

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL held remotely on
Tuesday 5th May 2020, 7.00 pm using Zoom

PRESENT: Cllrs Forbes (Chair), Phillips (Vice-Chair) Arnott, Draper, Haite, Lee, Loveday, Spoor and Tyrrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca Roberts (Clerk) and Sam Booker (RFO), West Sussex County Cllr Jacquie Russell, Mid Sussex District Cllr John Belsey, **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** 0

The chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

1. **Welcome and explanation about meeting procedure** - Cllr Forbes welcomed everyone to the virtual Council meeting and explained that for meeting clarity, members' microphones would be muted during the meeting and if they wanted to comment on an agenda item they should raise their hand. They would then be unmuted and able to speak. Agreement to an agenda item should be done by the raising of hands.
- 2 **Elections**
 - a. Election of Chair for the ensuing year – Cllr Phillips nominated Cllr Forbes, Cllr Haite seconded. Cllr Forbes was unanimously elected as Chair.
 - b. To resolve to receive the Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office at a later date – Resolved; all members agreed
 - c. Election of Vice-Chair for the ensuing year – Cllr Forbes nominated Cllr Phillips, Cllr Haite seconded. Cllr Phillips was unanimously elected as Vice-Chair.
3. **County and District Councillors' Reports**
County Councillor Russell reported that she had been in contact with Richard Speller (West Sussex Highways) last week to ask if the substandard path on the bends of Wall Hill Road could be undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. The answer was essentially no, but that it will be taken up once things settle and subject to funds.

West Sussex are currently working on a plan to re-open the household waste sites, hopefully the week commencing the 11th May. It was hoped to work in conjunction with neighbouring Councils, but they are hearing that East Sussex may be delayed with their opening. The re-opening of any household waste site will come with conditions; namely that it is for black bag waste, cars only, no vans, trailers or walk-ins. Only one person may get out of the car and social distancing will be observed. No one from outside West Sussex will be allowed on site.

Covid-19, Adults and health – between 1st March and 17th April 2020, there were 1409 deaths in West Sussex, 193 of these involved Covid-19, which represents 13.7%.

Mid Sussex currently has the highest number of deaths associated with Covid at 59.

Deaths in care homes verses Hospitals is as follows:

	CARE HOMES	HOSPITALS
England and Wales	37%	40%
West Sussex	47%	27%
East Sussex	43%	27%
Brighton and Hove	55%	27%

Demographically, West Sussex have a much larger elderly population and have a long-term upward trend of people dying in their home (including where this is a care home with an accompanying decline in people dying in hospital which is reflected in the figures)

PPE – sufficient PPE is still being sourced to meet the needs of the County’s staff as determined by Government guidance.

Hospital Capacity – there is adequate acute ward capacity in West Sussex and there has been a reduction in the admission rate of Covid patients in recent days.

Children’s Services – the service has had to develop new ways of working but is able to maintain its statutory duties. High risk children all obtain face to face visits still and these are now extended to all children with a Child Protection Plan.

West Sussex County Council has decided not to adopt the changes to the Statutory Instrument in parliament involving making it easier to go through the foster and adoption process and less frequent visits by social workers for example. This means the highest quality service can be maintained, especially because they are on an improvement journey.

Cllr Forbes asked if the potholes in the Village could be repaired whilst the roads are quiet. Cllr Russell said that she would look into this, but thinks that Balfour have problems with resources; staffing and supplies. In addition, Cllr Forbes also asked about the equipment and earth piles left over from the recent gas works. Cllr Russell will bring this up with Highways and report back to the Clerk.

District Councillor Belsey gave an update on the play equipment at John Pears. Rob Anderton has confirmed a contractor has been chosen. It was agreed that it would be counterproductive to close to the playground after lockdown to install the new playground. It is hoped it will be installed during lockdown and this is being looked in to.

Planning – the developers for the Dirty Lane site are going for a rural exception site. Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) has an independent consultant conducting a viability study on this.

Residents in Ashurst Wood are aware of the East Grinstead Emergency Action Group and are using the service. Residents should be reminded that there is only one phone line, so if it is engaged, to wait a few minutes and call again.

Clarion is currently only responding to emergencies. If residents had a call logged before the Covid lockdown, they will need to log the fault again.

Homelessness – there are currently 3 homeless people in Mid Sussex at the moment, but despite encouragement, they refuse to go into temporary accommodation.

Covid-19 is having a significant impact on MSDC which will in turn have an impact on future finances. MSDC is suffering a loss of income from leisure centres and car parks for example.

4. **Apologies for absence - None**
5. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Council held on 3rd March 2020 – the minutes were approved and signed by the Chair as a true and correct account of the meeting.**
6. **To confirm the Emergency Resolution made by the Council on the 23rd March 2020 – resolved, members confirmed the resolution that had previously been agreed over email due to the Covid crisis.**
7. **To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda**
None
8. **Chairman’s Announcements**
None
9. **To review and confirm committees, structure, terms of reference and delegated powers - existing membership, Chairs and Vice-Chairs to remain until further notice**
 - a. Planning

- b. Finance & Administration
- c. Public Services

It was agreed to continue and confirm the committees, structure, terms of reference and delegated powers as well as the existing membership, Chairs and Vice-Chairs as per the previous year.

10. **To review and confirm Working Groups** – existing membership to remain until further notice
 - a. Events Working Group
 - b. Allotments Working GroupResolved; members agreed to continue with the existing membership of the Working Groups
11. **To review and confirm Standing Orders and Financial Regulations** – The Council agreed and resolved to confirm the current Standing Orders, to adopt new additional Standing Orders relating to virtual meetings and to change meeting starting times to 7 pm. Financial Regulations will be updated to reflect that the Clerk is not the Responsible Financial Officer.
12. **To confirm the Council's current policies:** Financial Risk Assessment/ Complaints Policy/ Freedom of Information publication scheme/ documentation and email retention scheme/Health & Safety policy / grant funding policy/ Code of Conduct/ Pre application meetings with developers/ DBS policy / Privacy Notice GDPR – The Council **resolved** to continue with the Council policies.
13. **To confirm the bank signatories for the Current and Deposit accounts** (to be members of the Finance and Administration Committee) – Members resolved to continue with the same bank signatories as last year; Cllrs Draper, Forbes and Phillips
14. **To approve list of Council Assets** – the Council reviewed and approved the list of assets.
15. **Council Insurance – to approve the new insurance schedule; and to resolve either a 1 or 3 year term and the expenditure of up to £900 for the Council's insurance and up to £300 for the buildings insurance per annum** - Members were advised that the Council insurance is due for renewal on 1st June 2020. The Clerk had received three quotes. Members approved to delegate the decision to the Clerk and RFO to make a comparison of the quotations received and select the best policy for the Council up to £900. Members resolved the expenditure of up to £300 for the building insurance which is organised by the Village Centre Trustees as part of the building insurance for the hall.
16. **To appoint representatives to outside bodies** –
 - a. Ashurst Wood Village Centre Management Committee – Cllr Forbes was appointed
 - b. West Sussex County Council Local Committee (CLC) – Cllr Forbes was appointed, although it was noted that anyone could attend these meetings
 - c. Parishes Cluster Group – Cllrs Forbes and Phillips were appointed
 - d. Mid Sussex District Council Emergency Planning Local Council (EPLG) – Cllr Lee was appointed
 - e. Parish, Town and District Communications Group – Cllr Lee was appointed
 - f. Parish Liaison Panel of the Ashdown Forest Conservators – Cllrs Phillips and Tyrrell were appointed.
17. **To confirm Annual Subscriptions**
 - a. Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) membership for the Clerk and RFO – to approve the annual membership and expenditure of up to £320 – The Council **approved** the annual membership and the expenditure of up to £320
 - b. Association of Local Council Clerks (ALLC) membership for the Clerk & RFO – to approve the annual membership and expenditure of up to £80 – The Council **approved** the membership and expenditure
 - c. Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils (SSALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) annual membership and the expenditure of £566.54 (£465.52 for SSALC and £101.02 for NALC) – The Council **approved** the expenditure.

18. **To confirm contracts, agreements and licences** (amounts are based on previous year and may change slightly at renewal)

- a. **MSDC Rural Management Agreement** for John Pears Recreation Ground (LGA 1976 ch57 s19)
- b. **British Telecom:** Telephone and Broadband (Direct Debit)*
- c. **KCS:** Photocopier and stationery (Direct Debit)*
- d. **Shopping Bus** – Community Transport Sussex (Transport Act 1985 s22 & 106A(b))
- e. **Rialtas Business Solutions (RBS)** – ALPHA account software – (5-user £172)*
- f. **Moneysoft Payroll management** (£90)*
- g. **Easyspace – email and web host** – note; domain fee biennial next payable 2021 (£200)*
(Local Government Transparency code 2015)
- h. **Easyspace** – website host and technical/maintenance support – (£130)
- i. **Easyspace** – mail storage upgrade (£190)
- j. **ESNET** – NOD PC security*
- k. **Information Commissioners Office (Data Protection Register)** - (up to £45)*
- l. **Parish Online** – (70% discount obtained via SSALC – fee to be confirmed)
- m. **Public Sector Licence** – Royal Mail Mapping (no fee)
- n. **MSDC Premises Licence** for John Pears Recreation Ground and Pavilion (£75) (LGA 1972 s145 (1a))
- o. **MSDC trustees** – lease for John Pears Recreation Ground for the Street Snooker MUGA Wall (£200 fixed lease agreement) – 28 year lease resolved under the General Power of Competence
- p. **Utilities and grounds maintenance** paid to Village Centre Management Trustees (£750) – (LGA 1972 s133)
- q. **Internal Auditor** – (up to £400) (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 reg 5)
- r. **Community Heartbeat Trust** (Defibrillator Service £130) – (LGA s137)

Members resolved to continue with existing contracts (a to r)

**Local Government Act 1972 section 111 (2) For the purposes of this section, transacting the business of a parish or community meeting or any other parish or community business shall be treated as a function of the parish or community council.*

19. **To confirm the schedule and dates of meetings for the ensuing year** – Members resolved to agree a schedule at a future meeting and to agree meeting dates as and when required during the Corona Virus Pandemic

20. **Recorded Meetings**

Resolved: members resolved to delete the recording of the meeting held on 3rd December 2019

21. **To receive the minutes of Committees and reports from working groups and to consider any recommendations arising:**

- a. **Planning Committee** – the minutes from the virtual meeting held on 28th April 2020 were confirmed as were the decisions made using email
- b. **Finance & Administration Committee** – no minutes to receive and nothing to report
- c. **Public Services Committee** – no minutes to receive and nothing to report
- d. **Youth Club** – nothing to report – the Youth Club is currently closed
- e. **Events Working Group (EWG)**
 - i. **Ashstock** – it was reported that the event had been postponed due to Corona Virus

22. **Clerk's Report** – the Clerk's report was received and noted.

23. **Finance**

- a. **Accounts to pay**

The accounts payable from 28th February 2020 to 31st March 2020 totalling £9,288.19 were **ratified and approved by the Council**
- b. **To receive the RBS income & expenditure report up to 30th April** – the reports were received and noted
- c. **To approve the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020** – the end of year accounting figures were presented to the Council for approval; total balances carried forward **£57,824**.
The Council will approve the Accounting Statements at a future meeting.

24. **Annual Governance and Accountability Return** – it was noted that due to the Corona Virus, the Council had not yet had its Internal Audit and therefore there is no report. The audit is due 14th May 2020. It was agreed that approval of the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements for 2019/20 will be deferred to a future Council meeting.
25. **To Consider Grant applications** – members were reminded that the annual budget for grants is £1000
- Age UK – members agreed to award a grant of £250
 - Air Ambulance for Kent, Surrey and Sussex – members agreed to award a grant of £250
 - Citizens Advice in West Sussex – members decided against awarding a grant on this occasion
26. **To receive an update on Policing in the Village** – it was reported that PCSO Skerman and PCSO Lovelock would attend the Village Council office on 6th May at 11.00am and hold a virtual meeting over Zoom. Residents had been advised to email the Clerk with any questions. Cllr Forbes and District Councillor Belsey would attend virtually.
27. **To confirm the arrangements for the conduct of Council business during the Covid-19 pandemic**
- To resolve to hold future Council meetings remotely wherever possible, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Corona virus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) Regulations 2020 – it was **resolved** to hold meetings remotely, but if this was not possible, to delegate decisions as per the Emergency Resolution dated 23rd March 2020.
 - To resolve that the delegation arrangements set out in the Emergency Resolution dated 23rd March 2020 shall continue to apply when it is not possible to hold a meeting – **resolved** – members agreed.
 - To confirm that staff salaries shall continue to be paid in full until further notice. Where a member of staff does not attend work, they shall be paid for their contracted hours or average normal monthly hours where appropriate – **resolved** – members agreed.
28. **Community Support during the Covid-19 crisis** – Cllr Forbes thanked the Community Café for their support of residents. The café is regularly cooking for 24 patrons and is doing a great job. It was noted that the community seems very resilient and sorting themselves out. It was reported that the NHS Responders are not being called on. There was no time to leaflet residents with information before the lockdown, but the website and Facebook are a good source of information.
29. **Consultations** - None
30. **To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies** - Cllrs Forbes and Phillips had attended the parishes Cluster Meeting on the 5th March
31. **Items of correspondence**
- Previously circulated
32. **Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda** – the proposed meeting with Star Pubs regarding the Three Crowns was cancelled due to Corona Virus. Another meeting will be scheduled when allowed.
Cllr Draper told members that she would take photographs of the VE Day decorations around the village on 8th May 2020
33. **Date of next meeting** - To be confirmed

Meeting closed: 8.03pm

Chairman.....

Date.....