

Northlew Parish Council

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Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council held virtually via Zoom at 7.30pm on Wednesday 29th April 2020

Present:

Councillors: Joanna Wilson (JW) - Chair
Celia Rundle (CR) – Vice Chair
Mark Rundle (MR)
Gillian Dixon (GD)
Steve Smith (SSm)
Terry Hatt (TH)
Sue Main (SM) – Clerk

County Councillor: James McInnes (JMcl) - Devon County Council (DCC)

Borough Councillors: Patrick Kimber (PK) – West Devon Borough Council (WDBC)

Apologies: Bryan Dufty (BD)
Judy Jones (JJ)
Holly Dancer (HD)
Clare Kemp (CK) – West Devon Borough Council

Public Question Time

None attended.

The Chairman opened by welcoming attendees to the first virtual meeting ever held by the Council brought about by the coronavirus epidemic. Following changes in government regulations on 4 April 2020, this meeting format would continue until the national social distancing restrictions are lifted.

- 1. Apologies for Absence** were received from Bryan Dufty, Judy Jones and Holly Dancer.
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – none.
- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2020** were approved and signed by JW and would be sent to SM for filing.
- 4. Action Points Arising** – in order of action points in Appendix A:-

Internal Auditor – Chair confirmed that she had spoken to the parishioner who the Council had agreed previously would be qualified to take on this role if they were interested. The parishioner kindly expressed interest in the role and JJ followed up to outline the scope of work and to

confirm that they were still happy to assist. **Action:** The Finance Working Party (FWP) would be in touch with them in the near future to progress this year's audit.

Changes to the Parish Council. Chair confirmed that the Clerk had received all the necessary statutory paperwork from GD and this had been lodged with WDBC. **Action:** The Clerk to advise her, HD and SSm when the new Councillor Courses were being held once coronavirus restrictions had been lifted.

New Councillor and Chair – see Item 5 below.

Parish Council Website – privacy statement to be carried forward to a future meeting.

Seamoor Lotto – CR confirmed this was still generating revenue for the Council on a monthly basis – c.£364 p.a. and would continue to be promoted in the Northlew News.

Repayment by JW – Chair confirmed she had repaid to the Council £35.00 for her attendance at the recent audit course and £8.71 for donations collected at The Square Shop for the Northlew News.

Draft budget 2020/21 – this has been circulated, approved and adopted.

Subscription to Devon Communities Together - this is still outstanding and would be followed up by the Clerk.

Standing Orders –deferred until the next meeting given there is discussion by the full Council required to finalise the draft for review and adoption.

Financial Regulations – see Item 9 below.

Playground – Rospa Report – the broken bench had been fixed but ultimately would need to be replaced along with other items flagged up in the report once the coronavirus restrictions have been lifted.

Update on Replacement Fencing – this would be carried forward to a future meeting once the coronavirus restrictions has been lifted.

Northlew Stores Community Interest Company Outstanding £500 Loan – Repayment of this loan was agreed on the 19th March with repayment scheduled by 9/4/20 at the latest. However, since then the coronavirus lockdown has been put in place and repayment has not been received. A follow up email has been sent requesting an update on the situation for the Parish Council records (NB the email was not chasing for payment at this very difficult time). Post meeting the loan has now been repaid on 06/05/20.

Public Lavatories – see Item 12 below.

Parking in the Square – this has been clarified at the previous meeting and no further action was required.

DCC Budget 2020/21 – this had been put on the website.

5. Changes to the Parish Council

Nomination of New Chair – As the Council is no longer obliged to hold an Annual Meeting due to the coronavirus where the chair and vice chair elections would normally be held and as JW is stepping down as chair and councillor it was agreed that the elections for chair and vice chair would take place at this meeting. The councillors elected to these roles will remain in post until the elections at the meeting in May 2021 unless there are further changes to the legislation governing parish councils. JW proposed Stephen Smith to be appointed as the new chairman and this was seconded by CR. MR also proposed that CR continue in her role as vice chair and this was seconded by TH. Both appointments were unanimous. JW has already been liaising with the Clerk regarding a proper handover including all necessary paperwork and will liaise with the new chairman in the future to facilitate a smooth handover as required. In addition she will arrange the transfer of the training CPR kit, the printer and the 'No parking' signs to the new chairman.

New Parish Councillor – the new vacancy created by JW stepping down as councillor, has been advertised and parish electors have until 7 May to formally write to the West Devon Borough Council Returning Officer to request a bi-election. If no such notice is given, the Council will then

fill the vacancy through co-option. The Council has received interest from a parishioner in taking up this role.

6. Governance

It was decided to defer discussions on the Standing Orders review until the next meeting.

7. Planning Applications

Ref: 09/21/20/HH0 Stonewell House, Northlew EX20 3NL - alterations to existing driveway. The Council reviewed this application and there were no objections: **Action:** SM to notify WDBC Planning to this effect (this had now been actioned post meeting). SM confirmed that two new planning applications had been received in the last 24 hours. **Action:** SM to circulate details which would be discussed at the next meeting (or a separate planning meeting would be arranged if necessary to adhere to the relevant closing dates).

8. Parish Council Website

Monthly figures – SM referred to Appendix B which showed a drop in the number of visitors to the website this month. Regular updates were being posted on the Home Page in light of the coronavirus lockdown and an additional page had been added to enable local businesses to advertise here as well as in the Northlew News. This will be promoted once the Northlew News is published again.

9. Finance

Payments – SM referred Council to Appendix C which in its new format showed the current bank balance as well as payments made and those requiring approval. SM confirmed that the first precept payment had been received, together with income from advertising in the Northlew News. The Council approved expenditure payments and would revisit whether all four bank accounts were required in the future.

Financial Regulations annual review and adoption: - these had been circulated ahead of the meeting and with no further changes to be made, were approved and adopted by all. **Action:** Financial Regulations to be uploaded to the website.

Audit - PKF Littlejohn had now issued their instructions on signing and submitting the AGAR return by 13 November. This is later than usual in light of the impact of the coronavirus epidemic. **Action:** It was agreed the FWP would meet with the Internal Auditor so that the accounts could be finalised as early as possible. JW thanked members of the FWP but particularly Sue Main and Judy Jones for their efforts in getting all the working templates finessed, the books updated and in a good state in preparation for this process as well as putting together the comprehensive monthly finance report template.

10. Correspondence

None.

11. Playground update

JW reported that she and SSm had visited the playground and had put up all the necessary signs to close it down during the coronavirus lockdown. Any remedial works to the playground following the Rospa report, monthly working party checks and replacement fencing would be attended to once the restrictions had been lifted.

Climbing Frame donation – JW reported that a parishioner had kindly offered to donate a second hand climbing frame for use in the playground. **Action:** SM is currently in contact with the insurance brokers and Rospa to see whether it is feasible to accept this and will report back.

12. **Public Lavatory** - JW confirmed this was now closed due to the coronavirus epidemic but remained unlocked because keys cannot be located in the materials provided by the previous clerk. **Action:** SSm to pursue padlock options and any progress with roof repairs would be reinstated once restrictions were lifted. SM would also keep in touch with the cleaner.

13. **Matters brought forward by Chair and Councillors**

Playing field entrance – further to previous discussions about putting up additional ‘No parking’ signs at the entrance to the playing field, it was agreed that these should be put up to ensure that prospective buyers of the land for sale (that shares the entrance to the playing field) are absolutely clear that they are not able to park in the entrance should they purchase the land. **Action:** SSm to arrange for signage to be erected.

Grass Cutting Tendering – JW has emailed SM and SSm with draft tendering documentation for action.

Newsletter and new Editor - it has been agreed that due to the coronavirus lockdown, the curtailment of most local events and the inability to circulate hardcopies to the usual distribution points, the Northlew News publication would be suspended until further notice. The monthly noticeboard would continue to be produced and posted on the website and local noticeboards and the website would be updated regularly. The post for a new editor to replace JW will continue to be advertised but to date no candidates have come forward. JW has given notice that she would be stepping down from the role of editor after the publication of the December edition even if a new editor has not been recruited. .

Coronavirus epidemic – JMcl and PK reiterated that both DCC and WDBC were offering whatever support is required in the community during these difficult times.

Thanks and gratitude to the outgoing Chairman were expressed by JMcl and CR for all JW’s hard work, tenacity and diplomatic leadership over the past 5 years and CR also recognised the support her husband has given to the Parish Council. During her term, many improvements had been made both to the inner running of the Council (including the introduction of new robust operating procedures and the launch of the website) and within the community which has left the Council in a good position to be handed on to the new Chairman.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20.30.

Actions Points arising from the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on 29th April 2020

Item	Description	Responsibility
4.	Action Points Arising Internal Auditor: The Finance Working Party would be in touch with them in the near future to progress this year's audit. Subscription to Devon Communities Together - arrange	FWP SM
7.	Planning Applications – circulate new submissions and arrange to be discussed before due dates	SM
9.	Approved Financial Regulations to be uploaded onto website Audit – arrange meeting of FWP and Internal Audit to progress AGAR return	SM FWP
11.	Playground – Climbing Frame Donation – conclude insurance situation	SM
12.	Publication Lavatory – pursue padlock option to secure closure and keep in touch with cleaner	SSm/SM
13.	Matters brought forward Playing Field Signage at Entrance – arrange erection Grass cutting tendering – finalise tendering documentation	SSm All