

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M5/2021

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD VIRTUALLY in line with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

AT 19:30 ON

3 MAY 2021

PRESENT: Tony Bradley (Chairman) AB
Martin Smith, Gemma Allen, Paul Stubbs. (Councillors) MS/GA/PS

IN ATTENDANCE: T. Charlesworth; (Clerk/RFO). TC
One Parishioner
Parishioners/Representatives from the Traffic Calming Working Group: D. Richardson and S. Ward. DR/SW

1. APOLOGIES: Parishioner Z. Ward.
2. PARISH COUNCIL:
 - 2.1. Election Of Chairman: **RESOLVED:**
 - With no nominations AB agreed to remain acting Chairman until the end of June when he advised the PC that he would be resigning; this would give the remaining councillors time to review the situation.
 - 2.2. Election of Vice-Chairman: C/fwd.
 - 2.3. Notice of Resignation:
 - a) Permission to co-opt.
 - b) Resignation of Cllr. SK: C.D.C. notified; vacancy notice to be published on receipt. AB/TC
 - 2.4. Vacancy: No application(s).
 - a) C.D.C. confirmed that it has the powers to put people in place to bring a PC back up to a quorum; this would be at a cost to the PC (Parish).
 - 2.5. To Receive Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: None declared.
 - 2.6. COVID-19: Government Guidelines: Monitored.
 - a) Play Area: Work is completed and park re-opened.
 - b) Village Hall: Remains closed;
 - i. Local Elections: All action, as required, has been taken to make COVID safe; AB will be present on the day should there be any further requirements. AB
 - ii. PAT Testing: A request to be put on the Merton PC 'Facebook' page for a local electrician to quote for an annual PAT Test. GA
 - c) Meetings: The legal challenge brought by the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) was dismissed on 28 April 2021. This means that the Regulations (SI no. 392) brought in at the start of the pandemic to allow virtual council meetings come to an end at midnight on 6th May. This will mean that parish councils will have to revert to physical meetings under Local Government Act 1972. The PC will need to assess and mitigate as best it can the risk of holding a physical meeting.
 - 2.7. Emergency Plan: Review: Ongoing. GA/JC
 - a) Welcome Pack: Will be reviewed as part of the Emergency Plan.
 - 2.8. Merton Village Neighbourhood Plan:
 - a) Joint Neighbourhood Plan: The Clerk to express the PC's interest in the proposed joint plan with Ambrosden PC. TC
 - 2.9. Annual Review of Audit Documents:
 - a) Asset Register: **RESOLVED:**
 - To accept and approve the final documents following amendments.
 - 2.10. ICO Registration: **RESOLVED:**
 - That the registration should be in the Clerk's name. TC
3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:
 - a) Financial Trigger Point: The advice from OALC is that; *there is currently no trigger point for consultation in terms of money/spend for a Parish Council unless it wishes to take out a loan. However, if the PC is considering a large project it would certainly be open, transparent, sensible and best practice to let the residents know of its plans to avoid potential confrontation.* In order to meet transparency and best practice and in-light of the concern raised the PC agreed to look at setting a future trigger point of £5,000.00 to consult the village on future spending and look at amending its Financial Regulations and/or Standing Orders to reflect this. TC/ALL
 - b) Defibrillator: Delivered to SW; to alleviate concerns raised by parishioners about the proposed siting:-
 - The Defibrillator would initially be sited at the Village hall, as soon as possible, for safety; it should be in use, and Insurance reasons; GA and S. Ward to meet on-site to confirm siting. GA/SW
 - Further investigation is required for it to be sited at the bus stop as an electricity supply is required. MS
 - If an electricity supply is established the PC can consider whether it should be re-sited at the bus stop during the winter months and back at the village hall during the summer months.
4. MINUTES: **RESOLVED:**

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4.1: That the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 March 2021 were approved to be signed by the Chairman at the next face to face meeting. AB

4.2: That the draft minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 29 March 2021 were approved to be signed by the Chairman at the next face to face meeting. AB

5. ASSET MANAGEMENT:

5.1: Recreational Field/Play Area/Allotments:

a) Oxford Cavaliers Rugby League Club:

- i. Village Hall Proposals: AB and PS met with an architectural technician; it was proposed to initially ask him to provide the PC with a floor plan in order that proposals for the village hall can be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners of Merton Parish. OCRLC have confirmed that they will receive a grant of twenty thousand pounds which needs to be matched. PC to consider putting in place a group of representatives to meet regularly if the proposals go ahead; GA to liaise with OCRLC. GA/AB/PS

ii. Funding Applications:

- C.D.C. has been asked to provide grant information.
- Viridor: Stage 2 has been initiated and it was agreed that SK hands over the application process to GA.
- Calor Rural Community Fund: *See 8.8-b below.*
- 'Just Giving Page': Investigate if the PC is able to advertise a page for fund raising. TC/GA

iii. Village Consultation: Proposals to be presented at Annual Meeting of the Parishioners of Merton Parish.

iv. Review of Risk Assessment: OCRLC to provide a copy of its Risk Assessment. GA

Parishioners were thanked for attending and left the meeting.

b) Play Area:

- i. Update on order: Installation of new equipment completed.
- ii. Insurance: Having confirmed that the removal and additions of new equipment to the policy would incur no extra cost this year; the Clerk was tasked with instructing Zurich Insurance to make the amendments to the policy. TC

c) Football: Future lettings policy to be drafted for consideration. AB/All

6. COMMUNICATIONS

6.1: Parish Matters: The current, excellent, content was noted: **RESOLVED**

a) To publish the following matters:

- Parish Council vacancies to include an insight into being a councillor and reasons why the PC needs support.
- Date for the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners of Merton Parish: A request to be made for questions to be put to the Clerk prior to the meeting.
- Village Hall: Proposals to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners of Merton Parish.
- Contribution from OCRLC.
- East-West Rail Link: Consultation awareness.
- Bus Stop Light: Update.
- Proposed Tree Felling to be advised.
- Springclean 2021: Dates and information for volunteers. GA

b) Insert: *See 6.3 below.*

6.2: Facebook Page: A Merton Parish Council Facebook page is up and running. GA

6.3: Newsletter: It was agreed that 6.1-b above and the proposed 'Newsletter' were one of the same; to be used to communicate with the village; proposed spending; the Annual Meeting of the Parishioners of Merton Parish etc. Lead to be considered at the next meeting. TC

7. COMMUNITY:

7.1: Planning Applications:

a) Application No.: 21/00893/F

Proposal: Timber weather screening to upper walls of existing menage building

Location: Merton Grounds Farm, Langford Lane, Merton, OX25 2NS

Parish(es): Merton

Expected Decision Level: Delegated.

RESOLVED:

- That the PC had no comments or objections to the application. TC

7.2: Decision Notices: None received.

7.3: Planning Matters:

- a) Merton Nursing Home: Ownership to be monitored. GA
- b) Cherwell Local Plan Review 2040 - Village services questionnaire February 2021. All
- c) Ox-Cam Expressway – Cancelled; to remove from agenda. TC
- d) East-West Rail Link: Consider proposals for Bicester railway crossing. All

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- 7.4: Traffic Calming: Report from 'Working Group': Meeting scheduled for 14 May 2021.
- a) Proposal for a survey of traffic: Update on 'Speed Traffic Monitoring' van: No update.
 - b) S106 Agreement: To be followed up. MS
 - c) 20mph Speed Limit: Proposal to form partnership with neighbouring parishes: To be discussed at the Traffic Calming meeting. MS/SW
- 7.5: Bus Stop Light: The matter was now with the relevant department and the 'Fix my Street' report closed. SSE to be contacted regarding the power supply. MS
- 7.6: Notice Board: Proposed local project: Maintenance works to be carried out once the weather improves. AB
- 7.7: Defibrillator: See 3-b above.
- 7.8: Adopt a Phone Box: Established that the parish does not have a phone box to adopt.
- 7.9: Merton Burrow Pit: Proposed Cherwell District Wildlife Site enquiry: Information has been provided.
- 8: FINANCE:
- 8.1: Receipts: -
- a) Petty cash and Bookings:
 - April 2021: None.
 - May Election hall hire charge will be due.
 - b) Allotment No's: 5 & 6 – Rent 2021/22 - £27.00 – Banked.
 - c) Precept part payment £8,000.00.
- 8.2: Account for Payment Prior to the Meeting: None.
- 8.3: Accounts for Payment:
- RESOLVED:**
- That the following accounts were approved for payment:
- a) Clerks Pay/Exp. March 2021 – Cheque No: 101585.
 - b) Pest Control - £475.00 – Cheque No: 101586.
 - c) Grass Cutting Contractor – Inv. No: 1 -Trimming the brambles etc. from the footpaths in the woodland - £432.00 - Inv. No: 2 – Grass cutting and strimming at Merton Recreation Ground (30.3.2021) - £204.00 – Total £636.00 – Cheque No: 101587.
 - d) Playdale Playgrounds Ltd. – Inv. No: 0000041678 - £5024.04 (includes extra £50.00 delivery only charge for the timber pinball leg) – Cheque No: 101588.
 - e) Dog Bin Emptying x 3 (1/2 yearly invoice plus 10% Admin fee). – Inv. No: 20001403 - £180.67 – Cheque No: 101589.
- Noted that:
- f) Water Supply is £31.57 in credit. TC/AB
- 8.4: Quotes:
- a) Laptop: Recommendations and information to be forwarded to councillors once research is completed; it was noted that a purchase through the 'Amazon' account would be better for payment/invoice purposes. TC
 - b) Fallen/Damaged Trees: Having considered the three quotes provided it was **RESOLVED:**
 - To accept the quote from Oxford Tree Services; TC to email and copy councillors in.
 - MS to be point of contact in order that the owner of the field opposite can be alerted in order to move horses to safety. TC/MS
 - c) Village Hall Plans: See 5.1-a-i above: There being two parts to the quote provided by the Architectural Technician it was **RESOLVED:**
 - To approve the quote; initially for the preparation of plans to be presented to the village; although this would be part of the work as quoted it was noted that a four hundred pound deposit is required against the full quote. AB
- 8.5: Banking:
- a) Bank Signatories: No response received despite a letter being promised; to be followed up again; PC to look at options for a change of bank. TC/AB/MS/JC/GA
- 8.6: Financial Reports and Bank Reconciliation: None presented as awaiting up to date bank statement. The PC is to consider alternative banking arrangements; suitable for parish councils. AB/TC
- 8.7: End of Year Accounts 31 March 2021::
- a) Internal Auditor: Letter of Engagement: Receipt acknowledged:
 - b) Completion of Checklist: To be completed. TC
 - c) Oxon SA; Official Notification to Submit Your Authority's Return 2020/2021: The Clerk informed the PC that it had received its official notification to submit its Return for 2020/21: Completion and review of the 2020/21 AGAR has reverted to the standard timetable. This means the external auditor, would expect to receive the appropriately completed Exemption Certificate or AGAR 3 form and supporting documents on or before 30 June 2021. All
- 8.8: Grant Applications:
- a) Update for Village Hall Applications: See 5.1-a-ii above.
 - i. Parishes Containing Outbreak Management Fund: The PC has been successful in its application for funding of five hundred and fifty pounds to:
 - Installation of 'covid' guidance signage for the village

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- Purchase sanitiser for village hall
- Purchase of new waste bin for village park
- **RESOLVED:**
- That the PC understands and agrees to the conditions of the award. TC
- Calor Rural Community Fund: To make application. GA

9: GENERAL

- 9.1: The Clerks Contract and Job Description: Review: AB and Clerk to arrange to discuss. AB/TC
- 9.2: Correspondence for Action: The lists of correspondence presented M.P.C. 298/299 (Feb/March 2021) were considered as matters not otherwise covered by the agenda; with no further actions.
- a) Pre-Briefing Invitation | East West Rail Consultation – Rec/d 30.3.2021: *See 7.3-d above.*
 - b) Age UK Oxfordshire – Thank you letter for donation – Rec/d 15.4.2021: Noted.
 - c) Charlton-on-Otmoor Parish Council – Flooding – Consider signing the letter to enforce the PC's cause to resolve the flooding at Oddington Crossing: **RESOLVED:**
 - d) To sign and return the letter. TC
 - e) C.D.C. – Springclean 2021 –Rec/d 22.4.2021: AB to host and organise. AB
- 9.3: Matters for Further Information or Discussion:
- a) Matters for Further Information: None.
 - b) Matters for Further Discussion:
 - Beer Festival Equipment: Tobe followed up. GA
 - Occupied Rabbit Hole: It is hoped that the removal of the 'Cypress' tree will disturb the occupants.

10: NEXT MEETING:

10.1: 14 June 2021 –Parish Council Meeting: Date to be confirmed - to discuss plans for a Face to Face meeting given that the regulation to hold virtual meetings ends on 7 May 2021 unless information is received to the contrary: The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020: *See 2.6-c above.* This meeting will be held Face to Face in accordance with Government guidelines; and recommendations to make the hall COVID safe.

10.2: Annual Meeting of Parishioners of Merton: To be held on 21 June 2021 at 7.30pm:

- Invitations to be organised and to include the OCRLC, Cllr. D. Sames; a police representative and the local farmer. AB/TC
- Clerk to be advised of any questions in advance in order to minimize the length of the meeting.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 22:15.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman

Date