

**Draft Minutes of Hitcham Parish Council meeting held in Hitcham Village Hall on Monday 14<sup>th</sup>  
September 2020 at 7.30pm (Covid-19 restrictions observed)**

**Present:** Allan Scott, Chairman; Pauline Squirrell; Wendy Crease; Jim Morgan; Brian Hubbard;  
Country/District Cllr Robert Lindsay (via Zoom); one resident and Doreen Neun, Clerk/RFO

**1. Apologies for Absence:**

These were received from Rob Whiting and agreed by those present.

**2. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest;**

None were received.

**3. Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 via Zoom:**

These were signed as being a true record of that meeting. Proposed: Mr Morgan. Seconded: Mrs Crease.

**4. Matters Arising from Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020:**

a) Neighbourhood Plan: Mr Morgan and Mrs Neun had attended an informative Zoom meeting concerning Neighbourhood Plans run by SALC. It was apparent from this meeting that, as expected, it will take a lot of hard work and even with community support it may still not be possible. Mr Morgan also gave his comments on three planning consultation documents issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which had been circulated to councillors earlier. Their headings were Changes to the Current Planning System; Planning for the Future (White Paper) and Transparency and Land Control. These could impact on future Neighbourhood Plans as the White Paper will be involving the Local Plans currently prepared by District Councils. A copy of Mr Morgan's comments are attached to these minutes.

b) Fourth SID Post: Cllr Lindsay is helping Mr Scott with Highways who are looking into it. They have copies of documents showing the 4<sup>th</sup> post. They do not know why the post was not put in at the Water Run, but as they are very busy at the moment we should not expect an early response.

c) Neighbourhood Watch: Mr Scott had put a note on the Whatsapp Covid-19 group and although he had some response a co-ordinator is still to come forward. A note is to go on Hitcham Noticeboard and in The Roundabout. There is a web site which is very helpful for co-ordinators. Every scheme is run in the best way it suits the community. For us it would have to be small groups in various areas. It all depends on what response we get. Mr Scott will arrange for an article to go in The Roundabout.

**5. County/District Councillor's Report:** Cllr Lindsay joined the meeting via Zoom.

A copy of his report was circulated to those present and a copy is attached to these minutes. Cllr Lindsay went through his report expanding on certain items with the following comments:

i) New Housing Quota Formula: This proposal was unanimously opposed as it would mean increasing the number of new builds in Babergh from 300 to 789 which was considered to be far too high. However, this is only a consultation at this stage.

ii) Loan for Lowestoft Bridge: The £65 million loan is the largest single amount ever borrowed by SCC and will restrict council from further borrowing in the future.

iii) Climate Emergency Recommendations: The hope is to reduce emissions by 95% and how it can be brought to zero by 2030. There is to be a public consultation on the initial report by consultants. This ties in with funding received to install two pilot solar EV charging points in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

iv) Sizewell C: The County Council is objecting to EDF building it to its current plan. One issue is they feel it will mean a big increase in lorry traffic rather than using sea routes. The Council hopes their views will be taken seriously by Government who make final decision.

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v) New Innovation Awards: This can also include village shops. Just being nominated is helpful for any business.

Mr Scott asked Cllr Lindsay if it proved necessary could he offer his help over concerns that have been brought to the Parish Council regarding the footpath at Clay Hill Lane. Some feel that it should be classed as a Green Lane to be used by 4x4 vehicles, but its width would make this impossible and it has never been used in this way. Mr Whiting has written to Highways to get their confirmation that there is no Green Lane as they are the deciding authority not the Parish Council. There is also concern that the footpath has been altered at Fen Lane end. Mrs Squirrell didn't think so and Mr Morgan agreed. There may, however, have been a minor alteration to fence line adjacent to stream by a couple of inches.

After being thanked for attending Cllr Lindsay left the Zoom room.

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

The Clerk reported that there had been three reported incidents during July in Hitcham and five incidents in Bildeston.

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

The Play Area was now open following Government guidelines. Signage had been put up regarding social distancing and sanitisation. New chippings had been laid and the zip wire re-tensioned. The annual inspection is awaited.

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

a) Mr Scott had reported a fallen branch down Bury Road following recent high winds. Part of it had been above a BT cable which had snapped and was causing possible danger to passing traffic. Open Reach said they did not touch trees. Contacted Highways but they do not do anything about cables. Trees needed to be fixed first! In end Open Reach engineer borrowed a nearby cherry picker fixed cable and then Highways sorted tree.

b) The problem with branches coming low along footpath near Squirrels Coach yard had been solved and they have been removed.

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

a) Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018: This has to be in place on the web site by 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 and a copy of the regulations will be kept on file. This means that the Parish Council information must be accessible to all and a sub-section has been linked to the main web site to allow for this to happen. It also allows for colour and font changes.

b) The Clerk has sent any information of which the Parish Council should be aware by email as meeting arrangements are still being governed by Covid-19 restrictions which can change at very short notice. Any items which required discussion has been brought to this meeting

#### **10} Planning Matters:**

a) Rose Cottage, Water Run – replacement of first floor window: Permission granted by BDC

b) Outline Planning Permission for land North of Lower Farm Barn, Causeway – Permission granted

c) Walnuts, Cross Green – single storey side extension – No objections raised by this meeting

d) Loose Hall, Loose Hall Drive: 2 storey rear extension revised plan – No objection raised by this meeting

e) Windyridge, Wattisham Road – side extension, garage, new access, thatch extension – Refused by BDC

f) Elm Tree Cottage, The Causeway – severance from studio/annexe – Permission refused by BDC

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## 11) Finance Report:

a) The RFO had circulated the current bank balances and budget status documents prior to this meeting.

Hitcham Parish Council a/c:

Balance as last Statement No. 29: 2.8.20. All cheques cleared £16,523.92

Hitcham Community Play Area a/c:

Balance as at last Statement No.16: 1.7.20. All cheques cleared £855.60

b) After discussion it was agreed that it would be appropriate to pay £15 a month towards the cost of delivering The Roundabout to every house in the parish once a month. This is currently being done by Mr Marshall. It was decided to make a payment of £30 to him at every bi-monthly parish council meeting.

c) The following payments were approved and cheques drawn accordingly:

Hitcham Parish Council a/c:

Chq No:	376	Friends of Hitcham Church	£5,000	To help towards Community Hub Project ) from CIL
	377	Hitcham Village Hall	£1,500	To help towards car park refurbishment ) funding
	378	SALC	£186.00	Internal Audit fee
	379	Information Commissioner	£40.00	Annual data protection fee
	380	Mrs D Neun	£300.00	Clerk's July-Sept'20 salary
	381	HMRC 120PW003116348	£75.00	Clerk's July-Sept'20 PAYE
	382	Ladywell Accountancy Services	£32.00	Clerk's pay operation & RTI filing 20/21
	383	Business Services at CAS Ltd	£480.20	Annual insurance premium

When all these cheques cleared the projected balance would be £8,910.72

Hitcham Community Play Area a/c:

Chq No.	146	Material Change	£303.24	7cu.yd play area chippings for Play Area
	147	Tye Farm Contracting	£143.33	Play Area grounds maintenance June/July'20
	148	Hitcham Countryside Services	£40.00	Destruction of Play Area wasp nest

When all these cheques cleared the projected balance would be £486.57

c) The annual fee of £300 for use of Play Area land payable by Standing Order to G H Squirrell & Sons was approved. This is charged to the Hitcham Community Play Area account in October every year.

d) Following the approval of the annual insurance premium payment, the Clerk was asked to check that all assets were noted on the policy and if not to add any missing items. Also that any appropriate cover was in place with regard to the Play Area.

e) It was agreed that the RFO should continue in the role until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. It was noted that this should have been minuted at the start of this financial year.

f) Annual Audit Report: Following its receipt the Parish Council went through the Internal Audit Report and noted the following before approving the document. Proposed: Mr Scott Seconded: Mrs Squirrell.

i) The RFO will endeavour to tailor the Financial Regulations in line with the auditors comment

ii) Following the auditors comments regarding the £1,500 payment for church grounds maintenance, Mr Morgan had read the Local Government Act which covers these issues and had circulated a document, copy on file, from ChurchCare which implies that our donation is appropriate although we may need a solicitor to clarify this. The donation towards the Community Hub will be retained so it can be paid under the correct heading.

iii) At the recommendation of the auditor the Parish Council will discuss and approve the budget for 2021/22 at the next meeting so it is completed before the precept is agreed.

iv) The RFO confirmed that the Renewal of the Declaration of Compliance regarding employee pension enrolment had been completed on-line on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2019 and a copy was on file. This renewal had not been noted at that time. No response had been received from the Pension Regulator at all.

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- v) The auditor's comment regarding the Asset Register was noted.
- vi) After discussion it was agreed not to amend the Certificate of Exemption gross expenditure figure in line with boxes 4 & 6 of the AGAR section 2, but the auditor's comments were noted with regard to the difference in figures. The RFO will go through the accounts and ensure that the figures are correct going forward into the 2020/21 financial year.
- vii) The RFO had ensured that the electors' rights notice for 2019/20 had been put up on both the village noticeboard and on the website. Also a copy will be kept on file. Due to the delay in the audit because of Covid-19 the notice dates were posted later than normal.
- viii) The auditor's comments with regard to displaying the Transparency Code document were discussed. All relevant documents were on the web site for the 2018/19 financial year as soon as the auditor's report for that year had been received. The question of how easy was it to find the documents on the web site was raised. It was agreed that this year's documents be put under a clearer heading for everyone to find.
- ix) It was agreed that the Chairman would inspect the accounts against the bank statements on a regular basis in the future.
- x) With regard to Section 10 of the audit report it was noted that on the financial reports presented to the Parish Council by the RFO there is a column noting whether a payment has been reconciled against the bank statement. Outstanding amounts are noted.
- xi) The Parish Council will look into adopting and publishing the policies recommended by the auditor.
- xii) The question was raised of whether the Parish Council continue with SALC as their internal auditor, but the RFO stated that she found SALC to be very helpful and understood the workings of Parish Councils' audit requirements. Almost all local Parish Councils were with SALC for their internal audit and their training courses were extremely helpful. The cost of the audit was reasonable and the arrangement with our external auditor works well. As we do not have income or expenditure exceeding £25,000 we do not require an external audit as long as we declare a Certificate of Exemption. It was agreed to remain with SALC for the 2020/21 internal audit. The Clerk will contact SALC as normal nearer the time to confirm them as internal auditors.

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

- a) Before dealing with any other business Mr Scott regrettably had to confirm that as Mr Marshall had not attended a meeting of any sort for over six months it meant that his appointment is no longer valid and he can no longer be a councillor. This ruling still stood, even during the current Covid-19 restriction. He had tried everything to get Mr Marshall to come to a meeting and this face-to-face meeting was arranged mainly with the hope that he would attend. It was with regret that it was agreed that Mr Marshall be removed as a councillor. Mr Scott will write to him informing him of this decision and the Clerk will arrange taking Mr Marshall's name off our councillors' list on Babergh's website. Information will be required as to how we go about replacing him, either with an election or co-option.
- b) Mrs Squirrell is concerned that the state of the double seat at the entrance to the footpath next to the Village Hall is becoming dangerous. It was agreed to ask Neil Gant for a repair quote which Mrs Squirrell will request.
- c) Ruth Crocket, the shop manager, had joined the meeting and asked the council for thoughts on giving a small gift to the people who were volunteering to help the shop in some way during the current Covid-19 pandemic. She had come up with several suggestions. This was felt that this was a lovely idea and should be looked into bearing in mind a sensible cost.

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

This is already arranged for Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and it was agreed to hold it via Zoom commencing at 7.30pm.