council meets again.

Action: To wait until the close date to see if there are any further applicants, the co-option will take place in September.

17. Council vote – Confidential employment matters to be discussed.

Resolved: The council considered the situation and came to a majority decision

Meeting closed 21.10

For information.

Below is a note of items that are under consideration by the council prior to Covid19 lockdown. These are currently underway or have been discussed for action by the council previously. This is not an exhaustive list but enables council members to see what is going on and members of the parish to see and make comment should they wish.

- Stream Mill bridge
- Capital projects expenditure – Electric car charging point
- Speedwatch
- Mobile Phone Mast
- Tree planting
- Lighting at entrance to the village car park
- Village shop committee and Parish council liaison
- Potholes at the entrance to the village car park – work start date to be confirmed
- Maintenance of Bus shelters
- Saturday market
- Play park entrance
- Spring Clean – postponed until further notice
- Funds for Chiddingly Primary school outside area match funding

There is no Parish meeting in August, next meeting via Zoom conferencing will be 15th September 2020 at 7.30pm

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