

**Clerk to the Council/RFO: Caroline Higgins**  
**Chairman: Cllr Mark Underwood**

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7.30 pm on **Monday 16 March 2020** in the Memorial Hall.

Present: Cllrs Underwood, (Chair); Gouge; Parkhurst; Whittall; Wright; Clode; and Jones;

In attendance: Caroline Higgins

**166.19/20 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE** – The Council noted Cllr Lewis and Cllr Clarke had sent their apologies which were accepted.

**167.19/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Cllr Whittall declared her interest in football pitches which are hired by her son-in-law.

**168.19/20 PUBLIC SPEAKING** – None – no public present

**169.19/20 SHROPSHIRE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – In the absence of Cllr Clarke, this report was deferred.

**170.19/20 CHAIR'S REPORT** – Cllr Underwood reported he had been approached by a resident with some suggestions for improvements of the Parade, which is privately owned. He will forward the suggestions to the Council in due course.

The Chair had investigated the Woodland Trust Free Tree Scheme which provides free tree packs. He suggested that the Council identify suitable planting areas and consider the availability of volunteers to plant trees before considering applying for a pack in November. Cllr Wright reported that 12 volunteers had come forward and suggested that residents be encouraged to plant in private gardens. It was suggested that tree planting could be made a community event.

The Chair expressed the thanks of the Council to the three councillors who had recently resigned; Tim Ryan, Emma Robinson and Debbie Howells. It was suggested that former councillors be recognised at the Annual Parish Meeting with a certificate.

The Chair had attended the recent meeting of the Lyth Hill Advisory Group as substitute for Cllr Clarke. He reported that the group was considering

producing a report to help explain the management of Lyth Hill for publication in the Villager as there had been a number of concerns raised.

**171.19/20 MINUTES** – The Council reviewed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2020. It was unanimously resolved that the Chairman be authorised to sign the minutes as a true record.

**172.19/20 CLERK’S REPORT–**

The written report was **noted** by the Council.

The Council **noted** that the planned Bayston Hill / Lyth Hill 10K run was likely to be rescheduled due to the rapidly evolving coronavirus situation.

The Clerk tabled a risk assessment to address the expected restrictions relating to the coronavirus outbreak, including suggestions for business continuity in the event that meetings cannot be continued for an extended period. It was noted that government advice had been issued to work from home where possible and to reduce social contact and attendance at larger gatherings.

A set of mitigation measures to deal with potential staff shortages were considered and a scheme of delegation agreed. It was resolved that non-essential activities will be reduced in a phased way, maintaining essential safety checks and waste management for as long as practicable.

**Coronavirus Risk Assessment and Scheme of Delegation:**

**Risk 1: Clerk required to self-isolate or unable to attend Parish Office**

**Impact** - Office closure / Restricted access to Council facilities (keys / tokens / records/ photocopier / petty cash)

**Mitigation measures** - Notices on website, notice boards and office door; Close office to visitors; Clerk to use laptop to work from home if required; Enquiries directed to Council mobile phone number 07458 095619; Face to face staff meetings replaced by telephone calls; Council debit card to be kept at Clerk’s home address for emergency purchases to an agreed amount (£500 daily limit), **(Unanimously resolved)** ;

Clerk’s budgetary authority increased from £500 to £2,000 in consultation with the Chair of Council, until the next meeting, **(Unanimously resolved)**;

Temporary suspension of two signature approval for BACS payments **(Unanimously resolved)**;

Delegation of powers to authorise Chair of Planning to comment on Planning Applications on behalf of the Council, in consultation with Chair of Council and the Clerk between meetings **(Unanimously resolved)**.

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**Risk 2: Clerk unable to work due to sickness –**

**Impact** - Office closure / Council functions restricted to essential activities until locum Clerk appointed / delays to statutory functions (eg. payroll, audit processing, publication of agendas, supervision of staff)

**Mitigation measures** - Council to undertake appropriate cleaning of office / Council to appoint a locum Clerk with the assistance of SALC, to carry out essential services. The Council laptop and mobile phone will be recovered by a Councillor, sanitised and issued to a locum. Emergency access codes for computer files, safe and office alarm held by the Chairman will be issued (unopened) to the locum clerk. The spare office key will be provided to the locum clerk or nominated individual. The Council to give delegated powers to the locum Clerk to act as the Proper Officer. Payment of basic salaries to be processed by standing order until further notice with any adjustments being made by cheque as and when possible, which should not be unduly delayed.

Should it prove impossible to appoint a suitable locum, all payments becoming due will be paid by cheque, prepared by the Chairman or his designated substitute and signed by two authorised cheque signatories; **(Resolved unanimously);**

Should it be temporarily impossible to appoint a locum, the Council email account will be monitored by the Chairman or his designated substitute. **(Resolved unanimously).** The migration of emails to Office 365 Business Essentials to be delayed until the Covid-19 situation improves. **(Resolved unanimously).**

**Risk 3; Grounds Staff required to self-isolate (7 days or more) or unable to work normal hours due to caring responsibilities –**

**Impact** - Reduced level of services / requirement to close facilities if they cannot be maintained safely

**Mitigation measures** - Unaffected staff to cover colleagues hours if possible / non-essential work to be postponed in a phased way (see separate schedule) / staff to be permitted to work flexible hours in consultation with the Clerk / staff to be paid in accordance with sick pay policy for self-isolation / Staff to follow government guidance to minimise the risks of cross infection **(Resolved unanimously)**

**Risk 4; Grounds staff unable to work due to sickness (7 days or more)**

**Impact** - Reduced level of services / requirement to close facilities and public areas if unable to maintain them safely

**Mitigation measures** - Appropriate cleansing of workshops and public areas / provision of soap, gloves etc / Staff having had close contact to consider self-isolation if appropriate **(Resolved unanimously)**

**Risk 5: Councillors required to self-isolate or unable to attend meetings due to sickness / Government directive not to hold public meetings.**

**Impact** - Incurate meetings / inability for Council to make lawful decisions

**Mitigation measures** - Delegation of powers to Clerk to undertake any appropriate actions, in consultation with the Chair and / or Chair of relevant Standing Committee and report to next appropriate meeting. Actions may include not calling scheduled meetings; notifying public of meeting cancellations; **(Unanimously resolved);**

**Risk 6: Requirement to hold Annual Council and / or Annual Parish Meeting (Statutory duty (A Government dispensation is required to cancel these)**

**Impact:** Increased risk of infection of Council staff, members and general public

**Mitigation measures:** *It was **unanimously resolved** to suspend all meetings with immediate effect, including the Annual Council Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting until Government advice indicates it is safe to hold public gatherings.*

**Risk 7: All Staff required to self-isolate or unable to work due to sickness**

**Impact:** Inability to maintain services safely

**Mitigation measures:** Council buildings to be closed / Play park to be closed / Litter / Dog bins to be sealed / notices to be posted on unsecured facilities that they are unchecked so use with caution. **(Resolved unanimously)**

It was further **resolved** to circulate the approved contingency plan to all members of the Council.

**Support for Community Volunteering** - The Council considered a proposal for the Parish Council to coordinate support to vulnerable residents. The Council noted that it may be incurring an insurance risk by connecting volunteers with isolated individuals. It considered how it might encourage residents to be good neighbours and whether it could directly support very isolated individuals. The capacity of the staff to provide direct support was a concern, particularly if affected by illness. It was resolved

that should the Council be approached for help by individuals, they would be signposted to appropriate support services.

The Council **resolved** to encourage individuals to support their neighbours and to provide advice about keeping volunteers safe.

It was resolved that applications for financial support should be assessed using the Council's small grants application process. It was **unanimously resolved** that grant applications received between Council meetings shall be delegated to the Clerk and Chairman to determine, under the scheme of delegated powers.

**173.19/20 COMMUNITY LED PLAN** – In the absence of a representative of the Steering Group it was **resolved** to defer this item to a future meeting.

**174.19.20 STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2021 (Review – 2020)**

It was **resolved unanimously** that the draft document circulated with the agenda be approved and adopted.

**175.19/20 VE DAY 75 PARADE** – It was **noted** that the planned parade had been postponed as a result of government advice to avoid large gatherings.

**176.19/20 GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT** – It was **unanimously resolved** that should any temporary contingency measures approved to deal with the coronavirus outbreak be found to conflict with the adopted General Risk Assessment, then the temporary measures shall supersede the adopted risk assessment until normal meetings are resumed. It was **unanimously resolved** that the contingency risk assessment shall be added to the General Risk Assessment as an addendum.

**177.19/20 REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROLS** – The Chairman proposed that for future years the check sheet circulated to members with the agenda be completed by two nominated councillors prior to Full Council review but for expediency, it be reviewed jointly by the Full Council for the current year.

It was **resolved** to add a report of the review of internal controls to the agenda of the Finance Committee each January and for the Finance Committee to report its recommendations to Full Council in March.

**Budget reporting** – It was agreed that to improve budget monitoring, the Chair of Finance will visit the Parish Office between Finance Committee meetings to review expenditure against budget headings and that budget reporting will be added as a standing item to Full Council meetings in May, September, November and March.

**Petty Cash Expenditure** – It was agreed to add a summary of petty cash expenditure to the list of payments presented to Council meetings for approval.

**Asset insurance valuations** – It was agreed to arrange a review of building valuations.

The Council **resolved unanimously** to confirm the effectiveness of internal controls with the adoption of the agreed actions.

**178.19/20 REVIEW OF PENSION DISCRETIONS POLICIES** – The Council received a report from the Staffing Committee with a recommendation that Discretion Policy 3 - Flexible Retirement be amended, as follows:

‘Bayston Hill Parish Council will not agree to flexible retirement except in circumstances where Bayston Hill Parish Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case

- Will be considered on the merits of the financial and / or operational business case put forward,
- Will set out whether, in addition to any pre 1 April 2008 benefits, the member will be permitted, as part of the flexible retirement agreement, to take
  - a) All, some or none of their 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2014 benefits, and / or
  - b) All, some or none of their post 31 March 2014 benefits, and
- Will require the approval of the Staffing Committee
- Where flexible retirement is being considered, there must be a reduction of at least one grade or, in the case of working hours, be a minimum reduction in hours of 20% -(the equivalent of the hours for one working day)

Waiver of any actuarial reduction on flexible retirement –

Where flexible retirement is agreed, the benefits payable will be subject to any actuarial reduction applicable under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations and the Local Government Pensions Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014. Bayston Hill Parish Council will only waive any such reduction, in whole or in part, where it considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case will be considered on the merits of the financial and /or operational business case put forward and will require the approval of the Finance Committee including, where the reduction is only to be waved in part, approval for the amount of reduction to be waived’.

The Council **resolved** to accept the recommendation of the Staffing Committee and adopt the revised discretion policy with immediate effect.

**179.19/20 FOOTBALL PITCH MAINTENANCE** – The Clerk referred to the Annual Maintenance Programme, which had been shared with the agenda and

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reported on the inspection of the pitches carried out that morning. Due to the heavy rain during the winter months and the consequential need to close the pitches, the wear on the pitches had been lower than usual. The extensive renovation works undertaken during 2019 had resulted in the pitches being in much better condition at this time than in previous years and it was therefore recommended that a minimal amount of summer renovation be undertaken; specifically, the application of weed and feed (either a liquid or granular application) and the application of grass seed and top soil mixed with lawn sand in the goal mouths. This would offer a considerable saving against the budgeted expenditure.

After extensive discussion the Council **resolved** to invite a former Councillor to inspect the pitches and report back to the Clerk and Chair on the proposed renovations. It was resolved that the Chair be given delegated authority to authorise any additional expenditure that may be recommended.

It was **resolved** to commission an independent consultant to inspect the pitches on an annual basis in March and to make recommendations for summer renovations.

- 180.19/20 REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STANDING ORDERS** – The updated Financial Standing Orders as reviewed on 24 February 2020 and circulated with the agenda were adopted with immediate effect, by **unanimous resolution**.
- 181.19/20 PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL** – The Council received an updated list of payments becoming due. The Council **resolved unanimously** to approve the payments listed.
- 182.19/20 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC** – It was unanimously resolved to exclude the press and public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 in order to allow the Council to discuss confidential matters.
- 183.19/20 CONFIDENTIAL STAFF MATTERS** – The Council considered a recommendation from the Staffing Committee with respect to an application for flexible retirement. The Council **resolved unanimously** to approve the principle of the application but that it be deferred until after the coronavirus outbreak has passed.

*At 9:30pm Cllr Jones gave his apologies and left the meeting. Cllr Wright proposed a short extension. This was agreed.*

The Chairman reported that the Council had received a Subject Access Request. He requested authority to incur expenditure to seek a professional overview of the response. The Council authorised expenditure up to £2,000 should it be required.

*The meeting closed at 9:40pm*

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