

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 19TH MARCH 2020
AT 6.30pm AT ROFFEY MILLENNIUM HALL, CRAWLEY ROAD, HORSHAM**

Present: Councillors: - A. Britten (Chairman)*, Mrs K. Burgess, P. Burgess*, M. Cockerill, J. Davidson, Mrs R. Ginn, Mrs J. Gough*, R. Knight*, D. Mahon, R. Millington, T. Rickett B.E.M.(Vice Chairman), D. Searle*, A. Shine*, J Smithurst*, S. Torn, R. Turner*, I. Wassell* and Mrs S. Wilton.

* denotes absence.

In attendance: Parish Clerk - Pauline Whitehead BA(Hons) FSLCC, Deputy Clerk – Vivien Edwards.

FC/474/20 Public Forum.

There were no members of the public in attendance.

FC/475/20 Apologies for absence.

The Council received apologies and reasons for absence from Cllr A. Britten, Cllr P. Burgess, Cllr Mrs J. Gough, Cllr R. Knight, Cllr D. Searle, Cllr A. Shine, Cllr J. Smithurst, Cllr R. Turner and Cllr. I. Wassell.

FC/476/20 Declarations of interest.

Cllr Mrs K Burgess declared an interest in FC/457/20 as a close family member is employed by the Parish Council.

FC/457/20 Coronavirus (Covid-19) Emergency Measures.

North Horsham Parish Council's Business Continuity Plan states that the critical core functions of the business are as follows:-

- The Parish Council Office administers the halls by taking bookings, raising invoices, receiving payments, financial recording, communication with potential hirers, residents and other bodies, servicing meetings and assisting the public.
- Roffey Millennium Hall, (which includes the Parish Office) is hired out to regular users and ad hoc hirers.
- North Heath Hall is hired out to regular users and ad hoc hirers.
- Holbrook Tythe Barn is hired out to regular users and ad hoc hirers.
- Multi Courts are hired out to regular users and ad hoc hirers.

One of the emergency risks identified in the Plan is staff illness (epidemic).

The Government had put in place measures to reduce the spread of Coronavirus and on 16th March 2020 issued 'Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults'. This advised social distancing measures to be taken to

reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus.

Specific advice was given to those over 70 years old and those under 70 with named, underlying health conditions and who are at increased risk of severe illness from Coronavirus. This group were to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures which include avoiding non-essential use of public transport, working from home where possible, avoiding large gatherings and gatherings with friends and family.

Potential Closure of the Community Halls and Multi Courts

The Clerk reported that since the government advice had been released there had been unprecedented numbers of booking cancellations from hirers of the halls and the multi-courts.

To follow government guidance and avoid the spread of Coronavirus:-

It was RESOLVED that Roffey Millennium Hall and Holbrook Tythe Barn close with immediate effect until the end of May 2020 but, those who have bookings over the weekend of 21st and 22nd March 2020 should have the option to proceed with the hire if they wish and if cancelling caused them problems. The situation would be kept under review.

It was RESOLVED that North Heath Hall remain open for either of the nurseries who meet there, if required. The nurseries may be asked to remain open to provide care for pre-school children of key workers. If this facility was not required for this purpose, the building would be closed until the end of May 2020, but kept under review.

It was RESOLVED that the multi courts remain open for small groups of 4 or more at the discretion of the Clerk/ Deputy Clerk as a means of people getting exercise, but that large gatherings should not be allowed. This would be kept under review.

It was RESOLVED that the 28 day cancellation policy contained within the terms and condition of booking be waived and that anyone who has been forced to cancel their hire due to the Coronavirus outbreak will not have to pay for the hire of the hall.

The Clerk reported that the potential loss of income from the halls to the Council is approximately £10,000 for March 2020, £16,000 for April 2020 and should there be a need to close in May 2020 the loss was likely to be £20,000.

The projected financial figures indicate that despite the projected £10,000 loss for the financial period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, Council spending is likely to be still be well within the forecast budget. The Finance and Administration Committee will no doubt, consider how the potential £36,000 loss (or more) will impact on the 2020/21 budget and decide what measures need to be taken at a future meeting.

Meetings

Following a recommendation from the Clerk, **it was RESOLVED that all meetings, (including the Annual Parish Meeting scheduled on 20th April 2020) be cancelled with immediate effect until the end of April 2020 when the decision will be reviewed. It was NOTED that current guidance states that the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance and Accountability Return must be agreed by Council no later than 29th June 2020 and this can be facilitated by an Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting if necessary. Should this change it will be communicated to the Parish Council.**

Contingency Plans for making decisions

Following recommendation by the Clerk, **it was RESOLVED to agree a scheme of delegation whereby urgent decisions would be facilitated by agreement of the Chairman of the Council, Vice Chairman of the Council, Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee and the Clerk. Should one of those people be unavailable for any reason, substitutions could be made with the Chairman of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee or the Chairman of the Property Committee and the Deputy Clerk. Any decision made would be communicated to the Council and ratified as soon as possible after the decision had been made. If possible, the views of the Council would be sought prior to the decision, but this may not be practical.**

More details regarding how the Parish Council will respond to planning applications whilst formal meetings cannot be held will be circulated in due course. It is envisaged that the applications will be circulated to the Committee and any comments ratified at the next possible Planning, Environment and Transport Committee Meeting.

Authorisation of payments, if normal procedures cannot be followed.

Following a recommendation by the Clerk, **it was RESOLVED that in order for payments to be made in a timely manner, the list of payments would be sent to at least two Councillors who are authorised to verify payments for e-mail agreement. Those asked to sign off the payments would be able to request to see a copy of any**

invoice they chose. Large or unusual payments would be highlighted. All payment lists that were authorised in this way would be signed and authorised retrospectively as soon as possible.

Potential closure of the Parish office

It was **RESOLVED** to close the Parish Office to the public with effect from Monday 23rd March 2020. A skeleton staff would remain for as long as possible, but after that, where possible, office staff would work from home. For those Parish Council staff who were not able to work from home, there was still litter bin emptying, litter collection, cleaning, inspection of buildings and maintenance work to be done.

Other issues that may impact on the workings and service delivery of the Parish Council

There is limited knowledge on how the pandemic will affect the parish at this stage as it is a rapidly changing situation. It is likely that current projects will not progress as the full impact of 'social distancing' and the ability to link with other organisations and suppliers take hold.

Cllr K Burgess left the meeting.

FC/458/20 Exclusion of press and public

Those present **RESOLVED** to exclude the Press and Public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1, for reasons of confidentiality as the item relates to staff matters.

FC/459/20 Staff matters

The Parish Council **RESOLVED** to agree the following measures for staff with a review after two weeks.

- Four staff members fall into the category that should observe stringent social distancing. It was **AGREED** that one staff member would work from home and that the three other staff members, who could not work from home, would be asked to stay at home for two weeks but, receive full pay.
- Those staff members who could work from home would be asked to do so.
- Those who couldn't work at home would be asked to undertake litter picking, do inspections and outstanding maintenance.

FC/460/20 Date of next Council meeting.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting and will be held on Thursday 7th May 2020 (Scheduled).

There being no other business, the Chairman expressed appreciation for the work that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had done at this uncertain time and closed the meeting at 7.05 pm.

..... Signed

.....Dated