

Chiddingly Parish Council
www.chiddingly.gov.uk

Chairman

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10 March 2021

Minutes of the Chiddingly Parish Council meeting held on 9th March 2021 at 1930 hours via Zoom conferencing.

Present: Cllr Richards (Chairman), Cllr Mikelis, Cllr Newham, Cllr Allan, Cllr Luke, Cllr Tolhurst, Cllr Welsh, Cllr Bennett (ESCC), Andy Barnes (Tree warden), Julie O'Donnell (Clerk)

1 member of the public was present online at this meeting and joined after the meeting had started.

Minutes

1. Enquire whether anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting and ask if any member of public present has any objections to being filmed by a third party.
No members of the public present at the time of asking
2. Apologies and reasons for absence.
Apologies received from Cllr Marchant.
3. The Chairman will invite Councillors to declare any interest they may have in the following agenda items.
No interests were declared.
4. Minutes of 16th February 2021 Parish Council Meeting to be agreed and signed as a true record.
Resolved: Minutes were agreed and will be signed by Cllr Richards.

As no members of the public were present, the meeting was not suspended.

5. Clerk and Councillor reports arising from the minutes 16th February 2021 not covered elsewhere in the agenda:
None
6. Councillor Reports:
 - 6.1. Cllr Draper (WDC).
Cllr Draper was not present at the meeting.
 - 6.2. Cllr Nick Bennett (ESCC)
Cllr Bennett had nothing to report and enquired whether an Annual Parish Assembly would be held. Cllr Richards advised that this would be discussed later in the meeting and he would be advised of the outcome.

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Cllr Bennett recommended having a look at the ESCC council plan. It is an interesting and informative read.

7. Correspondence:

The Chairman and council have received Cllr Best's resignation and would like to thank her for her contribution and support during her time as a councillor for Chiddingly.

Wealden District Council have been informed and a Notice of Vacancy will be produced and displayed in the village in due course.

8. Tree Warden Report – Andy Barnes to update the council (report previously circulated)

Andy Barnes talked through his report.

He would like to produce an inventory of the parish owned trees. The clerk advised that the parish council only own Jubilee Field and Jubilee Garden. Andy advised that the free tree offerings are only applicable to schools, community projects, or parish councils. Andy has had three private landowners show an interest in a tree planting scheme. The free tree schemes would probably not be available to private land-owners though.

Cllr Marchant has expressed an interest in helping with the tree planting scheme, Cllr Richards suggested he continues to work with Andy and helps to produce the inventory. Cllr Richards offered to help if required too.

Action: Andy would like to meet Cllr Richards and Cllr Marchant at Jubilee Field when allowed, to show the previous plans for Jubilee Field. Cllr Welsh also offered to help and will liaise with Cllr Marchant when needed. A date will be arranged.

9. Jubilee Field rewilding project – Cllr Marchant to update.

Cllr Marchant was absent from the meeting so unable to give an update. The clerk confirmed she has submitted the grant application to Sussex Lund for funding towards the project.

Cllr Marchant had also suggested to the clerk that Jubilee Field was left to grow wild and not cut and asked her to speak to the council on his behalf. The clerk asked why the field was cut so often and whether the council would consider Cllr Marchant's suggestion. Cllr Welsh thought it may not be a welcome idea from Parishioners that use the field, children would not be able to play football in the long grass and it may look very untidy. Cllr Newham suggested it was discussed as an agenda item. There is already a contract in place for the regular grass cutting of Jubilee Field so the council may not be able to change the terms this year. The clerk will contact the contractor to find out.

Cllr Richards touched on a query he has discussed with a resident of Willetts Field. They have been advised that they will be charged for maintenance of the grass area outside the houses and for tree maintenance of the same area. The resident advised they have never been asked to pay for this before. Cllr Richards had explained to the resident that the matter was not a parish council matter as it did not own this land nor has the parish council ever maintained it. He advised her to speak to the Housing Association.

Action: Clerk to contact Barcombes regarding a reduced number of cuts and report back to council.

10. Jubilee Fields play park check – Cllr Newham to report any issues.

There are no new issues to report.

Cllr Newham suggested the council ask Vince Fisher to lay the path between the gate and the play park. He feels it needs levelling and is more work than just putting the matting down. The council could provide the materials and ask Vince to fit it.

The council agreed and Cllr Newham will contact Vince.

Action: Cllr Newham to obtain advice and a quote from Vince

11. Chiddingly Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator – to agree a new council representative for the village Neighbourhood Watch group.

The council discussed this and decided that they would suspend the group for now. There is already a Neighbourhood Watch mailing list in place, and the clerk receives regular updates which are sent to parishioners. The clerk will continue to receive all relevant notifications and disseminate them accordingly. The mailing list system works well and keeps everyone up to date.

Resolved: The co-ordinator role will be suspended for now as a system is already in place for advising the village of all relevant issues.

12. IT scoping exercise

12.1. Clerk to update on the next stage and note any issues or feedback from the email migration

The clerk advised that the IT company were still working on the website migration. This may be more difficult than they thought, and a plan is being put together with their website team. Uniserve will contact the clerk with further details once known.

The clerk asked if anyone had any problems or issues. The council were all happy with the service received and the emails are working fine.

Cllr Mikelis had a query regarding the password, he had been advised that he could not change it. He is also being asked by the system to enter his password every time. He will contact Uniserve to rectify.

12.2. Broadband at the village hall – Cllr Tolhurst

Cllr Tolhurst has spoken to the church and they do not require broadband now for broadcasting. Cllr Tolhurst has raised the issue with the Village Hall Management Committee, and they have agreed to pay for the broadband at the village hall. They will look to upgrade the broadband to fibre which will suit the needs of the hall users. The village hall may consider increasing the charges to cover the extra costs.

Cllr Tolhurst will arrange the new connection but is unsure whether he needs the landline at the hall.

The clerk suggested she could see if she can change the account holder details and the village hall takes over payment of the current supply. Cllr Tolhurst was concerned that the village hall can not claim the VAT back. Cllr Tolhurst will investigate the various providers.

Action: Clerk to contact the current provider to see if the account details can be changed to allow the hall to take over payments.

13. Litter picking – A local resident has suggested a parish litter picker volunteer group to maintain the verges in the village. With the new lockdown roadmap now in place can the council consider the options for this.

A volunteer is prepared to organise a litter picking group. Cllr Luke advised that a local resident is already litter picking and has done several lanes in the village.

There is litter picking equipment at the village hall. Cllr Welsh advised that no groups or events should be organised at this time due to the Covid restrictions. If individuals wish to litter pick on their own that is quite different to the council or a volunteer organising a group event. A group event is not allowed. A spring clean will be organised once lockdown restrictions ease.

Cllr Richards suggested we contact WDC for advice.

Cllr Luke mentioned that there are two reflective bollards from Jubilee verge have been removed and dumped into the ditch. Cllr Welsh advised that the recycling area in the village is also full and someone has just left a lot of rubbish there. Clerk to contact WDC regarding this too.

Action: Clerk to contact WDC regarding the rubbish at the recycling area and to also ask for their advice with regards to litter picking. Clerk to report at the next meeting.

14. Highways – Cllr Allan to update

Cllr Allan advised the two dangerous potholes on Whitesmith Lane have been repaired. Clerk to forward Cllr Allan the email from Cllr Bennett regarding the repair on Highlands Lane. Cllr Allan will respond accordingly.

Cllr Newham has reported a pothole on Rosemount and another one on Whitesmith Lane. He advised they have already been marked up for repair.

Action: Clerk to forward email to Cllr Allan

15. Donation of Peace sculpture – update from Cllr Tolhurst

Cllr Tolhurst has spoken to a representative from MOSAG and forwarded the emails from the sculptor to him. He is still awaiting a reply but got the feeling they would look at the request favourably. Cllr Tolhurst will chase and report back at the next meeting.

Action: Cllr Tolhurst to liaise with MOSAG and report at the next meeting.

16. Annual Parish Assembly – to make a formal decision on this event taking place.

Cllr Richards explained the options available. We could look to hold a reduced number assembly at the hall, we could hold a remote parish meeting, or we could just delay until times are more certain. With the children only just back at school there is no way of knowing how this will impact the number of cases. It would not be responsible of the parish council to organise a meeting in the village hall at this time. He feels a remote meeting would be impractical and difficult to manage. The idea of the Assembly is to talk face to face, have discussion and suggestions from the village. This is not so easy remotely. The last option is to just delay the meeting and look to hold something later in the year once the Covid situation is clearer. The larger towns in the County have decided not to hold their Assemblies this year, including Uckfield, Hailsham and Hellingly.

Cllr Newham agreed that the council should cancel the Parish Assembly and hold something later in the year if possible. Cllr Mikelis suggested that the remote meeting could be a good option, that parishioners may wish to talk or discuss matters with the parish council. We could organise a very short meeting and ask for comments, a possible question and answer meeting.

Cllr Allan agreed that talking to the parish and having proper discussion is welcome and a good idea but trying to facilitate this remotely is difficult. Cllr Tolhurst agreed, he has attended several large remote meetings and it is very difficult to manage. People tend to talk over each other, and technical issues can also make it very difficult.

The council unanimously agreed to review the whole situation later in the summer. The council agreed that there will be no Parish Assembly held in May and the council will look to hold something in the Autumn. This maybe in person or remotely. Clerk to obtain advice and circulate to the council.

Action: Await advice regarding the holding of an Assembly later in the year.

Note: The advice received following the meeting confirmed that there is no legal requirement to hold an Assembly and if the Parish Council wishes to organise something in the Autumn this is ok to do so.

17. Financial Matters

17.1. To approve the Bank reconciliations for February 2021.

Resolved: the parish council unanimously agreed to approve the current account reconciliation and the savings account reconciliation for February 2021

17.2. To approve and authorise accounts payable for March 2021 (as detailed on the payment list).

Resolved: the parish council unanimously agreed to approve the accounts payable, cheque numbers 102564-102578 totalling £2966.83

17.3. To acknowledge the RBS reports circulated by the Clerk – Summary Receipts and Payments and Cash and Investment Reconciliation.

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Resolved: the parish council acknowledged the RBS reports circulated by the clerk and no questions were raised

Cllr Mikelis did have a query regarding a re-issued cheque from last financial year. The clerk and the accounts advisor have explained that if expenditure was included in last year you cannot include in this year.

The clerk asked that if possible, the allowance cheques to the councillors are paid in before the end of the financial year.

Meeting ended 20.40

- *The next virtual parish council Tuesday 13th April 2021 at 7.30p.m.via Zoom conferencing.*
- *The next virtual planning meeting Tuesday 23rd March 2021 at 7.30p.m via Zoom conferencing.*

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
- Speedwatch
- Mobile Phone Mast
- Lighting at entrance to the village car park
- Maintenance of Bus shelters
- Spring Clean – postponed until further notice
- Funds for Chiddingly Primary school outside area match funding