

Newnham Parish Council & Burial Authority

Minutes of a Parish Council meeting held on Monday 29th March 2021 at 7.00 p.m.

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

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Present: Chair. Cllr N. Hughes, Cllrs F Bihlmeier, J Larkham, S O'Leary, L. Love, G. Moir & S. Tempest Plus the Clerk, County Cllr R Boyles, District Cllr N Packer and 3 members of the public.

1. **Public consultation**

Masonic Hall right of way access – A representative of the Masons appraised council on current plans at the Hall, which has fallen into disrepair and requires urgent works, some of which have started. Funding is an issue and an opportunity to develop on the scrub land opposite the Hall may provide the funding needed, allowing the Masons to continue to function within the building and possibly enable wider community use. However, the parish council has an historic right of way over this land, potentially preventing development. He pointed out that the right of way cannot be used as there is no exit onto public pathways. The Masons would like to enter discussions with the council regarding the release of the right of way, and in return deliver some benefits to the village with respect to use of the Car Park. Cllr Hughes thanked him for his input providing clarity on the plans at the Hall and said that his comments would be considered when the agenda item was discussed in detail. He also advised that legal advice had been sought regarding the right of way.

2. **To Receive Apologies for Absence**

C. Kenny

3. **To Receive Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs Bihlmeier & Tempest - friends with a member of the Masons representing the group in discussions on rights of way. No pecuniary interest

4. **Approval of Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 22nd February 2021**

Minutes of the meeting were duly adopted

5. **To receive a report from the clerk on outstanding actions for items not on the current agenda.**

Speed Sign – Not functioning, working with supplier to diagnose remotely.

Notice board minutes - February's posted on the notice board.

Ash tree responsibility at the Cliff – No response received to date; chase e-mail sent to Brian Watkins.

6. **To question District & County Councillors on the content of their reports to council, pre issued to all Councillors.**

County Cllr Boyles & District Cllr Packer were thanked for their reports, circulated in advance of the meeting. In addition to the report Cllr Boyles advised that over **120K vaccinations** had taken place within the county, enabling 59% of adults to have had their first jab. High availability of vaccine also allowed 29% of 40- 50 years olds to have first doses. Concerns were raised with both Cllrs regarding the planning application (agenda item 23) from Freeman homes to remove the condition requiring a west bound bus stop opposite the Unlawater development. The Clerk was instructed to supply details of the planning application to them for further consideration.

7. **To consider the current progress in the Victoria Hotel legal action by Glos CC against the current owner.**

Cllr Boyles confirmed that he had made enquiries on progress and is awaiting a response. However, he is confident the case is held in a backlog, due to the COVID pandemic.

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8. **To receive an update from the Clerk re the casual vacancy created as a result of Cllr J Wickham's resignation and to agree on the co-option process should an election not be called by parishioners**

The Clerk advised that the 14-day period for an election to be called will end in the first week of April. It was agreed that should no election be required the Clerk would post a co option notice requesting interested parties to contact him prior to the May meeting.

9. **To receive the Clerk's report**
all matters on Agenda.

Financial

10. **Financial Statement**

The monthly financial statement for March was received and duly approved.

Monthly payments for March were received and duly approved.

Notes: The Clerk's action to order timber for repairs in the Play Park (agreed by the Chair) in advance of the meeting due to H & S concerns was also approved.

Budget overspend on Benches and Changing rooms financed by underspend in Tree works and embankment allocation.

11. **To receive a report from the Finance committee (including the quarterly audit activity).**

Cllr Bihlmeier advised that the performance outlook (11+1) had been reviewed. Spend was outlooked to be within budget and income to exceed outlooks due to increases in burials and VAT refunds. The quarterly audit was also conducted, and the accounts found to be in good order, as was the income & expenditure report. The Clerk added that a provisional full year performance tracker had been circulated to council with areas where spend deviated from outlooks (+/-) overall performance was good.

12. **To approve a two year deal with Octopus energy for electricity supply to the Clock Tower and the Changing Rooms**

After consideration council **resolved** to approve the Clerks recommendation to enter into 2-year fixed deals with Octopus.

13. **To receive an update from the Clerk on year end accounts and the 2020/21 internal audit.**

The Clerk advised that year end accounts and the bank reconciliation would be produced in the coming week and circulated to council. The internal audit conducted by Internal Audit Consultancy (IAC) is arranged for the 14th April.

Procedural

14. **To receive an update from the Clerk re the risk assessments required for Allotments, Burial ground, Tree maintenance and Open spaces as required by insurance providers.**

The Clerk advised that the risk assessment for the Allotments was now complete and related documentation generated. Approval of these documents would be considered under agenda item 21. Burials would be the next area for review and action.

15. **To receive an update from Cllr Tempest on the amendments to the PC communication policy.**

Cllr Tempest referred to the communications policy previously circulated to council. After discussion it was **resolved** to adopt the policy. It was further agreed that Cllr Tempest would create a new Facebook page and the Clerk would delete the existing page..

16. **To consider what contact information for Councillors should be available to the public**

Cllr Tempest expressed concern that too much private information (addresses etc) was made available on the website and notice board. The Clerk advised that there were no hard and fast rules and that the information provided had just been custom and practice for many years. After discussion it was agreed that councillors could decide individually what information they were comfortable in having publicised.

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17. **To Consider and adopt the latest version of Standing Orders regarding tender value increases.**

The Clerk advised that the latest version of LGA model standing orders related to value thresholds for the tender process (circulated in advance). The contract values the changes related to were far more than anything the council would require, so there is no effect on the PC. It was **resolved** to adopt the latest version.

18. **To confirm that the exercise of public rights for the financial year 2019/20 were properly executed by the Clerk in accordance with AGAR requirements.**

A request was received from the auditor (in advance of the annual audit), that council formally concur the exercise of public rights had been properly administered in 2019/20. A fact that the chair would then confirm in writing. The Clerk advised that all was in order, in fact the exercise of public rights was detailed in the minutes of June 20 (item 12). It was **resolved** that the chair should do so as requested

Community

19. **To receive an update from Cllrs Hughes & Moir re Telephone box group meeting.**

Cllr Moir reported that the community group were well on the way to setting up a community fund raising site so that fund raising could begin.

20. **To Consider advice received regarding the council's legal right of way across the car park attached to the Masonic Hall.**

After considerable debate it was agreed that Council were happy to explore the potential benefits of discharging the right of way if the benefits to the village were acceptable. It was further agreed to share the legal advice obtained with the Masons, the Clerk was instructed to do so. A small team of Cllrs Larkham, O'Leary & Moir would lead discussions with the Masons.

21. **To consider an updated H & S policy for the allotments created because of the risk assessment required by the insurer.**

Cllr Larkham referred to the H & S policy and revised tenant's agreement (circulated in advance) covering all aspects of risk identified in the assessment. It was **resolved** to adopt the risk assessment. H & S policy and revised tenancy agreement.

22. **To consider the replacement of the existing notice board on the allotments.**

The Clerk advised that council had an obligation to post notices on site relating to the H & S policy and other relevant information. The current board is old and not fit for purpose. After discussion it was agreed to move the now unused notice board on the Bus Shelter next to the Club to the Allotments. The Clerk was requested to advise the Club (who had requested the use of the board) and confirm they would be able to use one of the boards inside the bus stop if they wished to.

23. **To Consider Planning applications received**

- **P0330/21/APP. Land North of Dean Road** – Approval of reserved matters of outline application P0068/20/OUT – **Resolved** “no objection”
- **P0325/21/FUL 2 Birchamp House, Church Road** – Two storey extension. - **Resolved** “no objection” subject to approval by the conservation advisor.
- **P0362/21/FUL. 1 East View** – Single storey extension - **Resolved** “no objection”
- **P0383/21/FUL Land East of Sheens Meadow (Quickset)** – Variation of conditions (01 approved plans) & (02 Biodiversity). Related to P1584/20/APP. **Resolved** “no objection”
- **P0486/21/FUL The Grange** – Change of use for therapy centre to 2 residential units **Resolved** “no objection”

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- **P0504/21/FUL Land adjacent to Unlawater Lane** – Removal of condition 12 (provision of Bus Shelter) and variation to condition 2 (Approved plans) relating to P1733/18/FUL

After discussion it was **resolved** “to object” to the application as the intention to remove the planned Bus Stop in the Chepstow direction in condition 12 was unacceptable.

Note: the installation of the gates in condition 02 was not considered an issue

24. **To receive an update from Cllr Hughes & the Clerk regarding upgrade of facilities at the Changing room and the release of S106 funds from FoDDC.**

Cllr Hughes advised that the window guards had now had hammarite applied (thanks to Cllr Larkham) and looked much better. Quotes were now needed for the general outside work, gutters, missing render etc. The Clerk advised he was looking for quotes. He further advised that as the invoice for J Morris had been cleared he would apply for the S106 funds to be released.

25. **To receive a quotation of £924 inc vat for the replacement of two doors at the changing room from Glevum windows**

Cllr Hughes has confirmed with Glevum Windows that they would install both doors for £924. The proposal to use reclaimed doors would be difficult as the doors in question are far from a standard size. It was **resolved** to accept the Glevum quote, and the Clerk was requested to place the order

26. **To receive an update from the Clerk regarding the installation of two “Lowther” benches at the Green.**

The Clerk advised that the benches were due for delivery to Cllr Bihlmeier in the coming days. He would then arrange for them to be fixed in place.

27. **To receive an update from Cllr O’Leary re the request from the WI for a water point in the centre of the village and the potential renovation of the water trough**

The Clerk advised he had yet to contact Heritage Stone who refurbished the Clock Tower to arrange a site visit. Once an idea of what could be done and at what cost, further discussions with the WI could take place

28. **To Consider remedial work in the Play Park on wooden timber bark retention barriers.**

Due to difficulty in obtaining a contractor to do this soon Cllr Hughes volunteered to fit the boarding himself, with the assistance of Peter Hood. The timber has already been ordered as approved in the monthly statement

29. **To receive a report from the Clerk and consider the viability of soft surfacing the current barked areas in the Play Park, possibly via a County Cllr grant (post May elections)**

The Clerk advised council that some preliminary discussions with two soft play surfacing companies had taken place so that quotations could be obtained. There was also the possibility that a grant from the County Cllrs fund could be applied for after the May election, should council wish him to continue with the investigations. It was agreed that the Clerk should explore both costs and grants. It was further suggested by Cllr Moir that the area across the back from the open playing field be fenced to prevent dogs etc roaming into the play park. Cllr Tempest expressed interest in installing a concrete table tennis table in the area. Further consideration would take place at a future meeting.

30. **To receive an update from Cllrs Bihlmeier & Hughes re the Riverside pathway and culvert discussions with Freeman Homes.**

Cllr Bihlmeier confirmed that discussions were ongoing and that the full scope of the possible work was yet to be confirmed.

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31. **To consider a quote of £890 from Whitehill for the information board siting on the Green (£600 funding ring fenced in reserves).**
After discussion it was **resolved** that an order should be placed with Whitehill subject to artworks being provided.
32. **To receive an update from the Clerk re the suggestion to sculpt the Fir tree trunk in the Play Park.**
The Clerk confirmed that the Harmony project members did not feel it was within their scope of works they engage in. It was agreed that Cllr Tempest should share a post on Newnham notice board (in the absence of a PC Facebook page) seeking volunteers to fund and complete the works.
33. **To Consider introducing wildflower sanctuaries in the village as installed by Highnam PC.**
The Clerk was requested to set up a Zoom meeting with reps from Highnam Parish council to understand what is involved in such a project.
34. **To consider the Highways response to a request for additional railings at Mornington Terrace.**
No update, the Clerk was requested to chase Highways
35. **To consider a request from the Library group to modify the "Information point" sign at the Bus stop to read "Book Stop"**
After discussion it was agreed that an addition sign could be added by the Library group.

Other Matters

36. **To consider correspondence received to date**
- None
37. **Matters for the Next Agenda**
Rights of way, registration of the riverside path prior to cut off in 2026 – next agenda.
Request to site a Bench on playing field by Harmony Group – next agenda.
Traffic restrictions on road in front of the green – next agenda
Concerns over Gigaclear cable installation in a conservation area – next agenda.
38. **To consider the option of virtual or an actual meeting for the April 21 annual parish and Parish council meetings.**
Agreed that April meetings should be conducted via Zoom. Hopefully may meeting could be in Armoury Hall
39. **To Confirm date & time of next meeting**
- Annual Parish meeting Tuesday 20th April 2021
 - Parish Council Monday 26th April 2021

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.55 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....