



SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the remote meeting of The Parish Council held on Wednesday, 18th November 2020 at 7.30pm.

Present:

Councillors Present in Chamber: G Watkins (Chairman), C Vickers

Councillors Present Remotely: M Neale (Vice Chairman), P Flores Moore, G Cole, G Scoon, D Moore, R Stranks, S Lewis, I Slowly. County Councillor N Jupp.

Members of the Public were able to view meeting by Live YouTube Stream

Clerk: Dawn Spouge *(Present remotely)*

Deputy Clerk and RFO: Justin Tyler *(managing the IT required for remote viewing)*

	Actions
<p>This meeting was conducted in accordance with safe working practices as per government guidelines. All those present in the Chamber had their temperature taken prior to the meeting and all were within the government guidelines for safe attendance regarding COVID-19. He clarified to all those in the room that if symptoms developed during the meeting or they felt unwell in any way to please leave the room.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that the meeting was not being recorded and did a roll call at the commencement of the meeting of all those attending both remotely and in person for the benefit of those viewing the streamed meeting. He stated that the meeting was being held in accordance with Government Regulations approved during the COVID-19 Pandemic for the period of May 2020 – May 2021.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all Councillors in attendance both remotely and in person and all members of the Public watching via live stream, to the meeting. He clarified with the Deputy Clerk that no members of the public had requested to speak at the meeting. He stated that when a member of the public does request to speak in any convened meeting that public are invited to speak at, this would be for maximum of 5 minutes</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed with all Councillors that they had received the documentation required to consider the Agenda items.</p> <p>The Chairman clarified the voting protocol required for decisions, etiquette required to conduct the meeting and housekeeping rules and also reminded all Councillors that if an interest had been declared, they would not be able to take part in any discussion or vote. Voting would be symbolised by a thumbs up for approval, down for against or horizontal hand for abstention. He explained that in cases where, in the opinion of the Chairperson, there is consensus, the Chairperson may seek to secure agreement whilst providing an opportunity for any dissenting members to be heard or to request a formal roll call vote</p> <p>The Chairman explained that if the meeting was at any point not accessible to Councillors/Chairperson through remote means due to any technological or other failure of provision, then he would immediately adjourn the meeting. If the provision of access through remote means could not be restored within 10 minutes, then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date. If a new date could not be fixed the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.</p>	

111/20. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Williams and Councillor Timson. Councillor Neale and County Councillor N Jupp advised they would arrive late to the meeting.

112/20. Declarations of Interest

None.

113/20. Public Forum – Public Question Time – 15 minutes in total.

Participating members of the public will be limited to 3 persons maximum per meeting. Each member of the public can only refer to items on the agenda and will be allowed to ask one question and one ancillary questions that combined will not last any longer than 5 minutes. Once participating members have asked their questions or made their statements as above, they will be removed from the meeting accordingly and will then only be able to access he meeting via live stream.

No public requested to speak.

114/20. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman updated the Council that he had established a Chairman’s Discretionary Fund to help and aid those in the community in the period coming up to Christmas. It had been well supported by local businesses by donation and additional support and donations were to be sought. The Chairman advised it was his intention to liaise with local groups on the run up to Christmas to see if he could help the community with this fund. He would be giving the name of all the businesses that have offered support in the Council meeting before Christmas. He requested the public look out for further information on the SPC website on information on how to access the fund.

115/20. Minutes – To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16th September 2020

Councillor Moore proposed acceptance of the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16th September 2020. Seconded by Councillor Lewis and **AGREED** with 7 in favour and 2 abstentions due to non-attendance at meeting.

116/20. Matters Arising - To deal with any matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting of the 16th September 2020 not covered elsewhere on this agenda.

None.

117/20. Minutes – To approve the Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 30th September 2020

Councillor Flores-Moore proposed acceptance of the Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 30th September 2020. Seconded by Councillor Scoon and **AGREED** with 8 in favour and 1 abstention due to non-attendance at meeting.

118/20. Matters Arising - To deal with any matters arising from the Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting of the 30th September 2020 not covered elsewhere on this agenda.

None.

ITEM 130/20. Neighbourhood Wardens was brought forward by the Chairman and taken after ITEM 118/20.

130/20. Neighbourhood Wardens

Councillor Flores Moore proposed formation of a working party to negotiate the terms and conditions of an ongoing contract with Horsham District Council, in accordance with the current agreement, and to report back to Full Council in time for the January 2021 meeting that would also consider and approve the budget and precept for the Council for years 2021/22. The working party would consist of the Clerk (and Deputy Clerk or Chairman should the Clerk not be available for any reason), Councillors Lewis, Scoon, Moore with Councillor Slowly in reserve. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Stranks and **AGREED** unanimously.

ITEM 123/20. District Councillor Report was brought forward by the Chairman.

123/20. To Receive and Consider any District Council Reports and Communications not covered elsewhere on this Agenda

Councillor Vickers (as also District Councillor) reported to Southwater Parish Council that Horsham District Council had serious budget issues due to COVID-19 as main income streams were down significantly contributed to by loss of parking income, closure of Capital Theatre and Leisure Centres. HDC have made difficult decisions with respect to the restructuring of the workforce to assist in the recovery of losses.

Councillor Vickers reported that the HDC Local Plan was under review and Central Government were to reconsider the imposition of new houses on HDC due to representation made by MPs. A decision to be made by the Cabinet on 28th January 2021 and Public Consultation would run for 6-weeks with all plans/comments submitted to the Inspector who will be carrying out the examination. Councillor Vickers explained there had been delays due to Statutory Consultee and evidence base requirements. She also advised that objections had been received on all sites put forward in the Local Plan.

The Chairman stated that the Local Plan had huge importance to Southwater Residents.

Discussion took place regarding the housing numbers and the calculations behind the housing assessments. Councillors Scoon and Lewis raised concerns over the housing numbers, the history of housing provision to date and with respect to COVID-19 Pandemic and the resulting effect on housing demand through decline in business and operational activity at Gatwick airport. Further concerns were raised as to whether qualitative considerations were considered such as an ageing population and the suitable homes for that demographic. Councillor Vickers confirmed that the housing assessments would be reviewed, and she agreed that qualitative considerations were important. It was expected that HDC would have to enable 920 additional homes per year plus 5% with a duty to cooperate with other Districts or Borough councils.

Councillor Neale (Vice Chairman) and County Councillor N Jupp joined the meeting and were welcomed by the Chairman at 7:45pm.

119/20. Correspondence

None to report.

120/20. Accounts

- i) Balance Sheet to date – To receive, note and approve

Councillor Neale proposed acceptance. Seconded by Councillor Moore **AGREED** unanimously.

- ii) Income and Expenditure – To receive, note and approve as at the date of this meeting

Councillor Flores-Moore proposed acceptance. Seconded by Councillor Scoon **AGREED** unanimously.

<p>121/20. Internal Audit Report – to receive and approve Interim Internal Audit Report of 27th October 2020 as circulated to all Councillors on 29th October 2020.</p> <p>The Deputy Clerk advised that the Interim Internal Audit Report was a positive improvement on previous reports. The Internal Auditor had identified the Council’s improvements and at the interim visit the review and performance tests did not uncover any errors nor identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk. It is the opinion of the Internal Auditor (Mulberry & Co) that the systems and internal procedures at Southwater Parish Council are well established and followed. The Deputy Clerk advised the Internal Audit Report would be uploaded to the website with the minutes to the Council meeting. The Chairman thanked the Council Officers and staff for their work.</p> <p>Councillor Cole proposed acceptance. Seconded by Councillor Neale AGREED unanimously.</p>	<p>Deputy Clerk</p>
<p>122/20. To Receive and Consider any County Council Reports and Communications not covered elsewhere on this Agenda</p> <p>County Councillor Nigel Jupp update the Council that the Infant Junior Academy had new classrooms which were due to open first week of January 2021 for the Spring Term provided there were no unforeseen delays.</p> <p>The Zebra crossings on Worthing Road had been scheduled to have the white road markings repainted but no works date provided to him at this stage. Councillor Flores Moore put forward her concerns regarding traffic safety in part due to lack of lighting at night and when there is queuing or congregating during the school run. Councillor Jupp suggested a site visit and meeting with the governors of the school and the Headteacher to work on a plan to improve the flow of people. Councillors Moore, Timson and Slowly suggested more marketing and publicity could be carried out to encourage walking to school versus driving to reduce congestion on Worthing Road.</p> <p>Councillor Jupp thanked Councillor Cole for the informative report received on the history of Cripplegate Lane and possible solutions with respect to the flooding. It was noted that 20th March 2020 was the last jet wash of the gullies and Councillor Jupp requested whether Councillor Cole or the Chairman could join him with an inspection/survey of the road. Councillor Jupp to inform Councillor Cole and the Chairman of the date of inspection.</p> <p>Further discussion took place regarding the various points reported by County Councillor Jupp. Councillor Scoon requested further information on the recent news release that WSCC may be handing back libraries or working in partnership with Parish and Town Councils to save money due to the massive deficit in the WSCC budget caused by COVID-19. Councillor Flores Moore queried when WSCC would install a footpath in the North of the Village to connect Blakes Farm Road with the roundabout past Martindales and RSPCA building. It was suggested there could be S106 available currently earmarked for other projects by HDC. Councillor Vickers advised she could assist on the matter. Councillor Lewis requested whether Councillor Jupp could assist him with a contact at WSCC to help Southwater Parish Council in the same manner they assist HDC with any illegal incursions. The Chairman suggested that the Councillors arrange a Zoom call with Councillor Jupp to go through their queries and requests in more detail. Councillor Jupp was thanked for his time and attendance at the meeting.</p>	<p>Cllr Jupp</p> <p>Cllr Jupp/ Cllrs</p>
<p>123/20. To Receive and Consider any District Council Reports and Communications not covered elsewhere on this Agenda <i>[This item was brought forward in the meeting by the Chairman]</i></p>	
<p>124/20. To Receive from the following Committees: reports, note any delegated decisions taken and make any recommendations</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">F&GP Committee – updates including:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">- Minutes of the Meeting held on the 21st October 2020</p> <p>Councillor Neale proposed acceptance of the item and Minutes of the F&GP Committee Meeting held on 21 October 2020. Seconded by Councillor Scoon and AGREED by those in attendance.</p>	

Planning Committee – updates including:

- Minutes of the Meeting held on the 4th November 2020

Councillor Watkins proposed acceptance of the item and Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 4th November 2020. Seconded by Councillor Moore **AGREED** by those in attendance.

125/20. Legal, Freedom of Information Requests and Planning Compliance Challenges – to receive update

The Chairman explained that the Council had received over 70 Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests this year from members of the public, most of the requests were considered unnecessary as the information requested was within the public domain and on the Parish Council Website. Some of the requests could be classified as vexatious and were generated by a small group of residents. He explained that he did want to name the particular residents as part of his statement to the Council, but the residents requested to not be named.

The Chairman estimated the cost of the requests to be above £4,500 in staff costs also taking valuable time away from dealing with other matters and the general running of the Parish Council and office.

One specific request that had been made concerned Easteds Barn and there were resulting legal costs of the enforcement notices issued. The Enforcement Notices legally must be answered by the Parish Council. The Chairman advised that he had previously answered these questions in an open session at a Full Council meeting regarding the onsite Car Parking and the cost of dealing with this complaint by members of the public to date was in excess of £6,500. It had now been accepted by Horsham District Council Enforcement that there is no case to answer. There was a provision in this year's budget for 2020-21 of £10,000 to deal with this and would likely be the case that the Council must make the same provision for 2021-22 as there are still requests coming into the offices. This is a cost that is paid for by all the residents of Southwater.

Another FOI request made by a resident who wanted to remain unnamed was in connection with the Lease agreed with the tenant of Easteds Barn, information of a confidential nature. The Chairman advised the Council would have to reject the request due to the information being protected by legal and professional privilege Section 42; the information was currently being considered in a legal recovery action; commercially sensitive and a commercial interest, Section 43; the documents may not exist and the cost of providing proof of this would exceed the cost limit of £450.00; and none of the documents were stored electronically and thus the cost of accessing the documents would exceed the £450.00 cost limit, including the cost of redacting personal information under Section 40.

The Chairman explained that the exemptions had already been communicated to the resident who had now elevated this to a complaint stage with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). The cost of responding to the complaint and request would be a significant strain on already limited staffing resources and would have to be considered for allocation to the budget for 2021-22.

The Chairman further explained that the staffing levels had been generally reduced and jobs restructured over the last few years. The FOIs requests, which he stated were the legal entitlement of all residents were imposing a great strain on the already reduced staff resources, were incurring overtime costs and a great deal of voluntary Parish Councillors' time. The Chairman wished to congratulate the remaining staff and volunteers for all their hard work.

Councillor Moore requested the names of the requestors be released with the costs to satisfy the requests. The Chairman advised he did not think they could but would seek advice from the Information Commissioners Office. Councillor Stranks believed that all FOI requests and the respective requestors' names were published and in the public domain for larger government bodies.

County Councillor Nigel Jupp gave his apologies and had to leave the meeting at 8:25pm

<p>126/20. To Note the grant transferred to Southwater Ghyll CIO of £88,683.00 and hold back of £11,638 in Earmarked Reserves – Remaining balance of EMR 334 Maintenance Leisure Centre (The Ghyll) to be transferred at year end 31 March 2021.</p>	
<p>The grant transfer of £88,683.00 and hold back of £11,638 in Earmarked Reserves were noted by the Council.</p>	
<p>127/20. Reports from Lead Councillors – To receive and consider any reports from Lead Councillors on the following areas: Amenities, Green Open Space & Boundaries, Public Realm, Play & Leisure facilities.</p>	
<p>The Lead Councillors for Amenities updated the Council that all their works relating to The Ghyll and Laurie Apted Building were complete and any respective reports or correspondence previous distributed to the Clerk. Further work and reports were still required on Beeson House and Councillor Scoon reported he would need access to the Lease.</p>	
<p>It was noted that the reports for Green Open Space and Boundaries had been distributed to the Councillors and Clerk. Councillor Lewis added that he hoped WSCC would be able to act for SPC in the same manner as they do for HDC with respect to illegal incursions.</p>	
<p>Lead Councillors for Public Realm, Councillors Moore and Stranks, confirmed their remaining Public Realm reports would be circulated to the Clerk and Councillors prior to the next F&GP Committee meeting. Reports on Fingerposts, Village Signs and Street Lights had been circulated.</p>	
<p>No reports had been received from the Lead Councillors for Play and Leisure.</p>	
<p>The Chairman thanked the Lead Councillors for their work and reports. The Clerk advised the reports would be made available with the minutes to the meeting.</p>	<p>Deputy Clerk</p>
<p>128/20. Working From Home Policy – To review and approve</p>	
<p>The Chairman advised the policy was necessary to comply with current UK Government Regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic, to allow this to take place in certain circumstances where the risk of working at the office exceeds the requirements of normal Health and Safety. He advised the office would continue to run and would be staffed with safe working distances and guidelines adhered to.</p>	
<p>Councillor Cole proposed acceptance of the policy. Seconded by Councillor Moore and AGREED unanimously.</p>	
<p>129/20. Chairman Discretionary Fund – to approve fund and Chairman authority to spend donations received from local businesses on worthwhile local charities and Southwater based needing causes.</p>	
<p>The Chairman explained the objective of the fund to help Southwater based needing cause on the run up to Christmas and how local businesses had generously donated money towards the fund. The Chairman advised he would be liaising with Churches, charity, and local groups on guidance on how to spend the money and as to those who were most in need. Councillor Lewis proposed approval of the Chairman Discretionary Fund and for the Chairman to have authority to spend donations on needing Southwater based causes in conjunction with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Seconded by Councillor Moore and AGREED unanimously.</p>	<p>Cllr GW</p>
<p>Councillor Moore requested all support given is publicised. Councillor Lewis thanked the Chairman for his initiative. The Chairman advised how to access the fund would be made available on the website and the names of businesses who have supported would be named.</p>	<p>Clerk/ Deputy Clerk</p>
<p>130/20. Neighbourhood Wardens <i>[This item was brought forward in the meeting by the Chairman]</i></p>	
<p><i>Councillor Vickers gave her apologies and had to leave the meeting at 8:45pm</i></p>	

131/20. Freedom of the Parish – Chairman to propose additional recipient of award

The Deputy Clerk advised there was an error with the numbering on the Agenda and for clarity this item should be changed from 130/20 to 131/20.

The Chairman proposed Peter Buckley for the recipient of the Freedom of the Parish Award for his time as Chairman of Southwater Parish Council, as a Councillor and for over 12 years on the First Responders Committee. Councillor Flores Moore proposed acceptance to the Chairman's proposal, seconded by Councillor Cole and **AGREED** unanimously.

132/20. Date of next meeting – 20th January 2021

The Deputy Clerk advised there was an error with the numbering on the Agenda and for clarity this item should therefore be amended from to 132/20.

This meeting was not recorded and ended at 8:50pm