

HOOK NORTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF HOOK NORTON PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020 AT 7.30PM

- Present:** Councillors: Wilson, Hicks, Brotherston, Duggan, Gregory, Matthews (part), Shepherd, County Cllr Reynolds, District Cllr Brown (arrived 7.35pm) and Mrs Watts (Parish Clerk/RFO). There was one member of the public in attendance.
- 20/153** **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs Porter and Noviss
- 20/154** **Declarations of Interest:** Cllrs Shepherd and Gregory declared an interest in allotment rents 2022-2023.
- 20/155** **Chairman's Announcements:**
20/155/1 Cllr Wilson thanked everyone for attending the virtual meeting.
20/155/2 Members of the public are advised to contact the Clerk to the Parish Council at rosemary.watts@hnpc.org.uk if they wish to attend a meeting. To enable attendance a link to Zoom will be sent to you. Residents should note that this will be for the purposes of viewing the meeting only and public participation will only be permitted at the discretion of the Chairman to allow any members of the public to address the meeting in relation to the business being transacted. The 5-minute public speaking rule, as per the Parish Council's Standing Orders, will apply.
- 20/155/3 In March 2021 households across Cherwell district will be asked to take part in the nationwide census of housing and the population. With the exception of 1941, the Census has been carried out every decade since 1801. This next one will be the first 'digital-first' census, and information from it will help decide how services are planned and funded in the local area and all around the UK. CDC will pre-identify key population groups who might need extra help or encouragement to complete their Census returns in March 2021. Cllr Wilson will be HN's Census Lead and will receive ongoing communication from the Census Engagement Manager.
- 20/155/4 The Parish Clerk attended an OALC 'FOI' training Course on 2 December. Cllr Duggan will attend an OALC 'Councillor Fundamentals' training course on 27 January. Cllr Shepherd will attend an OALC 'Experienced Councillor' training course on 13 July.
- 20/156** **Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held 12 November 2020**
20/156/1 Cllr Wilson proposed that the Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 12 November 2020 be resolved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Hicks and passed unanimously.
- 20/157** **Co-option:**
20/157/1 The Parish Clerk had placed an advertisement on the village noticeboards notifying villagers that there were two vacancies on the Parish Council. She had received one application from Mr Robert Mills. Cllr Wilson proposed that Robert Mills be co-opted as Councillor to the Parish Council. This was seconded by Cllr Matthews and passed unanimously. Mr Mills will complete a Declarations of Acceptance of Office and a Register of Members' Interests form. These should be returned to the Parish Clerk within seven days so that CDC can be notified of the appointment. The Parish Clerk will email him the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.
- 20/157/2 Cllr Wilson asked Cllr Mills to join the Cemetery and Allotments Working Group.
20/157/3 Cllr Brotherston will set up a Parish Council email address for Cllr Mills.
20/157/4 A vacancy exists on the Parish Council and interested parties should contact the Parish Clerk for further details rosemary.watts@hnpc.org.uk
- 20/158** **Planning Applications** – (Annex 1) Cllr Duggan reported:
20/158/1 Three planning/TCA applications had been received since the last meeting. A discussion arose around 20/03201/F England Farm, Burycroft Rd – installation of photovoltaic panels; a final decision will be made by Councillors in the next few days.
20/158/2 Cherwell District Council had granted eight applications, one of which the Parish Council had objected to - (20/02834/TCA – The Sun Inn - fell Ash).

Initials.....

20/158/3 Cherwell District Council refused three applications; 1) 20/02254/F2 Swiss Cottages, Sibford Rd, erection of open staircase to storeroom above garage; 2) 20/02197/F\20/02198/LB Manor Farm, Station Rd, alterations and erection of 2 houses; 3) 20/02193/F\20/02192/LB Manor Farm, Station Rd, alterations and erection of a new building.

20/158/4 Cllr Duggan attended an OALC Planning on-line training course on 17 November. His report is attached (Annex 2). Cllrs Reynolds and Brown confirmed that CDC does have an Adopted Local Plan in place, contrary to information given at the training session.

20/159 Reports of Working Groups

20/159/1 Recreation

- The play area can remain open during lockdown.
- Playdale has carried out repairs to the play equipment. Further repairs are required.
- The PC has replaced the young fruit tree in the play area damaged by vandals.
- A young fruit tree and some play equipment appear to have been damaged by a strimmer. The Parish Clerk will contact Thomas Fox.

20/159/2 Cemetery and Allotments

- The stone wall in the churchyard at the bottom of Talbot House, Queen Street has failed. Quotations for this one-off repair have been difficult to obtain. Councillors agreed that contractors should be invited to tender for a 12 month contract for work on walls for which the Parish Council is responsible. Cllr Gregory will set this matter in motion.
- The railings in the cemetery damaged by a falling tree have been replaced.
- Three allotment plots identified at the end of the season as needing attention will be inspected again in the new year.
- There are thirteen people on the list waiting for allotments.

20/159/3 Environment

- Cllr Shepherd has put his name down for a collection of wild flower seeds from a nature reserve near Oxford. Some seeds will be sown in Ironstone Hollow.
- A number of Councillors will attend HNLC AGM on 15 December.
- The Parish Clerk has asked OCC to replenish the salt/grit bins in the village.
- There is a nationwide project to plant a tree for every child starting school in the next two years. Cllr Shepherd will contact the Headmaster of the primary school to discuss.

20/159/4 Hook Norton War Memorial Hall

- Government restrictions means that the hall will remain closed until they are lifted.
- Ken Smith has not yet fitted the lights to the outside front wall.
- Cllr Brotherston has carried out some internal maintenance work.

20/160 Finance/Schedule of Receipts and Payments for Authorisation by the Council:

20/160/1 The Parish Clerk presented the schedules of receipts and payments for December totalling £6,356.61 for the Parish Council and £305.40 for the Memorial Hall (Annex 3, 4). Cllr Wilson moved acceptance of the payments detailed. Seconded by Cllr Hicks and agreed unanimously.

20/161 Bank Signatories:

20/161/1 Cllr Wilson proposed that Councillors Porter and Shepherd be appointed as signatories to the Parish Council bank accounts. This was seconded by Cllr Hicks and passed unanimously.

20/161/2 The Parish Clerk will raise the necessary paperwork for signature.

20/162 External Audit – 2019-2020 Accounts

20/162/1 Although the Parish Council accounts for 2019-2020 were sent to external auditors Moore for auditing on 30 July, their conclusion of audit, due to lockdown, was not received until 23 November (normally end of September). Moore reviewed and certified the accounts as being satisfactory, with no matters arising.

20/162/2 The External Auditor's Certificate can be seen on the Parish Council website.

20/162/3 Cllr Wilson thanked the Parish Clerk for once again carrying out this statutory and lengthy annual exercise.

Initials.....

- 20/163** **Budget/Precept 2021-2022**
 20/163/1 Following discussions at last month's meeting, the Parish Clerk had updated the budget paper and re-distributed it to Councillors before the meeting. Cllr Wilson proposed that the revised budget be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Matthews and agreed unanimously. The Parish Clerk will forward the precept details to CDC.
- 20/164** **Cemetery Fees 2021:** Cllrs Gregory and Hicks had discussed cemetery fees 2021 before the meeting and they proposed a 1% increase. Following a discussion Cllr Wilson proposed that in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, this increase be deferred to 2022. This was seconded by Cllr Matthews and agreed by the majority. Cllr Duggan opposed the decision. The Parish Clerk will notify local undertakers/stonemasons of the 2021 rates.
- 20/165** **Allotment Rents 2022-2023:**
 20/165/1 Cllrs Gregory and Hicks had sent out their proposals for allotment rents 2022-2023 before the meeting. After a short discussion Cllr Wilson proposed that in line with other local areas, rent for a full plot should be increased to £28 but that half plots should remain at £15.30. This was seconded by Cllr Hicks and agreed unanimously. Cllrs Shepherd and Gregory, having declared an interest, did not vote.
 20/165/2 The Parish Clerk will send out rental invoices for 2021-2022 in February; details of the agreed 2022-2023 rates will be included.
- 20/166** **Engagement of Parishioners:**
 20/166/1 Cllr Gregory had made contact with HNLC and Hook Norton Newsletter to discuss ways of engaging residents. The Parish Council sends in Snippets every other month; it works well and provides details of where villagers can access further information. The information that the Parish Council puts on the noticeboards is very interesting but they are not sure how much others look at it and if they know about this. They did suggest that the Parish Council might want to consider using Snippets to ask for views on how villagers might like the Parish Council to communicate with them. They also suggested that the Parish Council might want to focus on new things that are happening or specific areas that it is working on, such as the wildlife zones, planters, tree programme.
- 20/167** **Inconsiderate Parking and Damage to Verges:**
 20/167/1 Councillor Wilson has received a number of complaints from residents about people parking inconsiderately, causing difficulty for other road users and damage to verges. Cllr Reynolds said that there seems little that OCC Highways can do to stop this. He added that it is a problem in many villages but it seems that such parking is not illegal on highway land unless it is within 10 metres of a junction. In this case, only the police can enforce the law. People are therefore asked to park their vehicles safely and considerately in all areas of the village.
 20/167/2 TVP may issue parking fines to drivers who park their cars dangerously or cause an obstruction on the footpaths.
- 20/168** **Trees:**
 20/168/1 Work on the first tranche of tree maintenance began on 30 November. Wood chippings created from coppicing trees in Ironstone Hollow have been left in place to provide mulch for future use. Treotech left a number of log piles for use by residents and these went very quickly.
 20/168/2 Two trees in the cemetery have been tested for disease; a cypress has decay in the centre but is viewed by Treotech as stable at the moment; a lime has decay in the centre but also has fungal growth at its base - Treotech indicates that it will have to be felled at some point.
 20/168/3 The Parish Clerk had referred the Chairman and Cllr Shepherd to Cavanagh v Witley Parish Council (2018), where legal proceedings were instituted against a parish council as owner of a tree which fell into the path of a bus causing serious injury to the driver and damage to a nearby property. The court found that the parish council's approach to the inspection of trees on a blanket three-year cycle was inadequate and failed to take into account trees in higher-risk locations. Cllr Shepherd proposed that in light of judgement, mature trees in high-risk locations need individual assessment and should be inspected by an arboricultural expert on a 12-18 month basis. The timing of the interim inspections must ensure that these trees are inspected both bare and in leaf within a two-year period. Cllr Wilson seconded the proposal and it was agreed unanimously. Councillors will discuss which high risk areas/trees should be included in the additional surveys at the next meeting.
 20/168/4 Councillors thanked Mr Hope for donating a willow tree which will be planted in the cemetery.

Initials.....

20/169
20/169/1

Report on District Council Matters: District Cllr Brown reported as follows:-
Planned Executive, 7th December

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021 / 2022 - to recommend to Council the option of a no-change Council Tax Reduction income banded Scheme for working age customers for 2021 - 2022. That is to (i) retain the discount for 2nd homes at zero, (ii) retain the discount for empty homes (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) at 25% for 6 months and thereafter at zero, (iii) retain the discount for empty homes undergoing major repair at 25% for 12 months and thereafter at zero, (iv) retain the empty homes premium of an additional 100% for properties that have remained empty for more than 2 years.

Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire - this is the first draft and is intended to be the start of a conversation with Oxon communities to build consensus around a common set of goals for Oxon centred on people's wellbeing in the round in ways that make important connections because there are well-recognised intrinsic links between the environmental, social and economic dimensions of wellbeing and how these need to be underpinned by improved resilience (their words, not mine). They go on, in similar, vein The Strategic Vision defines the ambition for Oxon as a set of outcomes, which if successful, will have been achieved by 2050. To help achieve the ambition, the Vision defines what is meant by "good growth*" with the approach based on improvements in quality and circumstances for individuals and society. The aim is that growth in Oxon will be inclusive (my question: does that mean more development including everywhere in the County?), focussing on progress in improving health and wellbeing, transitioning to a low carbon future, addressing inequalities and prioritising the natural environment alongside greater resilience to climate an economic change. Despite its high-sounding objectives the Vision has a "clearly defined non-statutory status". Public and stakeholder engagement runs from 16 Nov 2020 to 3 Jan 2021. * the definition of "good growth" contains all the usual buzz-words - sustainable, healthy and inclusive, clean and green, innovation, efficient, resilient, high quality.

20/169/2

Budget Proposals 2021/2025 and beyond - CDC has issued a report setting out the financial challenges it faces over the next four years. Future uncertainties around funding and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic means CDC will for the first time in many years need to make significant savings to budgets over the next two years. The report has been published www.cherwell.gov.uk/budgetconsultation and consultation closes on 8 January 2021.

20/169/3

A meeting at CDC on 14 December will address the controversial matter of drag-hunting over council-owned land.

20/170
20/170/1

Report on County Council Matters: County Cllr Reynolds reported as follows:-

The 2021-2022 budget is looming and OCC is expected to raise the normal Council Tax by the full 2%. However there is a possibility of it going up 3-5% to go towards adult social budgets. The budget for road repairs will be looked at to ensure that badly maintained roads have capital money invested in them.

20/170/2

Planning application for works at the Library - unfortunately the works needed are not going ahead as quickly as hoped and the latest lockdown has not helped with the possible re-opening.

20/170/3

OCC Councillors are being persuaded not to oppose 20mph speed limits through villages.

20/171
20/171/1

Correspondence:

The Parish Clerk had forwarded all correspondence to Councillors during the month and there were no matters outstanding.

20/172

AOB: Items for discussion next month:- Hook Norton Emergency Plan: PC Policy for S137 Grants: Park Farm Railway Embankment.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 7.30pm.

There being no further business, Councillor Wilson thanked everyone for their work over the year. She gave special thanks to the Parish Clerk for her extra efforts and support to the Council over the past year. She thanked everyone attending and closed the public meeting at 9.20pm.

Signed
Hook Norton Parish Council
Dated