

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL
Held ONLINE

4th May 2021

Present: Councillors Read (Chair), Bold, Carson, Dobson, Flannery, Shore, Tarrant and 10 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr K. Parkinson (CEC) (Conflict with CEC Mayor-making and Full Council meeting)

1. OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT FOR 2020-21

The Chairperson gave his annual report, a summary of which will be posted on the Parish Council website. The report was accepted unanimously.

2. ELECTIONS

2.2 Election of Officers – It was agreed that this item be taken first as Cllr Carson was encountering technical issues in joining the meeting. Cllr Read was unanimously elected as Chairperson for the ensuing year (SF nominating and CT seconding the motion).

2.3 Appointment of Responsible Financial Officer – The Clerk was unanimously elected as RFO for the ensuing year (SF nominating and PD seconding the motion).

2.1 Declaration of Acceptance of Office – Councillor Sarah Carson – having been newly elected to the Council during April 2021, Cllr Carson signed her Declaration of Acceptance of office in the view of the Clerk. Cllr Carson will pass the original of this document to the Clerk. The Chair welcomed Cllr Carson to the Council.

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PART A – PUBLIC AGENDA

1. ATTENDANCE

Present Councillors Read (Chair), Bold, Carson, Dobson, Flannery, Shore, Tarrant

Apologies Cllr K Parkinson (CEC) (Conflict with CEC Mayor-making and Full Council meeting)

Police Nil

Public 10 members of the public for much of the meeting

2. MINUTES

2.1 Approval of Minutes The minutes of the meeting of 6th April 2021 were agreed.

2.2 Matters arising from minutes of meeting of 6th April 2021 –

5. Report from CEC Cllr K Parkinson – Cllr Tarrant gave a brief update on the highway repair issues. He noted that he has received no reaction from CEC officers about the complaints he has submitted about the many highway problems that exist. Cllr Carson, in attending her first council meeting, noted how poor was the condition of the parish's roads. The Chair suggested that those two councillors liaise in pursuing further complaints to CEC.

The Clerk noted that in respect of Planning issues at Sunnyside/Meadowcroft (Pickmere Lane) (planning application 20/5757M) Cllr Parkinson reported that she had spoken with the Planning Enforcement team leader about this matter, whose response was to repeat the information of which the Council was already aware, but without making any reference to the Parish Council's current and repeated request for a meeting with CEC, and including representatives of the neighbours to the proposal, about the matter.

8.8 Memorial items – the Clerk responded to a question in saying that no further response has yet come back to the Council from the respective families who wish to erect memorial interpretation boards near the lake.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS Cllr Bold declared the possibility of a personal interest in part of agenda item 10.1 (depending on which matters were discussed under that head). Cllr Read declared a personal interest in agenda item 10.9, in that he is a close neighbour of the resident concerned.

4. PUBLIC FORUM No Public Forum items had been submitted.

5. REPORT FROM PCSO No report had been received. The Clerk reported that the Police had not been willing to divulge the questions that they were using in their partial survey of Pickmere's residents but had undertaken to share the results of the survey with the Council. Cllr Bold had accompanied the PCSO on one of the PCSO's survey visits, but with little information being divulged. The PCSO had told the Clerk that the Police would arrange the proposed meeting with interested bodies to discuss the summer visitor problems once their survey had been completed. Cllr Flannery noted her regret that the Police had not accepted the Council's offer to help with their survey and hoped that the Police would engage with the Council with the results.

6. REPORT FROM Cllr K Parkinson (CEC) The Clerk noted Cllr Parkinson's communication which contained comments in relation to the highway condition issues and to the situation at Sunnyside/Meadowcroft. The Council agreed with Cllr Flannery's suggestion that the situation re highway condition issues be copied to Esther McVey MP together with Cllr Tarrant's substantial email to CEC about the matter with his photos of the many issues.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

7.1 Holding of Online Council meetings – following the Government’s decision not to extend the temporary period within which Council meetings could be held online (which was to expire on 7th May), the Council considered the various options (noted in the report) in relation to how future Council meetings should be held. Reference was made to the differing requirements that related to the Government’s proposed Step 3 and Step 4 changes. The Clerk was asked to make enquiries as to the potential availability and capacities of Pickmere Methodist Church, of Wincham Village Hall and of Tabley Village Hall, in case one of these might offer an alternative larger venue than Pickmere Village Hall, in relation to the next Council meeting, due on 1st June. However, in the knowledge that it might not be possible or advisable to hold the next meeting of the Council in a hall because of the constraints surrounding social distancing requirements in relation to councillors and members of the public attending, the Council resolved:

That power be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to decide on the venue, form and date of the next Council meeting, taking into account Government’s further announcements on Covid matters, and also in the meantime to make any decisions on behalf of the Council, subject to those decisions being reported to the Council at the first appropriate opportunity.

7.2 Form and Programme of Council meetings 2021-22 The schedule of meetings proposed, based generally on the first Tuesday of the month, was agreed, subject to:

- The dates of the June, July and any August meetings being provisional and subject to decisions yet to be made as resolved in the previous agenda item.
- There being no meeting in January 2022.

7.3 Membership of outside bodies and associations The report was noted and authorisation was given for continuing subscription payments to the bodies referred to for the ensuing year.

7.4 Arrangements re GDPR Council agreed to adopt the policies and other documents last reviewed in June 2020 until changed circumstances suggest or require their review, and that the Clerk should continue to act as the Council’s Data Protection Compliance Officer.

8. FINANCE

8.1 Financial Risk Assessment Council confirmed the assessment of financial risks, with the alteration of the comment in relation to ‘Loss of paper/electronic records being amended to “Existing procedure adequate....” This change was as a result of the Clerk now saving Council documents to Microsoft OneDrive.

8.2 Annual Governance Provisions and procedures for Audit

- The Council noted that its accounting procedures have been successfully appraised by the Internal Auditor and notes the comments made by the Auditor in respect of its financial reserves.
- Following explanation of each of the items in the Annual Governance Statement, the Council approved the Statement and authorised the Chair and Clerk to sign the return.
- The Council approved the Accounting Statement for 2020-21 and authorised the Chair to sign the return.

- The Council agreed that the relevant documents be submitted to the External Auditor for a Limited Assurance Review in the appropriate timescale.
- The Council approved the Asset Register as at 1st April 2021.
- The Council approved the proposals for providing appropriate publicity to its accounts for 2020-21.

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

8.4 Expenditure from the Community Infrastructure Levy The Council noted the report and agreed that a copy be sent to Cheshire East Council.

8.5 Covid Business Restart Grant A discussion of the issues involved, which were introduced in the report, included the following remarks:

- That since the Council is currently considering the possibilities for applying for grant aid to help fund the Play Area refurbishment, which currently seem scarce (as a result of the impact of the Covid pandemic), it would seem perverse not to take advantage of funds that are offered and for which the Council is eligible to apply. Receipt of such funds would be likely to help accelerate the implementation of such refurbishment.
- That there is a concern that moneys relating to the Covid pandemic are being made available by Government without desirable checks and balances, and therefore some caution should be applied in considering this question.
- That the Council is not applying for such moneys with a view to keeping them in the bank but is intent on making use of the funds for worthwhile works and projects that will benefit the local community.
- That, as noted in the report, the funds expended so far have been recycled into the local economy by virtue of the works carried out.

Following the discussion, it was resolved that applications should be submitted for this grant in respect of the Council's two buildings. The voting was 6 in favour of the resolution and 1 against.

8.6 Current Financial position Council noted the monthly financial summary.

8.7 New payments Council authorised payment of the items on the amended schedule issued on 1st May, including authorising the Clerk to arrange for, and to issue payment for, the clean of the Village Hall in advance of Polling Day on 6th May, and an additional clean of the Hall after Polling Day.

9. PLANNING MATTERS Members noted the Planning update that was tabled.

10. REPORTS FROM CLERK AND FROM COUNCILLORS

10.1 Asset Maintenance Programme Members agreed to the inclusion of the list of works in the report, with the addition of the clearing of moss from the Pavilion roof. The works to the Pavilion eaves and fascia boards were considered a relatively high priority. It was agreed that a

quotation should be requested for the fascias of the Pavilion to be replaced in UPVC, as a possible alternative to repairing and painting the existing boards. Cllr Carson will supply the Clerk with the details of a supplier of such boards.

Following a discussion and questioning from a councillor as to the need to be sure of the purpose and function of the lakeside platform, the Council agreed that the contractor who submitted the accepted quotation for the repair of the platform should be requested to remove the existing structure so that the ground surface under the platform could be assessed, and that a report be submitted to Council in due course as to the options for the location.

- 10.2 Update – Neighbourhood Plan** The working group of councillors has met a number of times, CEC has been informed of the Council's intention to prepare such a plan, an application for Government grant is under preparation, and a flyer has been drafted and will be appropriately typeset to ensure it is in an attractive form. This will be distributed shortly to all properties in the parish and will outline the plan process and request volunteers to join the proposed Steering Group (to be made up of councillors and a number of residents) which will lead the preparation of the Plan for presentation in the first instance to the Parish Council for approval.

Council noted the report.

- 10.3 Reopening of Village Hall and Pavilion** After a discussion of the factors surrounding this decision (Cllr Bold and others having carried out a great deal of work in respect of precautions prepared at the Hall), Council agreed that the Hall and Pavilion would be made available for use from the date Government's Step 3, subject to requisite Covid safeguards and procedures, and that it would be for individual hiring groups to decide whether they wish to return at that point.

- 10.4 Update – Parish boundary signage** Cllr Bold has contacted several local parish councils and CEC and is awaiting CEC's response as to the issues, rules and guidelines involved. A further report will be submitted on receipt of CEC's advice.

- 10.5 Update – Community Speedwatch and traffic calming measures** Cllr Dobson reported that several residents have volunteered for training, and the PCSO's response as to potential training dates is awaited. Cllr Bold commented that information from CEC indicates that the likelihood of being able to secure further traffic calming measures is very small.

- 10.6 Update – Play Area refurbishment** Cllr Flannery reported that questionnaires have very recently been distributed to all households in the parish, and a number of responses already received. The deadline for responses is 14 May. A 'working meeting' on site is proposed in the coming weeks, to involve parents and also children to explore views and possibilities. ACRE had advised that there is only a very small likelihood of being able to access grant aid at present because many grant aiding bodies are concentrating resources on needs arising from the pandemic.

10.7 High Legh Neighbourhood Plan The issue of the Pre-submission version of the plan was noted. Comment was made about the professional nature of the plan, but also as to its substantial length (which is not a requisite).

10.8 HS2 – response to Parish Council request for information The Council noted the response to the Council's request had now been received, after a delay of 6 months. Incredulity was expressed at the implication in the response that local councils are not capable of interpreting technical reports commissioned by HS2.

10.9 Request to prune tree at Buttercup Way footpath As Cllr Read declared a personal interest in this item, Cllr Shore was elected as temporary Chair for this item. Two councillors had visited the site and in doing so noted that 2 smaller trees on the Council's land had apparently been pollarded in the past, with no councillor having any memory of the Council having carried out or having permitted such work. The Council resolved that the request should be refused, primarily because of the impact such a level of pruning would have on the appearance of this young, well-formed tree, and the consequent impact on the appearance and character of this part of Mere Lane.

10.10 Resolution to exclude the public Councillor Read resumed the Chair. Council resolved that members of the public should be asked to leave the meeting at this point to enable discussion of confidential matters.

PART B – PRIVATE AGENDA

11. Revised quotation for provision of Neighbourhood Plan consultancy services The revised quotation, based on the Council's request for additional consultancy input to the plan process, was accepted. The Clerk commented that it may be that over the course of the Plan, revisions to the level of the consultant's input are likely to occur depending on the progress of the plan and as a result of the likely length of the process, with resultant changes to the cost of such input.

Extra item – Spinks Lane Members agreed to the addition of this item. The Clerk reported the receipt of a short CEC response to the Council's last letter, but it did not change CEC's current position that it was not minded to go back to court in relation to the matter. The Chair noted that Cllr K Parkinson had suggested a discussion with representatives of the Parish Council about the current position. Following discussion it was agreed that the Chair should write again to CEC to request an update as to the number of current residents on the site, and that the correspondence should be copied to Cllr Parkinson and Esther McVey MP, but that this should await the suggested discussion with Cllr Parkinson.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.