

OFFWELL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT 7.30PM
ON TUESDAY 17th MARCH 2020 IN THE SOCIAL CLUB

Present: Cllrs. A. Small (Chair), M. Brake, P. Hopkins, C. Whithear

In Attendance: A Jenkins (Clerk)

Members of Public: 0

Councillors were asked to sit apart and maintain a safe social distance.

OPEN SESSION

No matters raised

COUNCIL BUSINESS

1. Apologies

Cllrs. M. Mulrain, P. Tuke, S. Patch, J. Tristram, EDDC Cllr. H. Parr, DCC Cllr. M. Shaw

2. Declaration of Interests

None

3. a) Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th February 2020

The minutes were declared a true record of the proceedings, proposed by Cllr. Small, seconded by Cllr. Brake, all in favour.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None

5. Reports

a) Police:

The Clerk advised that he had not received a report for the last month.

b) District and County Councillors:

The Clerk reported that DCC Cllr. Shaw had sent a monthly report which had been forwarded to all Councillors and also posted on the website.

Cllr. Shaw had advised that he was now working from home and following official guidance would not be attending meetings until further notice.

While he is working from home, he will of course be available as usual by email and phone if we need any kind of assistance.

The Clerk reported that EDDC Cllr. Parr had sent a monthly report which had been forwarded to all Councillors.

She advised that she was also following official guidance and working from home, but would also be contactable by phone or email if the Council required any assistance or advice.

c) Other Reports

None

6. Correspondence

The Clerk advised that he had forwarded on to Councillors all email correspondence received.

The items of note were:-

- a) A number of emails re Covid 19 guidance
- b) Defra guidance on managing household refuse if a household is affected by the Coronavirus.

7. Finance

a) Current Financial Position

The Clerk advised that there was £6,971.91 in the current account (after allowing for uncleared cheques but not allowing for the below payments).

There was now £3,362.09 in the CIL Account

It should be noted that the Council has resolved to make a commitment to spend £2,250 from this CIL monies on playground equipment for the Project.

b) Intervening Expenditure to approve

None

c) Expenditure to be approved

Cllr Whithear proposed, Cllr. Brake seconded, all in favour that:

- 1. £318.72 be paid to the Clerk for salary for March

d) Forthcoming expenditure to approve

None

8. Planning Matters

a) Planning applications received prior to agenda publication

None

b) Planning applications received after agenda publication

None

c) Any other planning matters

The Clerk reported that Planning Application 20/0041/FUL for The Grazing Cow, had been approved.

The Clerk reported that Planning Application 20/0021/COU (Change of use from agricultural land to garden) for Sweethayes Offwell Honiton EX14 9SB had been approved.

9. Councillor vacancy

The Clerk reported that the EDDC returning officer had confirmed that the Council could proceed to fill the vacancy by co-option. Councillors agreed to defer this matter until after any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covi-19 virus.

10. Lengthsman

The Chair reported that he had been unable to meet with Cllr. Patch to progress this matter.

11. Parish Council Website

Cllr. Brake advised that he was continuing to work on the website but that the subcommittee had not met to discuss progress and would not be able to arrange a meeting until after any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covi-19 virus.

12. Document Retention Policy

The Clerk had circulated to Councillors with the agenda the proposed Document Retention Policy for consideration and adoption at the meeting.

Cllr. Whithear proposed adopting the policy, seconded by Cllr. Brake, all in favour.

Extraordinary Items to be considered

13. To consider extending the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk working in association with the Chair during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covid-19 virus or where Council cannot meet due to illness or self-isolation of Councillors. Such delegation is to enable the Council to continue to legally function and fulfil its responsibilities to its residents.

The Clerk advised that it is likely that the Government will shortly pass emergency legislation to support the prevention of the spread of Covid-19. This may include restricting and preventing groupings of people for meetings and events. As yet, we do not know what form this will take.

This does not prevent Councillors preparing and thinking about the Parish Council's activities in the context of a "lockdown". In Italy restrictions have been put in place until 3rd April. If the same happened in the UK how will the Parish Council continue to operate all its functions.

NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks have issued advice that Parish Councils need to consider different scenarios and actions that will assist in the continued running of the Council in the event that Council meetings cannot be held due to meetings being banned or Councillors being unable to attend due to illness, self isolation or being in the perceived vulnerable groups.

Their advice is that Council meet to pass a resolution establishing a suitable delegation to the Clerk (working in association with the Chair) in order to keep the Council operating. The Local Government Act 1972 allows a local authority to arrange for the discharge of any of its functions to an officer of the authority, which in the case of Offwell Parish Council would be the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer.

Cllr. Brake proposed extending the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk working in association with the Chair during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covid-19 virus or where Council cannot meet due to illness or self isolation of

Councillors. Such delegation to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents. Seconded by Cllr. Whithear, all in favour.

14. To consider establishing a Pandemic Crisis Management Team.

The Clerk advised that following prior consultation with the Chair and in view of the urgent need for the Parish Council to respond to this crisis and support the Community, much work had already been done. ORSA had offered to help and Cllr. Mulrain, Dawn Mulrain and Linda Whithear had offered to act as coordinators for an Offwell Neighbourhood Support Group which would offer support and assistance to parishioners.

Cllr. Small proposed that the Clerk working with the three Support Group coordinators should manage the Council's response to the Pandemic Crisis but also call on other Councillors if assistance is needed. Seconded by Cllr. Brake, all in favour.

15. To consider the consultation process to be adopted for Planning, Finance and other matters.

The Clerk advised that it was highly likely that Planning Applications would continue and that the Parish Council as a statutory consultee would be asked and be expected to comment on any new planning applications. It was important that Councillors view the plans and documents of any application and they could do this online. He suggested that a procedure be adopted whereby when he was notified of a new planning application, he would email all Councillors advising them of the application and the EDDC link in order to view the documents. He would ask them once they had viewed the documents to email the Chair (cc to the Clerk) within a set period advising whether they had to declare any interest in the application, whether they supported the application or had no objection or objected to the application and any comments they wished to make. The Chair would then collate all the replies and formulate the consensus decision, (If necessary, contacting Councillors for agreement) and email the Clerk who would submit the Council decision to EDDC Planning.

Cllr. Brake proposed this procedure be adopted. Seconded by Cllr. Hopkins, all in favour.

The Clerk to consult with the Chair on any finance and other matters.

16. To consider how the Council can best inform and support the Community during this Covid-19 Pandemic period.

The Clerk advised that he together with the three Support Group coordinators were after careful consideration drawing up a plan on how the Support Group would support the Community and particularly those who were in the vulnerable at risk category and would have to self-isolate. Support and assistance would be provided through a network of volunteers and would consist of picking up prescriptions, shopping for those unable to travel or self-isolating and making friendly supportive phone calls. The Clerk said a letter was due to be printed and posted out later in the week advising parishioners of the Support Group, the support offered and contact details etc.

It was felt important that the Support Group establish contact details for all parishioners particularly landline telephone numbers and the letter asked parishioners to contact the Coordinators and provide these details.

The Support Group were contacting local pharmacies about agreeing the picking up and delivery of prescriptions and local food shops who could support the community through the crisis and any lockdown period.

The Clerk said that the Village Website would be vital for relaying official and any other relevant information to Parishioners and both Carol Hayes and Dawn Mulrain had already done much work publishing information on the website. The Clerk would pass on to Carol and Dawn all official guidance as it is received from Government, Public Health England, Devon County Council, East Devon District Council and other bodies for it to be published onto the Website.

The Clerk advised that Honiton were also holding a meeting this same evening for representatives from a wide range of organisations in order to discuss and formulate a plan of how they can respond, support and inform their community during this crisis. Dawn Mulrain had kindly offered to attend the meeting and would report back on how Honiton are responding and any ideas for our own response.

The Chair thanked the Clerk, Cllr. Mulrain, Dawn Mulrain, Linda Whithear and Carol Hayes for the work they were doing supporting the Community and parishioners.

17. To consider any other NALC/DALC/SLCC/EDDC/DCC and official Government issued covid-19 virus guidance or imposed measures issued and received ahead of the meeting.

The Clerk said that all bodies were having to consider unprecedented measures necessary to protect the public in this crisis and that there was a lot of consideration being given to the social and legal impact of any of these unprecedented measures on the governance of and the services etc provided by local authorities. He anticipated a constant flow of information and guidance cascading down in the coming weeks.

The earlier decision of the Council to delegate Council decisions to himself working in association with the Chair would enable the Parish Council to legally function, fulfil its responsibilities to its residents and respond to the various changes and guidance as it is received.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

None

18. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Clerk advised that no date could be set until after any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covi-19 virus.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and to follow the published KEEP SAFE NHS advice

The Meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

