

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

7th September 2021

PART A – PUBLIC AGENDA

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Apologies

Present: Councillors Read (Chair), Bold, Carson, Dobson, Flannery, Shore, Tarrant,
Police: PCSO E Darroch
Public: 5 members of the public
Apologies Cllr K Parkinson (CEC) - incapacity

1.2 Item withdrawn from agenda

2. MINUTES

2.1 Approval of Minutes The minutes of the council meeting of 20th July 2021 were agreed.

2.2 Matters arising **9.2 Multi-agency meeting** – the Chair reported briefly on the meeting of representatives of the parish councils fronting the lake. A further meeting is planned shortly.

9.6 Village Hall – possible broadband – the Clerk had not been able to pursue this further.

9.8 Village signage – Cllr Bold had not been able to pursue this item for the moment.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Cllr Tarrant declared a personal interest in agenda item 8.1 where he had a planning application under consideration. The Chair recused himself from discussion of agenda item 9.2 where he was a close neighbour of the applicant.

4. PUBLIC FORUM A member of the public expressed disappointment as he felt that the Council had demonstrated a lack of commitment to the proposed Neighbourhood Plan in that none of the councillors on the NP Working Group had expressed themselves willing to act as chair of the proposed NP Steering Group [It had been agreed by Council that the chairmanship of this Group would be rotated among the councillors on the Group]. The Chair responded to the comment.

5. REPORT FROM PCSO The PCSO informed the meeting that no burglaries or car crimes had been reported in Pickmere in the past month, although there had been one theft of jewellery from a visitor to the lake. She suggested as winter approaches that residents should generally consider having house lights/radio etc on timer to discourage burglary. The Chair asked the Residents Association (which was represented by a member of the public at the meeting) to ensure that this message is disseminated via the Neighbourhood Watch group. The Chair also thanked the PCSO for her help in setting up and training the Community Speedwatch volunteers.

5.1 Police Survey of residents' attitude to visitor issue – the Clerk noted some of the findings from this survey (which had a sample size of 70 households) – one of which was that the survey found that social media posts were a significant factor in encouraging visitors to the lake, and that opinions among the Pickmere residents who had been surveyed on the issue of large numbers of people visiting the lake were split almost evenly between those for this and those against. The PCSO commented further on the survey and was asked if she could convey her top ten residents' suggestions as to potential remedies for the problem to the Clerk. The Chair also commented that anecdotally he has been told by residents that the most difficult agency to get any action from is Cheshire East.

6. REPORT FROM CLLR K PARKINSON Nil (as KP had been expecting to attend the meeting).

7. FINANCE

7.0 The Chair accepted an additional item: Results of audit of Council accounts 2020-21 – the Clerk reported that the 'Limited Assurance Review' of the Council's 2020-21 Accounts had now been carried out and the auditors had found that they were in accordance with proper practices, and that no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern. The Clerk will now proceed to publicise these results as required. The report was noted.

7.1 Current financial position The monthly financial summary was noted. Cllr Tarrant asked the source of an Administration item of £500 receipt; the Clerk was not able to answer this query at the time. [This entry was in fact a miscoding in the accounts and related to the recent switch of Council bank accounts where the Council had to issue a cheque of £500 to the new bank account to open the account, and then that 'receipt' was subsequently noted in the new account, leaving an overall cancelling out of the sum.] The monthly accounts were noted.

7.2 New payments The schedule of new payments was agreed with the addition of the following items:

- Village Hall cleaner (who has now reverted to cleaning weekly rather than monthly) **£96.00**
- Repair to Millennium Gate – reimbursement of payment to contractor by Cllr Tarrant **£30.00**
- PKF Littlejohn LLP – fee for external audit of Council accounts (standard scale fee for a council of the size of Pickmere) **£300.00 excluding VAT**

The Clerk notified the Council that in line with Council's resolution of 20th July 2021, a contract had been entered into with Ash Waste Services Ltd for the provision and regular emptying of a large waste bin at the IROS for the period until end September and then from 1st April 2022 through the summer of 2022. Initial direct debit payments of £91.56 to cover 6 collections and rental of the bin for that period had been paid. Council noted and agreed this arrangement and the resultant commitment to payments.

7.3 Continuation of Council's Zoom account Members agreed to continue with the Zoom subscription for the moment and review it at the December meeting. Councillor Bold suggested the idea of pursuing the possibility of a 'hybrid' meeting where residents could either attend the meeting in person or view it online. The Clerk was asked to add this to the Council's October agenda, and in the meantime to ask Chalc if they had any advice on this issue.

8. PLANNING MATTERS

- 8.1 Planning application update** The schedule was noted. In respect of application 21/4359M (10 Merehaven Close) Cllr Tarrant, the applicant, left the meeting. The Clerk advised the meeting that in his view it was unnecessary for other members, who clearly all know Cllr Tarrant, to declare prejudicial personal interests in the matter. In considering the application, members went on to ask that CEC determine the application in accordance with its usual policies for such proposals, and to ensure that any comments on the application from neighbours of the property are taken into account in making a decision.

Councillor Tarrant re-entered the meeting on the conclusion of this item.

- 8.2 Neighbourhood Plan Update** The Clerk summarised his report – in particular referring to the receipt of Government grant to aid preparation of the Plan for the period to end March 2022, and also the process for eliciting volunteers to help with preparation of the Plans and the selection of 4 of those volunteers to join help make up the Plan's Steering Group. The Chair offered his thanks to the councillors who had been involved in this process and the residents who had volunteered to assist, noting that with a variety of persons involved in the process there will also be a range of viewpoints on the issues that will come to be considered.

Councillor Flannery, who is one of the four parish councillors on the Council's Neighbourhood Plan working group and on its Steering Group emphasised the firm wish of the Council that the process of preparing the Plan should be a democratic process, not steered by any one person or group, and in particular wished to stress that where some local residents had expressed the view that the Council has a hidden agenda in relation to the future of the Village Hall, there is no such agenda.

The Council's planning consultant is to be asked if she has any advice in relation to the best platform for arranging online meetings relating to preparation of the Plan.

9. REPORTS FROM CLERK AND FROM COUNCILLORS

- 9.1 Council Property Strategy** The Chair thanked the Clerk for the work he had put into this report which set the scene for Council's consideration and noted the source and long history of some elements of the topic.

The Chair asked each member in turn to comment on the various issues considered in the report. Following that and a discussion, Council resolved as follows:

- **Not** to continue the strategy previously adopted by Council, i.e. to develop a project to deliver an affordable, eco-friendly, fit for purpose Village Hall on land at the IROS, primarily funded by disposal of the Village Hall site – agreed by 4 votes to 1.
- To maintain both Council buildings (i.e. Village Hall and Pavilion) in their current form whilst a reviewed strategy is decided, which may or may not in part be based on evidence coming forward via the Neighbourhood Plan process - agreed by 5 votes to 1.
- The report's proposition 3 – the adoption of a more positive stance of seeking some enhancement of the Hall and Pavilion concomitant with the scale of funds available – was lost by unanimous vote.

- To establish a working group of councillors to identify maintenance works for the Pavilion and Village Hall and where appropriate and in association with the Clerk to bring forward quotations for Council consideration, subject always to the availability of funding. It was further agreed that the working group will comprise the Chair, and Councillors Dobson and Carson.

9.2 Proposal to prune tree at Mere Lane Councillor Shore took the Chair for this item. Councillor Read remained in the room but took no part in the discussion. Following such discussion, Council resolved not to agree to the applicant's proposal. Councillor Read re-took the chair on the conclusion of the item.

9.3 Cheshire East Consultation – Bus Improvement Project Council wished to inform CEC of its view that the current bus service through Pickmere should be at the least maintained and preferably improved, on the basis that a reduced bus service inevitably leads to further decline in demand and patronage, while the service remains a local lifeline for some residents of the parish.

9.4 Manchester Airport Future Airspace project The report was noted.

9.5 Reopening of Village Hall – update The report was noted.

9.6 Resolution to exclude the public 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

10. RECEIPT OF QUOTATIONS

10.1 Replacement of damaged post/rail fence – IROS WAP Lawton to be requested to replace the post/rails, which sought to prevent unauthorised vehicles being able to descend to the lakeside.

10.2 Clothes moth infestation at Village Hall The Council's pest contractor was authorised to apply a treatment for this problem at the cost mentioned.

11. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE Arising from a recent issue, the Clerk was asked to prepare a report for the October agenda on this general topic to include a draft Council Complaints policy.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.