



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council
held via Zoom on
Monday 18 May 2020 at 1830**

Present: Councillors Susan Davenport (Chair), Steven Ridgeon (Vice Chair), Matt Atkinson, Charles Ritchie, David Cooke, Sharon Sillence, Andrew Hales, Marc Atkinson, Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake

District & County Councillor Rob Mocatta & Suzie Brooker, Parish Clerk

1. Apologies for Absence

None received

2. Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interest

No declarations received

3. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting on the 16 March 2020

The Chair asked Councillors to consider whether they felt the Minutes were a true record of the meeting. Councillors who had attended the meeting confirmed that they were and they were approved as read. Proposed by Cllr Steve Ridgeon and seconded by Cllr David Cooke and duly signed as a true record.

4. Dates of Future Meetings

The dates for the 2021 Parish Council meetings had been circulated and were agreed as:-

Monday 25th January 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 15th March 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 17th May 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 5th July 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 13th September 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 15th November 2021 at 6.30pm

Monday 26th April 2021 – APA at 7pm

5. Approval of updated and revised Parish Council Policies

The Parish Clerk had circulated revised Standing Orders and Policy Documents to Councillors for review and amendment. No further amendments were suggested and Councillors approved all the documents. Proposed by Cllr Matt Atkinson and seconded by Cllr David Cooke.

6. Matters Arising from the Meeting held on the 16 March 2020

a) Play Areas

Cllr Ritchie reported that the new beam and net had been installed on the climbing frame at the Recreation Ground and that all work was now complete. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the play area on The Green had been locked however the grass would need cutting. Cllr Ritchie would now hand back responsibility of the Play Areas to Cllr Sillence.

b) Speed reduction signs, traffic and double yellow lines

Cllr Matt Atkinson reported that it was unwise to move the sign during the lockdown, however once traffic increased it would be moved to a new location. Cllr Atkinson informed the Council there were no updates about the double yellow lines. He reported that some potholes had been repaired. Cllr Cooke raised the issue of potholes in Frogmore Lane as local residents had complained. Cllr Atkinson would contact HCC, but thought it would not be a priority. Cllr Robert Mocatta recommended that residents use the online service to report issues with potholes.

c) Stiles

Cllr Atkinson reported there were no further developments with the grant application. Cllr Ridgeon reported that some of the springs had come off on the new kissing gates. Cllr Matt Atkinson would look into it and arrange for them to be repaired.

d) Noticeboards

Cllr Marc Atkinson reported he had the noticeboard, however all onsite work at the Petersfield Forge was on hold. Once the Forge reopens, the noticeboard would be dealt with.

e) Village Hall & Pavilion

Cllr Ridgeon updated the Council on the EHDC Support & Communities Fund which he would look into.

f) Bridleways, Fiveways & Limekiln Lane

The Chair reported that she had received reports of bikers along Fiveways. The Chair asked Councillors to take photographic evidence of bikers and email her with the date, time and details of the damage that was being caused. The Chair was in discussion with Nigel Brookes about Limekiln Lane and hoped some progress could be made. Cllr Marc Atkinson reported he had received correspondence that the Meon Valley was being advertised as a good place for off road bikers to ride.

g) Grass Cutting

Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake reported that Petersfield Town Council was doing a good job and that he would meet with Doug Budd in the near future. The grass on The Green is being left to grow up around the edges and the remainder is cut once a fortnight. Cllr Ritchie felt that the football pitch had been cut to a high standard and that the residents on The Green were generally happy. Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake would ask PTC to trim the ditch in Workhouse Lane that takes flood water to prevent it being filled with greenery.

h) Replacement Tree on Washer's Triangle

The Parish Clerk reported that nurseries had started to open, so a replacement tree could now be purchased.

i) Painting of railings

Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake reported that as the VE Day commemorations had been cancelled, he had not given instructions for the work to be carried out. It was agreed that it still needs to be completed, so Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake would arrange for the work to go ahead.

j) Weeds Policy and update on work of East Meon Nature

Cllr Atkinson updated the Council on the following:-

- The Managing Land for Nature Vision Statement would not be posted on the village noticeboard until an article about how as a Parish we could manage our land better for wildlife had appeared in Meon Matters in June.
- EMNG had not yet heard back from Elaina Whitaker-Slark about the River Meon improvements.
- Brian Biggs had started work on the website
- Steve Ridgeon had provided Debs Evans with information on a grant scheme
- Concern that roadside verges in Workhouse Lane were still being mown by HCC. Steve Ridgeon would speak to Cllr Mocatta to establish maintenance responsibility of the area.
- Next meeting of the EMNG would be held on 28th May.

k) Sewerage in Workhouse Lane and the Allotments

The Chair reported that since the lockdown there had been no further developments and Southern Water were unable to do anything due to social distancing. The Chair had advised allotment holders that they could be used at their own risk. Cllr Ritchie reported that the allotment holders had now received their compensation from Southern Water.

7. Parish Matters

a) Coronavirus update

The Chair reported that the village was coping well and the East Meon Volunteer Group had been supporting vulnerable residents. The tennis court had reopened, but the play areas remain closed until further notice. The planned sewerage meeting had been cancelled and would be rearranged at some point and the Tree Warden had been advised by EHDC not to inspect trees at this time.

b) Lengthsmen

Cllr Cooke reported he had been in contact with Bill and they had 7 tasks to complete and hoped to be in the village the week beginning the 25th May. 4hrs were carried over from last year, therefore totalling 44 for this year and they had already used 11 hours. Cllr Cooke recommended the work was spread out over the next year.

c) Recreation Ground bench

Cllr Ridgeon reported that Ken Woodhouse had restored the bench on the entrance to the Recreation Ground. There is also another white bench which would need replacing and would cost in the region of £350.00. Councillors agreed that it would be reviewed before the start of the cricket season next year. Cllr Ridgeon would ask Ken Woodhouse to remove the current damaged bench. Cllr Cooke reported that an area of the grass had been burnt and bottle tops had been left. Cllr Sillence kindly volunteered to remove the mess.

d) Workhouse Lane car park, gravel area next to the Pavilion & Glebe Strip hedge

Cllr Ritchie asked if the Tyrwhitt-Drakes would be able to kill the weeds in the car park and also the gravel area next to the bottle banks and all the area around the pavilion. A discussion ensued about the weeds as to whether they should be left to grow in line with the Vision Statement on Managing East Meon Land. The majority voted for weed killer to be used in the car park but that the gravel area should be left to grow in a managed way.

Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake would arrange for the southern end of the Glebe Strip to be cut late Autumn/early Winter.

e) Annual Parish Assembly postponement

The Chair recommended that we do not hold an APA this year and that the 2020 Parish Award be made next year.

f) VE 75th/VJ75th Commemoration

The Chair said it was most unfortunate that due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the planned VE Day celebrations could not take place. She advised there could be a commemoration of VE and VJ day on the 15th/16th August but was too early to know if this would happen.

8. County & District Councillor Report – Rob Mocatta

Cllr Mocatta reported he was not aware that any EHDC staff had been furloughed. Most were working from home, and many have been moved from one team to a different team in order to provide support for residents. The main office at Penns Place is practically empty most of the time, and the reception is not manned.

There have been some issues with waste collection due to staff self-isolating for a while, but EHDC has collected 100% of residents' ordinary bins. They have not collected green waste for many residents as the staff have been redeployed to the main bin collection. The same was true for the street sweeping teams. Cutting back grass verges has not been a priority.

There were 2172 businesses eligible for grants in East Hampshire of either £10k or £25k. 1966 have received grants. The others had been contacted to explain why grants had not been made.

EHDC has seen major drops in many revenue streams. Parking income is down 95%, planning fees have halved, as have building control and overall fee income. EHDC is looking at a shortfall of over £500k per month.

EHDC have collected over 75% of the rent on property investments - almost half of this is made up of Tesco and Waitrose. The bulk of the shortfall was from retail tenants - unsurprisingly given the circumstances. The current crisis was likely to worsen the situation for our high streets, and EHDC will look to be more flexible on how buildings are used.

The Petersfield HWRC reopened this week. There were substantial queues, but no one reported any problems.

The QCEP car parks, like all the other Country Parks, have reopened, and are charging as before.

HCC has had 6,000 children in its schools during the lockdown, including all the children with Education Plans.

HCC was also suffering from the financial consequences of the lockdown, losing about £20m per month.

HCC is engaging with all the other local transport authorities in Transport South East about how to make the region more cycling and walking friendly. County Cllr Mocatta reported he was talking to HCC Councillor Rob Humby about this.

9. Planning

Cllr Ridgeon reported there had been 14 planning applications; 11 dwellings and 3 trees.

11 applications had no objections and currently 3 are pending site visits.

Cllr Ridgeon informed the Council there was no update on the Westbury House application and also that conversations between SDNP and the developer for Coombe Road were ongoing.

10. Open Forum

No residents were present

11. Finance

a) Report on the Audit for the year to 31st March 2020

The Parish Clerk reported that the Audit for the year 1st April 2019-31st March 2020 to check that the Parish Council was complying with the requirements set out in the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England took place on 4 May 2020. Due to the current Coronavirus pandemic the consultation took place over the telephone with the Clerk providing back up information to support the current governance and financial management position of the Council. The Parish Clerk had circulated the Internal Audit Report to all Councillors in advance of the meeting.

Further confirmation was obtained of good practice and compliance with the Transparency Code Regulations 2015 from the Council's website. A series of independent audit tests were undertaken from the information made available to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's internal controls. The following checks were made:-

Bank Reconciliations

Bank reconciliations for the bank account had been carried out between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020, and totals agreed to those shown in the Cash Book.

Income and Expenditure

Test checks of the Cash Book totals for April 2019 – March 2020 were checked against payment information to ensure that the details were correctly recorded, and VAT elements extracted correctly.

Income recorded in the bank accounts was checked to ensure the details matched those entries shown in the Cash Book.

VAT

A VAT reimbursement claim for £2915.94 was received in May 2019 for the period for 2018/19 and the Clerk is aware that a VAT claim form will need to be submitted to HMRC for purchases made in 2019/2020.

Payroll Information

It was noted that the Parish Clerk is not registered for PAYE through the Parish Council which is now a requirement that Proper Officers are employed by the Parish Council. Contact should be made with HMRC to register the Proper Officer for PAYE and National Insurance purposes. The Council should produce a contract of employment for the Proper Officer so that this is formalised as soon as possible.

Asset Register

The auditor confirmed with the Parish Clerk that she had reviewed the Asset Register, and this was up to date as at 31 March 2020.

Risk Assessment 2019/2020

It was noted that the Parish Council did not minute that it approved the review of its risk during the financial year 2019/2020 but will need to review its risks at its next meeting in 2020. It is now a requirement by the External Auditor to review the Parish Council risks every year so the Council can answer "Yes" to assertion 5 on the Governance Statement on the AGAR. This will ensure that this requirement of the Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England is met

Insurance

The Insurance Cover for the Parish Council is with AXA/Inspire. The current level of cover is sufficient for the size of Council in 2019/2020.

Exercise of Public Rights 2019

- The 2019/2020 AGAR Internal Audit Report will require the Internal Auditor to check the Council has correctly provided the proper opportunity for the exercise of public rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations during 2019/2020.
- This will include the Internal Auditor being shown evidence that the posting of the notice on the website was done at least one clear day before the 30-working day period begins. An extract from the External Auditors notifications states:

Parish Council Minutes

Details of Parish Council Minutes on the Council website were checked from April 2019 to March 2020 to record points of note for any financial approval or decision that affected the budget of the Parish Council and to ensure that details were correctly shown in the Financial Ledger. Audit Note: The Minutes of the Council should list the number of payments and an overall total approved at each meeting.

End of Year Procedures

A full check was carried out on the end of year documentation provided by the Parish Clerk to confirm the accuracy of the details. This also included the validation of any variances of totals over 15% between 2018/19 and 2019/20 shown on the AGAR in Section 2 as required by the External Auditor.

Audit Opinion

The auditor advised that all internal control statements shown in the Internal Audit Report on the AGAR had been completed to show in his opinion that there was an adequate framework in place for the Council.

b) Approval of 2019/2020 accounts

i. Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020

Councillors considered and approved items 1-9 of the Governance Statement (page 4 of 6)

ii. Annual Accounting Statement & Accounts 1 April 2019-31 March 2020

It was noted that Councillors had received the final accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 together with the financial report. Councillors approved the Annual Accounting Statement for 2019/2020 (page 5 of 6).

c) Presentation of actual v budget for the current year

The Parish Clerk reported that between 1 April – 12 May 2020, 15 payments totalling £6,178.30 had been made. All Councillors present approved the payments.

The Parish Clerk reported that the following payments had been received:-

Parish Precept: £13, 731

EMCC: £500

VAT return for 2019/2020: £3,409.37

The Parish Clerk was thanked by all those present for her very capable work on the audit.

12. Any other business including correspondence of note

The Chair informed the Council that the Caretaker, Andy Symes had handed in his resignation effective from 1st July and a replacement would be required. A job specification and a formal advertisement would be produced.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 20.07