

## **Draft Minutes of Hitcham Parish Council meeting held via Zoom on Monday 13th July 2020**

**Present:** Allan Scott, Chairman; Pauline Squirrell; Wendy Crease; Country/District Cllr Robert Lindsay and Doreen Neun, Clerk/RFO

### **1. Apologies for Absence:**

These were received from Paul Marshall; Jim Morgan; Brian Hubbard and Rob Whiting. These had been received prior to meeting and agreed by those present.

### **2. Pecuniary interest:**

Mrs Crease advised a pecuniary interest with regard to a planning application to be discussed later.

### **3. Minutes of Meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020:**

Following the amendment of the name 'Will Perry' to 'Will Pratt' under item 133/8 these were approved as being a true record of these meetings. Proposed: Mr Scott. Seconded Mrs Squirrell. All agreed. Confirmation of agreement had also been received via email from councillors not present.

### **4. Matters Arising from Meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020:**

Due to COVID-19 no progress had been possible on the Neighbourhood Plan; the extra SID post; loss of bus service or the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. As restrictions are now being lifted it is hoped to be able to move forward with these in the near future. Mr Morgan hoped to move forward with the Neighbourhood Plan in September.

### **5. County/District Councillor's Report:**

A copy of Cllr Lindsay's report had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting and a copy is attached to these minutes. Topics covered were pension savings; funding for cycling; carbon reduction; pandemic funding, track and trace, Sizewell C, new Joint Local Plan and Babergh commercial property investments.

Cllr Lindsay joined the meeting and was asked for updates on the following:

a) SID 4<sup>th</sup> Post: Mr Scott asked if there was any progress. Cllr Lindsay had thought Mr Scott was going to chase Highways and if still no progress he would approach them. He asked Mr Scott to send him the last email sent to Highways and he would then contact them on our behalf.

b) Loss of Bus Service: Cllr Lindsay had nothing further to add to earlier information. He thought service was still suspended due to COVID-19. The £3,000 received from Councils will only keep them going for a few months when the service resumes. Monetary assistance from parish councils is not viable. There needs to be a sustainable business plan to keep service going. Perhaps considering changing routes to go to supermarkets may help as this is where most people who use service would want to go now. Elmsett happy to sit down with Virginia Tuck, Bildeston contact, to discuss the matter further. Mr Scott added that although we had received CIL money we have used this on Church and Village Hall projects which are both community assets which need our support.

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c) Footpath: The Parish Council had received complaints about Clayhall Lane at top of Fen Lane, stating that new owners adjacent to this lane are restricting access. Cllr Lindsay confirmed that any blocking should be reported on the Highways portal. Highways can send out a community warden to visit and if necessary they can issue a notice to get it cleared. In the first instance the Parish Council should consider sending a polite letter to the owners before contacting the Council. It would probably be helpful to talk to someone who knows how it used to be in the past as it is not clear as to whether it is a footpath or a green lane.

a) Cllr Lindsay had recently attended the first meeting of the Biodiversity panel. This will be looking at how biodiversity can be improved in the district. I.e. verges and public paths.

#### **6. Police Report:**

Nothing to report at present.

#### **7. Community Play Area Report:**

Following the Government now allowing Play Areas to re-open Will Pratt had been down and cut grass and trimmed outside hedge to main gate approach. He has been asked to quote for sanitising play equipment prior to re-opening and to obtain the necessary chippings to lay round equipment where necessary. This had not been possible during lockdown. He had reported animal activity round some of the equipment which will need inspection and resolving as health and safety issue. Mrs Crease had approached Neil Gant and he is happy to look at this issue for us. Mrs Crease will contact him to arrange date for visit. Sanitising spray will cost E20 a visit and it would be necessary to have it done every 5 to 7 days. This cost was considered prohibitive so it was agreed to have it done once and then ensure that posters were put up stating what precautions people should take prior to entering play area and whilst using equipment. Provision of hand sanitiser stations was considered. A risk assessment would be required prior to opening. The Clerk was trying to find a company to carry out recommended maintenance to equipment as mentioned in the last play area inspection. Until these could be completed it was agreed to disable the Zip wire for health and safety reasons. Councillors were asked to revisit the last inspection report to ensure all necessary action has been taken before re-opening. Requests from residents about re-opening have been received on Hitcham Noticeboard and the Clerk had responded to them.

#### **8. Chairman's Report:**

a) Need to make progress with Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. As there may be a September issue of 'Roundabout' an article could be entered regarding this. Mrs Crease added that some contributors had felt that as there were no dates for events, just articles, there seemed no point in going to print.

b) Progress is also needed with the Neighbourhood Plan. The necessary letter to residents needs to be done and sent out. Mrs Squirrell remarked that we need to take responsibility to build a few new houses as in other villages. The County Council's current Local Plan, which is under review,

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shows the land north of Lower Barn Farm as an area suitable for development. An unauthorised notice giving false information regarding this proposed development had been put up above Babergh's official planning application letter but has since been removed.

b) Mr Scott informed those present that he and Mr Morgan had had a meeting with Ruth Crocket regarding the shop and how the Parish Council could help. They had put her in touch with a data specialist who can help her with data issues. However, before any data processing can take place a stock check needs to be carried out, but this is dependent on finding people prepared to spend time in the shop to carry this out. We need to ensure that the shop keeps going. The question of the community running it was raised. Mr Scott confirmed that this was not an issue at the moment, but is something that may have to be thought about in the future.. At moment it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the day to day situation. We need proper facts to work on.

c) Web Accessibility Regulations Compliance before 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020: This refers to the ability for people with handicaps or disabilities to access our web site. Having looked at this it applies to web sites built after 2018 so as ours was built in 2015 it appears we are presently exempt but is something we must consider. It would require a separate site for Parish Council information as an accessibility sub section of current website. This should hopefully only involve a small cost.

#### **9. Correspondence:**

a) James Cartledge, MP – Local Electricity Bill: A response had been received from Mr Cartledge following our request for his support of this Bill and the Clerk had forwarded this on the Councillors.

b) During the current COVID-19 situation the Clerk has emailed councillors any correspondence received relevant to the Parish Council including NALC information and Babergh planning matters.

#### **10. Planning Matters:**

a) Elm Tree Cottage – severance of studio/annexe from Elm Tree Cottage to form a separate dwelling: At this point Mrs Crease left meeting whilst this planning application was discussed. Details had already been circulated to councillors. The Clerk read out a note from Mrs Crease explaining the reason for the application. No objections were raised. Mrs Crease was let back in meeting and told of outcome.

b) Planning Application decisions: The following planning application outcomes had been received from Babergh as follows:

DC/20/1896 & 97 Cheyneys, The Causeway: back extension and annexe: Both granted

DC/20/00499 Brick House Farm new build, Bury Road: Refused as proposal not in accordance with development plan

DC/20/1507 Hitcham Hall use of part ground floor to accommodate the Food Station: Granted

DC/20/019354 Holmwood, Bury Road, conversion of outbuilding to holiday let: Granted

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### **11. Finance Report:**

a) The Clerk had circulated the current financial position to councillors prior to this meeting. The current bank balances as at 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 stand at:

Hitcham Parish Council a/c	£17,134.34
Outstanding cheque 373 Compleat Office Solutions Ltd	£235.42
Hitcham Community Play Area a/c	£855.60
All payments cleared	

b) Approval was given for the following payments with cheques to be drawn accordingly:

Chq 374 Mrs D Neun	£300.00	Clerk's salary April – June 21020
Chq 375 HMRC 120PW00311648	£75.00	Clerk's PAYE April – June 2020
Chq 376 Friends of Hitcham Church	£5,000.00	Donation towards toilet/kitchenette work
Chq 377 Hitcham Village Hall	£1,500.00	Donation towards hall car park alterations

c) Annual Audit 2019-20:

i) The RFO had sent this year's Certificate of Exemption to the external auditor, PFK Littlejohn Ltd, and received confirmation of receipt.

ii) The RFO had circulated the AGAR papers and copy of Certificate of Exemption to Councillors. Agreement was given to all the Annual Governance Statements (AGAR Section 1) apart from item 6 as no independent review of financial controls and procedures had been undertaken since the last audit. However, the account and budget figures and meeting minutes were available to the County/District Councillor for every meeting. Approval was given to the figures entered by the RFO on the Accounting Statements 2019-20 (AGAR Section 2). Approval of AGAR papers proposed by Allan Scott. Seconded: Mrs Squirrel. The RFO had obtained email and verbal agreement and approval from those councillors who were unable to attend this meeting. The RFO will obtain the confirmation signature of the Chairman on both Sections 1 and 2 and will then complete and submit this year's audit papers as requested by SALC.

iii) Once the AGAR is signed the RFO will publish the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of AGAR (Exempt Authority) on the website and council noticeboard for thirty working days from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

iv) All documents required to adhere to the Transparency Code will be uploaded on the web site as soon as it is possible to do so.

### **12. Questions to the Chair:**

a) Consideration was given to how the next meeting would be held. A decision will be made nearer the date bearing in mind any change in COVID-19 restrictions. An outdoor meeting was suggested with social distancing. Virtual meetings are still being recommended by SALC. It was pointed out that by September the nights will be drawing in so if an outdoor meeting is required it may have to be at an earlier time. If indoor meetings are viable this may also be considered.

### **13. Date of Next Meeting:**

This has already been agreed as Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Venue or method of delivery to be advised