

654
MINUTES of THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Held ONLINE

2nd June 2020

AGENDA PART A

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Present	AS (Chair), AB, PD, SF, SR, HS, Cllr K Parkinson (CEC)
Apologies	CT
Police	Nil
Public	12 members of the public

2. MINUTES

2.1 Approval of Minutes – The minutes of the meeting of 3rd March 2020 were agreed and the Chair authorised to sign them.

2.2 Matters arising from Minutes – Nil

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Nil

4. OPEN FORUM

4.1 Open Forum – The meeting agreed that as the two comments received related to agenda item 9.6 this item would be dealt with at that point.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

5.1 Decisions made since previous meeting – the decisions referred to were authorised and confirmed.

5.2 Form and programme of future meetings – Members agreed that the next meeting, perhaps solely concentrating on lake and visitor issues, should be held no later than July, and earlier if it was considered appropriate. (During this item PD had IT issues and left the meeting)

5.3 Council's and employee's membership of other bodies – authorisation was given for continuing subscription payments to the bodies referred to in the report.

5.4 GDPR – (PD returned to the meeting at this point) – Council agreed to adopt the policies and other GDPR documents last reviewed in May 2019 until changed circumstances suggest or

require their review. In addition the Clerk was to continue to act as the Council's Data Protection Officer.

6. REPORT FROM CHESHIRE EAST COUNCILLOR PARKINSON – KP wished to comment on two matters, but it was agreed that she could also comment on the matters raised at agenda item 9.6 when that item was being discussed.

- Fly tipping – several issues had been reported to CEC (e.g. sofas near the lake); KP has been pursuing their clearance which should take place shortly, if not already done.
- Parking provision – 100-118 Pickmere Lane – KP is hoping that a scheme for a CEC project to improve parking provision for these properties will receive a decision in September; if that is not possible, the scheme may slip into the following financial year.

7. FINANCE

7.1 Financial Risk Assessment – Members confirmed the assessment schedule of financial risks.

7.2 Annual Governance provisions and procedures for audit – The Council noted that its accounting procedures have been successfully audited. The Clerk read each of the questions on the Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020 and members agreed to give a positive answer to each question that was applicable to this council and authorised the Chair and Clerk to sign the return. The Accounting Statement for 2019-2020 was then approved. The Council confirmed itself as exempt from limited assurance review and the Clerk/RFO and Chair were authorised to sign and submit the relevant certificate of exemption and other documents. The Council approved the Asset Register as at 1st April 2020. Finally the Council approved the proposals for providing appropriate publicity to its accounts for 2019-2020.

7.3 Standing Orders and Direct Debits – The Council noted and re-confirmed the standing orders and direct debits scheduled in the report.

7.4 Current financial position – Council noted and agreed the monthly report, the one notable item being the continuing loss of income for the hire of the Village Hall due to the Covid19 crisis – this amounts to about £200/month.

7.5 New payments – The Council authorised payments in accordance with the schedule presented, and confirmed the payments already made.

8. PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE – the schedule of planning matters was noted.

9. REPORTS FROM CLERK AND FROM COUNCILLORS

9.1 Coronavirus – Current position – the report was noted. The Chair requested members to consider the question of the Council's methods of communication with the local community particularly in relation to recent events. We have the website and the noticeboards, and also

the recently introduced bulletins inserted in Pickmere Press, but there is clearly a gap in providing quick and up to date messaging. He therefore proposed setting up a carefully controlled and edited Council Facebook page. SF and SR supported this proposal. SR said that an up to date PC bulletin (drafted by SF) would be prepared this week but probably too late for this week's issue of Pickmere Press, but that he would organise a separate distribution of the bulletin in the forthcoming week. The Council agreed that the Clerk should work with councillors to set up a Facebook page at the earliest opportunity.

9.2 Receipt of Community Infrastructure Levy Payment – Council agreed that this item should be deferred until the next suitable meeting.

9.3 Annual Parish Meeting 2020 - Council agreed that this item should be deferred until the next suitable meeting.

9.4 Neighbourhood Plan – The meeting agreed that momentum should continue on consideration of a Neighbourhood Plan. The report was noted. A report on potential consultancy assistance is at agenda item 10.1.

9.5 HS2 – National Infrastructure Commission Consultation – members noted the report and confirmed the content of the response made to the NIC. The response is available to view on the Parish Council's website.

9.6 Lakeside issues – May/June 2020 – the Clerk advised the meeting as to the basic facts surrounding the powers available to the Parish Council in trying to deal with the problems experienced in the village in last few weeks:

- The Parish Council owns 20% or less of the land fronting onto the lake; the remaining 80% is owned by other private landowners. The Council does not control the lake itself – that is shared among all the owners of lakeside land.
- The problems recently experienced in Pickmere and Wincham involve 3 parish councils, 2 district councils, several landowners, and several semi-discrete units of Cheshire Police. This complicates management of the area and the problems that arise.
- The Parish Council has powers only in respect of its own land. Other bodies have responsibility for dealing with:
 - The obstruction of roads and pavements by parked cars
 - Public order and drugs issues
 - Policing yellow lines
 - Emptying of litter bins
 - Testing of lake water for toxic algae.

The Parish Council can only ask the relevant bodies for help in resolving any of these problems.

The Chair asked SR to summarise the events that have taken place recently. SR has in the recent days spent a great deal of time, from early morning until late evening, walking the lakeside and village, liaising with residents, visitors, and police. In reviewing the events he drew a very broad distinction between two groups of visitors – family groups, and groups of young people who tend to congregate together. People have generally visited Pickmere because they have free time due to the recent lockdown, because the weather has been so good and because many other open-air venues have been closed due to the Covid crisis. Social media have played a significant part in these visiting groups expanding substantially – reference was made to multiple social media accounts (more than 12?) that have highlighted the availability and attractiveness of Pickmere Lake

for recreation. SR drew attention to the fact that Pickmere has been a well-known local recreational centre for many years/decades.

Problems relating to parking, public order, litter etc have affected both Wincham and Marston parishes as well as Pickmere, with the particular problem of large groups of young people causing problems of various types in all areas.

Clearly there are no facilities to deal with such large numbers of visitors – no toilets, no car parking facilities, etc. Cheshire Police, once they had realised the scale of the issues, have been extremely helpful. However it was clear that the number of residents who ring 101 to complain about problems has a positive effect on the level of priority the Police give to the problems – residents are therefore encouraged to do this (the Pickmere Covid WhatsApp Group have been particularly active in this respect). Further the Police although nominally all part of the same Cheshire force are split into semi-discrete policing units – Knutsford, Macclesfield, Northwich, Warrington, etc – and there was no co-ordination between these units until several days into the serious problems. This is a particular aspect that needs to be remedied.

Many residents have helped litter pick daily. Also Cheshire East's litter bin collectors have been extremely co-operative and helpful in taking away the substantial quantities of litter that had been gathered. However there has been very little assistance on the part of CE traffic wardens, who are apparently the only agency able to ticket vehicles parked on yellow lines.

SF reported on a meeting she had attended (with CT) involving Esther McVey MP and a senior police officer in relation to problems on Earles Lane, where many groups of young people accessed the Marston end of the lake. The Police have apparently ~~senior police officer there~~ accepted the need for greater co-ordination of police units, and the need to establish a partnership approach to the issues with all local stakeholders. Cheshire West and Chester Council also seem to have demonstrated a much more helpful involvement than has Cheshire East.

SF commented that it would be helpful to know from Cheshire Police just how many arrests have been made and how many parking tickets issued – if the Police advertised these facts it may help discourage others from visiting the area.

The Clerk read out two representations that had been received from local residents about the problems. The Chair responded to a comment in one of the representations that the Parish Council had done little or nothing to deal with the problem. This was plainly completely wrong – the problem was the lack of PC powers and the complexity of responsibilities of the various bodies involved.

KP, from CEC, has requested that CEC provide traffic cones, and for a traffic warden to visit. She has been visiting the area ~~visited the area several times, discussing~~ and has discussed the problems with local police and residents. She does need communication from Parish Council representatives however to help her.

There then followed a discussion of the actions that might be possible to deal with future problems. The comments included the following:

- Wincham have an involved and motivated Police Inspector – we need to seek a similar relationship with our police unit.
- We need more input from CEC traffic wardens actively tackling parking issues on yellow lines.
- We need to liaise with the local authorities' Covid teams.

- The Chair stated that a co-ordinated approach is essential and that Pickmere needs to take the lead; it is however likely to take some time to access the right people (including senior representation from CEC and the Police, but also key landowners) and to put into operation.
- In the short term we need access to more – many more – traffic cones, to permit the Police to take firmer action. A comprehensive coning of the area would be required (for short term periods) – on the scale of Cheshire Show arrangements – for instance extending along stretches of Pickmere Lane and Frog Lane. This would inevitably inconvenience local residents as well but the effort needs to be to dissuade casual visitors from coming because it is too difficult or troublesome to access the lake. This requires the will of CEC.
- SF emphasised the need for both short- and longer-term actions. She referred to the lack of compliance with social distancing rules, and the fact that the problems have given rise to members of the local community not being able to access the lake and its surrounds. It was pointed out that the chief culprits in relation to social distancing were the younger people.
- The possibility was mentioned of painting white circles on the IROS field to reinforce the social distancing message, but also importantly to give the Police a valid basis for enforcing a decision that the IROS was full up, and that consequently additional visitors would not be allowed to enter.
- The possibility of fencing the lower part of the IROS field, either permanently or from time to time.

The Chair summarised that it is necessary to assemble a list of the various potential actions so that the Council could decide which were the most practicable and feasible, and which bodies need to be approached to implement them.

In conclusion it was agreed that:

- Members are to supply the Clerk in the next day or two with potential short-term measures; such a list will be assembled and be the subject of early decision.
- The Clerk is to seek to organise appropriate meeting(s) with relevant key stakeholders to discuss how the problems might be comprehensively dealt with in the longer term.
- The Council's Facebook page is to be established as discussed above.

AGENDA PART B – CONFIDENTIAL

The Council resolved that members of the public should be asked to leave the meeting at this point to enable discussion of confidential matters.

10. RECEIPT OF QUOTATIONS

10.1 Neighbourhood Plan – Fee proposals received – Members agreed that Cheshire Community Action be approached to request an on-line meeting with representatives of the Council to seek to establish their suitability to assist the Council in progressing its Neighbourhood Plan.

Clerk: Jack Steel

Next meeting: To be arranged