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PICKMERE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PARISH MEETING

29 NOVEMBER 2022

VENUE: PICKMERE VILLAGE HALL commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting had been requested by 12 Pickmere electors under the terms of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Present: 55 electors of Pickmere parish (including Parish Council Chair and Parish Clerk)
Approx. 5 non-residents of Pickmere

Parish Councillor Simon Read, being present, chaired the meeting in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The Chair first stated the basis for the meeting and the statutory rules that governed any voting at the meeting. He also stated a series of principles in order to ensure an orderly and purposeful meeting. Contributions from Pickmere electors were then requested. There followed contributions from 19 electors, the vast majority of whom stated opposition to the proposed IROS fence. Among the points made were:

- Open spaces generally are disappearing and it would be morally wrong to erect a fence to enclose a further piece of currently open space.
- Would like to know when parishioners were made aware that the proposed fence would breach the “planning permission” for the IROS.
- The Parish Council is a political body; the land is effectively government-owned land.
- If the fence goes ahead, Cheshire East Council (CEC) will say “that the problem has been solved” and therefore do nothing more; it should be up to CEC to sort out the parking issues relating to visitors to the lake.
- Is there a way to ask a local landowner to “give us” some land to provide parking?
- Does not like to see this element of division in the village, though does not like the idea of a fence because of its effect on the character of the land.
- Need for the community to work together to solve the problems; need to accommodate visitors not deter them; could portaloos be provided? Admits that the parking problems can be “a nightmare”.
- It is public land and should be accessible by the public.
- The survey carried out by residents shows the reaction of the residents of Pickmere without the need for a Parish Poll – it shows the majority of residents oppose the fence.
- The Parish Council should get on with other solutions.
- This is a beauty spot and a centre for wildlife – the fence would disturb the environment for wildlife.
- “...something needs to be done” however opposes the fence; if erected other fences will follow around the lake. The answer is that the enthusiasm of all the objectors should be utilised to e.g. marshal visitors on busy days, collect litter/deal with visitors.

DRAFT

- Although oppose the fence understand why the Parish Council has arrived at its decision; is also against the use of traffic cones and yellow lines. Perhaps the answer is a fence in the short term and more facilities being provided in the longer term.
- The PC's proposal is "fencing off a stunning area for a few people".
- There is a need for more involvement from CEC, and there could be the use of volunteers. The current facilities for visitors are inadequate.
- The key issue is that parking in Pickmere is free compared to other locations.
- Need to consider whether we need a Parish Poll to be carried out at the suggested level of cost. The equivalent funds could perhaps be used to help CE deliver its proposed parking survey. The only way to support the proposed Parish Poll is if the Parish Council would say that it would abide by the results of the poll.
- Not in favour of doing nothing – has experienced significant ASB and also parking problems outside their house. Does not believe there is a perfect answer. Is a shame this has resulted in such a toxic atmosphere – where social media have played a substantial role. If there can be no other form of action to solve the problem then would be in favour of the fence.
- Does not think that anyone in the village wants a fence but what happens when the roads are blocked to the extent that emergency vehicles cannot access a problem?
- Understand that something needs to change.
- On Clover Drive yellow lines on the two 90deg bends would be beneficial.
- The decision to erect a fence should have involved more residents.
- What is the plan for the defibrillator if the fence is erected?
- The lake and adjoining land have proved beneficial for mental health e.g. of teenagers.
- This meeting has brought out the call for collaboration to think differently about possible solutions.
- Social media have had an extremely polarising effect – those on both sides of the argument need to be "more factual".
- Thank you to the Parish Council for their work on all parish matters throughout the year

There followed a request for a show of hands on the question of whether persons were for or against a fence. A vote of electors was taken:

- 9 electors agreed with the proposal to erect a fence;
- 42 electors were against the proposal
- 1 elector abstained.

There followed a discussion about whether a Parish Poll (as referred to in Schedule 12 to the Act) should be called for, conscious that the Parish Council would have to fund the process. A vote was called and:

- 30 electors voted in favour of demanding a Parish Poll.

However, before that proposition could proceed to CEC it was necessary to establish, in detail, the question that would be the subject of the Poll. At this point there was discussion in the meeting about the merits and the potential cost of a Poll. The Chair of the meeting and Parish Council subsequently confirmed that the results of tonight's meeting would be reported to the Parish Council at its meeting next Tuesday, and that the Council would be asked to consider what options might be available to it in response to the points made, and whether further decisions about the fence proposal should be

DRAFT

made at this time. On that basis, there was no proposition from the electors at tonight's meeting as to the wording for a Parish Poll, and therefore the proposition to require such a Poll could not proceed to CEC.

The Chair then closed the meeting.