

Chiddingly Parish Council
www.chiddingly.gov.uk

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16th June 2020

Minutes of the Chiddingly Parish Council meeting held on 16th June 2020 at 1930 hours via Zoom conferencing.

Present: Cllr Richards (Chairman), Cllr Tolhurst, Cllr Allan, Cllr Welsh, Cllr Mikelis, Cllr Best, WDC Cllr Draper, ESCC Cllr Bennett, 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.

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

No interests declared

3. Minutes of 23rd May 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 23rd May 2020 not covered elsewhere in the agenda:

Clerk advised that there had been no query raised from the council members regarding their roles and responsibilities discussed at last month's meeting. Cllr Mikelis has agreed to be responsible for the Lachelle Link.

The final two old noticeboards have been removed from Whitesmith and Golden Cross.

Thank you letters have been received from 1st Chiddingly Rainbows, Brownies and Guide, The Air Ambulance and the Parish Church Warden for their grant payments.

5. Council vote – motion to conduct Agenda item 19 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).

PAGE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Cllr Draper confirmed there was nothing new to report this month. WDC continue to run council business remotely in line with Government guidelines and socially distanced site visits are now permitted.

Planning applications are still being received at a phenomenal rate, once one has been dealt with another one is received!

Cllr Draper has been copied into correspondence regarding Stream Mill Bridge. Following Cllr Mikelis and the Heritage Officers visit to the site unfortunately, the Heritage at Risk team are unable to help this time. The Parish Council has now been given other options to explore.

Action: Cllr Mikelis requested this to be an agenda item for discussion at next month's meeting.

6.2. Cllr Nick Bennett (ESCC)

Cllr Bennet discussed the new cycling and walking scheme which has been submitted to Government. ESCC has been allocated £479,000 from the first round of the Government's Emergency Active Travel fund. Having worked with District and Borough council and sought suggestions ESCC have submitted measures for approval by the Department for Transport. These include the improvements to cycle routes, improved signage and widening of footpaths.

Cllr Mikelis asked if there would be any car-parking made available at the Cuckoo Trail. Cllr Bennett asked that locations be suggested if there were any available.

The Local Authorities are now responsible for the quality of care in care homes which is an enormous piece of work but in this County it is going very well. The financial impact of Covid19 is now being truly realised across the County. There will be changes to services next year to help with the impact, these have not been agreed yet. The infection rate in East Sussex is very low especially low in Hastings. Track and Trace will be starting soon and relies on people reporting accurately and self-isolating if they have been in contact with an infected person.

Cllr Richards asked regarding the Nash Street Development. Cllr Bennett confirmed that ESCC have objected and the objections remain regarding the road and turning.

7. Correspondence: Nothing received

8. Financial Matters

Due to the current Covid 19 situation, the end of year audit has been delayed. Until this process is complete, we are unable to provide RBS reports for the current financial year.

Until the financial year end procedures are completed, any payments for the new financial year cannot be input to RBS, so there will be an Excel document of payments, and not an RBS payment report.

8.1. To approve and authorise accounts payable (as detailed on the Excel document payment list)

Resolved: the parish council reached a unanimous decision to approve payments of cheques number 102483-102495 totalling £3294.04

There was a query regarding the ICUK charges, Cllr Allan would like a list of the charges and details of the contract. There may be better cheaper options available. There is no reason to pay for data transfers anymore.

Cllr Mikelis advised that he must delete emails to release more space in his mailbox. Cllr Allan wants to look at other options, the mailboxes are currently limited at 100mb which is not enough.

Action: Clerk to investigate and send details of contract and payments with a view to switch providers.

8.2. To acknowledge the receipt of the following finance documents prepared for the end of year finances, internal and external audits, as emailed to full council on 29th May 2020 for the year ending 31st March 2020:

- Internal audit plan
- Last year's AGAR section 1,2 & 3 from PKF Littlejohn
- Chiddingly Internal Audit report 2018-2019

PAGE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

- Cashbook for current account
- Cashbook for savings account
- Cashbook for CIL account
- Bank reconciliation current account to 31st March 2020
- Bank reconciliation for savings account to 31st March 2020
- Bank reconciliation for CIL account to 31st March 2020
- Detailed receipts and payments
- Earmarked reserves 31st March 2020
- Summary receipts and payments
- Trial balance for current year 31st March 2020
- VAT return to 31st March 2020
- Explanation of differences
- Excel sheet bank reconciliation 2019-2020
- Cash and Investment reconciliation
- Financial regulations 2019
- Model Standing orders
- Draft minutes from Dec 2019
- Grants policy 2021-2022
- Grant application form
- Chiddingly Parish Council procedures re response to consultation requests
- Chiddingly Parish Council procedures re gifts and hospitality
- Risk Assessment
- Fixed Asset Register
- Insurance policy and schedule
- Minutes of meeting 21st May 2019
- Statement of Internal Controls
- Proposed budget setting document
- Chiddingly Parish Council half year financial review 30th September 2019
- November 2019 meeting agenda
- Draft minutes Nov 2019
- Summary receipts and payments by budget heading 21st January 2020
- Bank cash and investment reconciliation as of 21st January 2020
- Precept remittance for April 2019 & September 2019
- Chiddingly Parish Council Financial Reserves Policy – proposed
- Grant covering letter
- Section 2 AGAR
- Financial summary report 2019-2020

Resolved: All members of the parish council acknowledged receipt of the above documents and one query was raised. This was regarding the format and the adding up of the asset values in the Fixed Asset Register. This was checked before the meeting by the Clerk who confirmed the figures were correct, but there was an error in the list of removals and purchases. This has now been amended and will be re-formatted in Excel as agreed by the council.

9. Internal Audit - to receive the internal auditors reports and consider his recommendations for the next financial year

PAGE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Resolved: The parish council acknowledged receipt of the internal audit report (with no exemptions). The auditor advised that the annual play park maintenance inspection should be added to the Risk Assessment document. He also advised the Parish Council should make regular inspections and document this. It was decided that Cllr Newham (if he agreed) would inspect the play area monthly and report back to the council at the meeting each month. The findings would be recorded in the minutes. Cllr Newham dealt with the annual inspection repairs last year. The council agreed with the amendment to the Risk Assessment document.

Council agreed to keep the play area closed until after the inspection even if the Government advice changes regarding opening the park. The park gate is currently cable tied shut.

Action: Clerk to check with Cllr Newham that he is happy to inspect the play park.

The Auditor recommended the Clerk adds the reserves and bank account figures to the half year spreadsheet. These figures were previously documented in Word but the Auditor would like to see the information added to the spreadsheet so it is all in one place.

Cllr Mikelis queried the recommendations made by the locum RFO in the Financial Summary report. It recommends transferring the end balance of £16,016.56 from the current account into the savings account on Barclays and RBS. Cllr Mikelis disagrees with this and thinks we should transfer £10,000 into savings and leave £6000 in the current account.

Cllr Allan said the account starts with the budgeted precept amount which is why the surplus money is transferred into savings.

Clerk explained that any money transferred into savings is easily accessible by instructing the bank.

A discussion took place regarding the Ear Marked Reserves(EMR), the council currently has a reserve marked for Special Projects but nothing specific has been decided. Clerk advised that the EMR could be re-distributed, but the council needs to discuss and agree how.

Cllr Welsh suggested the council send a survey to the Parish explaining there are funds available and ask how they would like to see the money spent. A survey was previously done and had a good response. There has been no response from the Parish regarding the adult exercise equipment yet.

Cllr Allan suggested we share our ideas with the Parish and then ask for feedback.

Action: Clerk to check with the locum RFO reasons for transferring the whole amount at the end of the year.

10. Annual Governance Statement

10.1. To review the effectiveness of the system of internal control and prepare the annual governance statement.

10.2. Resolve that full parish council approve the Annual Governance Statement.

10.3. For the Chairman to sign the Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved: All members of Chiddingly Parish Council acknowledged their responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the statement of account. Chiddingly Parish Council confirm, to the best of their knowledge and belief, with respect to the council's statement of accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 that Section1 (the annual governance statement 2019/2020) had been adhered to. Page 4 of the Annual Return was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

11. Annual Accounting Statements.

11.1. For full parish council to consider the Accounting Statements

11.2. Resolve that full parish council approve the Accounting Statements

11.3. For the Chairman to sign the annual Accounting Statements

Resolved: The full parish council approved the accounting statements (receipts and payments basis) of the Annual Return for 2019/2020. Page 5 of the Annual Return was signed by the Chairman and the Responsible Financial Officer.

12. Pension discretions policy

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DATE:

12.1. To agree and adopt the new discretions as requested by the East Sussex Pension Fund

The council all agreed this was a confusing document, the discretions also need to be completed from 2008. Cllr Richards and the Clerk will get together and discuss the liabilities to council and the discretions available.

Cllr Mikelis asked that the clerk contact the pension team for further clarification and ask for further information to help make an informed decision.

Action: Clerk to email the Pension team and discuss with Cllr Richards.

13. General Reserves Policy

13.1. To agree and adopt the General Reserves Policy

Cllr Mikelis would like to make suggested changes to this document. There is no mention of the Financial Working Party and it does not explain things in detail.

EMR and CIL is to be excluded in the reserves amount. Clerk explained that the council could change the EMRs to redistribute funds. The RFO works alongside the Financial Working Party when setting the budget.

Cllr Mikelis suggested he work through the document with the clerk and make suitable changes to the policy. This will then be brought back to council at the next meeting for approval.

Action: Cllr Mikelis and Clerk to discuss changes to be made and present the policy next month.

14. Notice of Vacancy – update

WDC have confirmed there has been no call for an election so the Council can Co-opt a member to the council.

Cllr Welsh suggested contacting previous applicants advising of the vacancy, this is acceptable as per WDC guidelines. The council should advertise the vacancy for 4 weeks and see if any applicants. If we receive no applicants, we can re-advertise the position or hold off the process until next year. Due to Covid19 we may not get as many applications.

Resolved: Council agreed to advertise the position for 4 weeks, see whether any responses are received and decide based on that. The vacancy will be posted on the village noticeboard, sent on the mailing lists and the website.

Council approved the vacancy advert as produced by the Clerk.

15. Respond to East Sussex Fire Rescue consultation – To consider Cllr Allan’s report and to agree an appropriate response to the ESFR consultation

Cllr Allan did not have time to produce a report but presented the issues to the council.

He feels that the consultation is a negative process and that the cuts will be detrimental to the service.

Cllr Best commented that even though the number of house fires has allegedly decreased the service is still in demand with the increase in forest fires and flooding which require multiple station attendance.

Cllr Draper advised that as far as he is aware WDC have yet to officially comment and will have no say on the proposed changes.

Action: Cllr Allan to email the contact advising that Chiddingly Parish Council object to the proposal and fully agree with the opposing comments made by other local councils. He will ask for a response to his comments.

Cllr Richards will add details of the ESFR consultation to the Parish News article.

16. Exercise equipment - to discuss and agree the proposal and quotation from Fresh Air Fitness, Cllr Newham

Cllr Richards asked whether the council is happy to spend over £11k without any comment from the Parish. Although the council agree this is a good idea there has been no positive or negative feedback from the village.

Cllr Welsh asked due to Covid19 and the fact there is no match funding available is the council happy to spend this amount of money.

Cllr Mikelis suggested we ask for feedback and put the documents on the website and ask for comments. Cllr Best suggested using survey monkey to do this.

Cllr Newham has sent an email confirming that FreshAirFitness guaranteed to be the cheapest provider, the council still need to get two more quotes for comparison.

PAGE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Cllr Draper suggested the delivery charge is queried; it is a high charge considering the overall cost of the equipment. He suggested that the council contact other providers for a demonstration and encourage the Parishioners to view the equipment. This would have to be organised after the lockdown sanctions have been lifted. He will also speak to Fitness First who run some of the leisure centres in the District and ask for local companies that provide the equipment. Cllr Draper will liaise with Cllr Newham. This will be carried over to next month as an agenda item.

Action: Cllr Richards will put details of the proposal in the Parish News. Cllr Best will word a survey and send to council for email approval. The council asked for two more quotes to be provided and to use a local company if possible.

Action: Cllr Best to word a survey for the Parish and circulate to the council.

Cllr Draper will liaise with Cllr Newham regarding other companies supplying this type of equipment.

17. Village car park repairs and fencing – update from Cllr Welsh

Cllr Welsh obtained quotes from 4 suppliers for the car park repairs as detailed below. He has not received any quotes for the fencing yet.

Roadways – Hailsham

Full carpark quote

For the sum of £25549.00 + £5109.80 VAT @ 20% = **£30658.80**

Entrance and pothole repair

For the sum of £2729.00 + £545.80 VAT @ 20% = **£3274.80**

Laughton Agriplant –

Entrance and pothole repair

price £8350.00 plus £1670 Vat = **£10,020.**

This quote is for completely removing the current entrance surface and re-laying the tarmac.

Gary Simes –

Entrance and pothole repair

price £2560 plus £512 vat = **£3072**

Nicholls Bros –

Entrance and pothole repair

price £2,740.00 + £ 548.00 VAT = **£ 3,288**

None of the providers will provide a guarantee of the work.

Cllr Allan suggested as Roadways Hailsham have quoted for the full carpark repair should the council consider doing this in conjunction with Parish feedback. Cllr Welsh confirmed all the suppliers would be willing to quote for the full car park repair if the council required it.

Cllr Tolhurst said that there may be drainage issues if the whole carpark is re-surfaced and should be considered in any decisions made. Cllr Welsh said he would discuss the options with the suppliers if it was agreed to re-surface the whole car park. The council would ask for Parish feedback before making any decision.

Council all agreed that the entrance repairs and potholes need to be completed sooner rather than later. The council will use CIL funds for this repair.

Resolved: The council made a unanimous decision to use Gary Simes for the job based on price and he is a local provider. Cllr Welsh will contact him to discuss starting the work.

He will chase the fence quotes, but the council may need to consider the costs of this. It is not a necessity and we may want to hold the money for something else at this time.

18. Village Hall grant - to discuss whether the council agree surplus money granted for the toilet refurbishments at the village hall can be diverted to the Hall's maintenance fund.

PAGE:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Cllr Tolhurst asked that the grant requested in 2017/2018 for the village hall toilet repairs be diverted into the hall's maintenance fund. This is because a grant requested by CVHMC to Veoila was paid in full and covers the cost of the toilet replacement.

A water leak has now been discovered at the hall which the CVHMC will be responsible for and repairs will need to be made.

Resolved: The council agreed that the grant can be used for the maintenance instead of the toilets.

19. Council vote – Confidential employment matters items to be discussed
Closed minutes produced and circulated to all council members.

Any items for inclusion on next month's agenda

- Stream Mill Bridge
- General Reserves policy
- Outdoor exercise equipment

Meeting ended 2130 hours.

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 – to consider a more permanent repair and obtain quotes for this work to be carried out during the drier weather
- Maintenance of Bus shelters
- Saturday market
- Play park entrance
- Spring Clean – postponed until further notice
- Funds for Chiddingly Primary school outside area match funding

The next virtual parish council meeting will take place on Tuesday 21st July 2020 at 7.30p.m.via Zoom conferencing.

PAGE:

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