

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERTON M4/2021

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE 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 29 MARCH 2021

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

IN ATTENDANCE: T. Charlesworth; (Clerk/RFO). TC
Ten Parishioners

1. APOLOGIES: None recorded.

2. PARISH COUNCIL:

2.2 To Receive Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: None declared.

2.3 Annual Review of Audit Documents:

a) Review Effectiveness of Internal Audit: **RESOLVED:**

- To approve and adopt with no amendments.

b) Review of Internal Audit: **RESOLVED:**

- To approve and adopt as amended for the newly appointed Internal Auditor.

c) Asset Register: It is noted that the remains of the bin on Forge Close have been removed: **RESOLVED:**

- To approve and adopt with the following amendments:

- Insurance values to be updated to 2020/21.

• Play Equipment: Removal of:

- 1 Spring Horse 410 – Purchase Price £451.00 – To be £0.00.
- 1 Spring Elephant 416 – Purchase Price £489.00 – To be £0.00.

• Play Equipment: Addition of new equipment:

- 1 Timber Team Swing Frame with Shackles – Purchase Price £1259.10
- 1 Green Team Swing Seat with Chains for Frame: £898.20.
- 2 Safety Barrier – Purchase Price £396.00.
- 1 Timber Wobble Board – Purchase Price £632.70.
- 1 Timber Rope Walk – Purchase Price £466.20.
- 1 Timber Log Walk – Purchase Price £25.20.
- Surfaces: Black Grasslok Surfacing (30-150m²) Del & Ins - £806.00.
- Delivery and Installation – Total £2,490.00 to be confirmed.

• General:

- 5 Historical Pictures and Memorial Plaque – Stored in the village hall store room - £1.00 (unknown purchase price – discovered when clearing store room).

d) Risk Assessments: **RESOLVED:**

i. Allotments: Draft review accepted and approved.

ii. Play Area: Draft review, taking into repairs to equipment of new equipment, accepted and approved.

- Playdale Playgrounds to be asked to quote for Annual Inspections. GA

iii. Woodland Public Access: Draft review accepted and approved.

iv. Woodland Volunteers: Draft review accepted and approved with the addition of the trees that need felling.

v. Village Hall/Comprehensive Risk Assessment:

- 4.1 and 4.4: Noted electrical checks overdue: Mr Foxon to be contacted regarding a PAT test. TC
- 5.5: Suggested caveat to be clarified.
- 6.3: Exiting the changing rooms, team and officials, to be added here. Keeping the back access clear; to be added.
- 7.2: Cleaning fluids; bleach etc. to be kept in a locked cupboard; to be added.
- 7.5: Allotments to be changed to Water feed to Allotments: Check the tap for leakage on a regular basis; to be added to Existing Safety Precautions.

e) Parish Council: Review of current document accepted and reviewed with no amendments.

f) Financial Regulations: Review of current document accepted and reviewed with no amendments; new model to be processed ready for next review.

g) Standing Orders: New model Standing Orders 2018 accepted and approved. TC

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The following concerns were raised regarding the Parish Councils transparency when making decisions about public money:

- **Play Area:** Whilst those parishioners present were in agreement that the repairs to the play area were a requirement under Health and Safety and vital to the safety of the children it was unclear how much had been spent on either repairs or new equipment; the parish should have been consulted and thus may have prevented concern being raised through Facebook by parishioners:

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- Facebook: The PC needs to be clear if councillors are representing themselves or the Parish Council when responding to comments?
- Governance: Relevant documents should be visible to the parish; there needs to be a clear decision trail through the Minutes, it was apparent that no other ideas were explored i.e. the provision of equipment for a different or wider age group or on more concerning matters like traffic calming, neither was the parish consulted.
- Engagement/Communication: In accordance with statutory requirement the parish should be consulted, in order to discuss and gain views; consensus; the fifty-one parishioners that responded to the traffic calming consultation shows that parishioners need to be aware and informed in order to participate.
- **Precept:** Where is the communication/explanation for the 80% increase last year; the PC should demonstrate and explain such increases.
- **Traffic Calming:** Five members were present; consultation with the parish resulted in the decision to raise funds for the purchase and installation of VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign); a total of £9,000.00 will be available for Traffic Calming through D. Sames O.C.C. and money set aside from last year's budget and the forward year budget once the PC receives the precept in April. Unfortunately due to COVID meetings have not taken place and at the last PC meeting, at which a member of the group was present, it was agreed to explore the possibility of raising funds through a s106 Agreement through planning in Ambrosden and look at a 'build-out' option which completely opposes what had been agreed by the group; this option has already been explored and there were many reasons against it. The group plan to reconvene and will reassess the parish views; looking at what, financially, can be achieved now and possible fundraising for any further measures (phases). In terms of the spending of public money on new play area equipment; again concern was raised regarding consultation, communication, discussion etc., and priority given the interest shown in traffic calming measures by the parish and the concern that action should be taken before there is a fatal accident (accidents and speeding should be reported to 101 or 999 in order that they are on record as statistics managed by the Police show that not all accidents are reported).
- The Parish Council advised that it's meetings is the forum for discussion; matters to be discussed are on the agenda of a meeting, which are published on the notice board and PC website, to which the public and press are welcomed; decisions are recorded in the Minutes; it acknowledges that COVID and the use of Teams for meetings has presented problems and see tonight's attendance as a positive outcome.
- Communication:
 - The PC is looking at utilising 'Facebook'; the use of Facebook by other parish councils has been monitored; they are used for information only i.e. providing links to agendas; dates of meetings etc.
 - There is now a summary of meetings being published in the Parish Matters; the PC will consider the proposal to produce a newsletter and the use of inserts to the Parish Matters; support was offered with the publishing and delivery.
 - Governance Documents are published on the PC website.
- Village Hall proposals:
 - The PC has previously minuted that it is to consider plans for consultation with the parish/village.
- Play Area: An explanation of spending:
 - Following an assessment two pieces of equipment were removed as they were deemed unsafe; the large climbing area was still being used at 'own risk' prior to repairs.
 - Just under £5,000.00 incl. VAT was spent on repairs and maintenance.
 - Some items were relocated and new items purchased at a cost of just under £10,000 incl. VAT a large proportion of this cost was delivery/removal and installation.
 - Some verbal consultation with parishioners had taken place in-passing when it was expressed that new items would be appreciated.
- **Dog Walking:** To try and resolve and improve relationships with the local farmers and dog walkers the PC would consider inviting a representative from the estate. All.

Thanks were expressed for those attending the meeting; parishioners left at 21:06.

4: FINANCE:

4.1: Account for Payment Prior to the Meeting:

- a) ICO Registration - £40.00 – The Clerk/RFO had received confirmation that this was due for payment and is a requirement.

5: VILLAGE MATTERS:

5.1: Health & Safety:

- a) Split Conifer tree on the fence line behind the village hall: Following an on-site meeting the PC had been provided with one quote (clarification required as to whether or not the tree is deemed unsafe) and was waiting on another.
 - For Health and Safety reasons the area will be taped off and a sign put up.
 - It was also reported that a flowering tree to the west side of the play area has fallen over; the bark appears to have been scored through at ground level: tree to be cut off.

6. MATTERS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR DISCUSSION:

- a) INFORMATION:

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- Having attended a meeting regarding the consultation on the Code of Conduct the Clerk reported that, one of the areas for concern is the clarification of when a councillor is acting as a councillor and therefore, governed by the Code of Conduct and when a councillor is not.
- b) MATTERS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:
 - The Clerk was tasked with researching what the process would be if the PC was no longer quorate. TC

7. NEXT MEETING:

- 7.1. 12 April 2021 at 7.30pm: The meeting will be 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: GA to set up a Parish Council 'Facebook' page, linked through the Clerks email address, the PC will look at holding the meeting through messenger; as the regulation governing virtual meetings currently comes to an end on the 7 May it was not deemed viable to open a parish council 'zoom' account at this time. GA

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21:35.

Draft Minutes subject to confirmation:

Approved and Signed by the Presiding Chairman

Date