

ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 2020/04/14-136

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING held via Zoom on Tuesday 14th April 2020 at 7.00 pm.

[The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020]

PRESENT: Councillor M Worrall (Chairman), Cllrs. Baxter, Cypher, Freeman, Helmore, Hornsby, Humphries, Lambert, Lewis, Wise and Willetts.

Also present: Mr R Peach

In attendance: Mrs J Smailes – Parish Clerk/Minute Taker

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from;

DCllrs Van der Plank, English and District/Cllr Hotham.

Noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. DISPENSATION REQUESTS

None.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Approval of the Minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council meetings held on 30th March 2020 at 7pm and 8pm respectively were proposed by Cllr Worrall. **Unanimous.**

5. OPEN FORUM

No requests to speak were received.

6. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE CHAIR

- a) Cllr Worrall reported on a recent virtual meeting held on Thursday 9th April with officers of BDC; he explained that the meeting was arranged following a recent CA8 meeting to try and ascertain proposed housing numbers for the Parish.

Officers advised that before it would be possible to provide such information it was BDC's (LPA) intention to commission a Planning Consultancy and, using the findings of this report which would not be available until the end of the year, BDC would then be better placed to provide proposed housing numbers for the district.

Cllr Cypher felt that the meeting had been somewhat disappointing, with officers imparting hardly any valuable information

Cllr Baxter expressed her concern as she believed there to be no correlation across the district between housing numbers, highway infrastructure and developers wishing to build.

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Cllr Worrall believed that BDC could be trying to distance themselves from possible future criticism in relation to future recommendations for proposed housing numbers by commissioning an independent Planning Consultancy.

Cllr Cypher spoke of the excellent transport corridors that Planners appear to associate with Alvechurch despite there being numerous highway/transport issues which he felt should also be considered as part of any overall scheme.

Cllr Humphries queried whether it would be possible to request of BDC a copy of the Project Brief/Tender Document so members could understand fully what the independent Planning Consultancy was being tasked to address? It was unanimously agreed that our District Councillors be requested to obtain a copy of this document.

Action: Clerk

b) **Picnic In the Park**

Cllr Worrall reported that he and the office had received an approach from the Picnic In the Park organisers who were keen to set a new date for the event; suggested date being 5th September. Cllr Worrall asked Members to confirm they had no objection in order that approval may be given and preparations could commence. **Unanimous.**

Cllr Hornsby noted that the date was close to the end of the Second WWII and suggested this be encompassed in the celebrations.

c) **Virtual Meeting Subscription** (*Namely Zoom*)

It was noted that as instructed the Clerk had subscribed to Zoom however as the Parish Council did not hold a Debit Card she had paid for the subscription herself and would reclaim the sum accordingly. **Noted**

Cllr Worrall reported that a number of community organisations could benefit at this time from arranging virtual meetings and called on Members to consider whether they felt it appropriate for the Clerk to be given delegated powers (*LGA 1972 S101*) in order to allow her to facilitate virtual meetings as deemed appropriate. **Unanimous.**

Cllr Worrall gave an overview of the recent Planning Meeting, held the week prior, speaking in particular about; 14th The Square (Simply Fresh) and Bordesley Hall/Bordesley Farm – (*see Planning Committee Minutes*)

Cllr Worrall completed his monthly report by saying that he was pleased to advise that the Assistant Clerk was now feeling a lot better and had returned to work that day.

7. **CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk advised that she had; assisted Alvechurch Cares by setting up and controlling the Policy/Document Suite and had facilitated payment of the approved float sum; completed Year End Accounts and submitted the Q4 VAT return (*Independent Internal Audit would take place as soon as restrictions were lifted if not remotely; External Audit /Public Right to inspect/AGAR Submission date - dates awaited from Central Government*); the new Council Website was nearing completion, and she hoped to have the final policies ready for Members to consider/adopt en-block at the May ACM so the website could then go 'live'.

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The Clerk reported that she had received the Insurance Renewal Quote and she was currently ascertaining if the Council were tied in to a policy or whether it could consider additional quotes prior to the renewal date of 1st June.

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) The Year End Reconciliation and Year End Earmarked and General Reserve positions were confirmed as correct. **Unanimous**

- It was noted that Q4 VAT Return had been duly submitted.

- b) Members were provided with a copy of the 2020/21 budget breakdown taken from Scribe which now mirrored the previously approved budget headers.
- c) 2020/21 Financial Start Position was confirmed as being correct following the transfer from G/Rs of £30,143.86 to balance the predicted budget expenditure of £181,000.00. It was also noted that a sum of £1,500 had also been transferred to Mr A Cook re. Alvechurch Cares (*Minute reference - (FC 2020/03/30 – 135)*)
- d) **Monthly Payment Listing (Mth 1)**
Authorisation of the Monthly Payment Listing was proposed by Cllr Worrall. **Unanimous**
- e) Transfers/Virements were approved. **Unanimous**

9. ACTION PLAN

Cllr Worrall thanked AH and JC for their contribution; stating that the Action Plan provided a positive framework from which the council could now draw.

Cllr Humphries explained that the document had been created initially in November 2019 as an aid memoir for the new Clerk however had grown to become a business framework for the council; a document that could be used to demonstrate progress and justify expenditure to the electorate; he suggested that the Action Plan could form the basis of a pre-budget meeting.

Cllr Cypher felt it would also enable the electorate to understand better what the council was about.

Cllr Baxter said that she felt it was important not to underestimate its value for it will assist the electorate in understanding how their money is spent.

Cllr Worrall proposed the Action Plan be adopted as a ‘working document’

Unanimous

10. ALVECHURCH CARES

Cllr Worrall provided an overview of the work undertaken to date by Alvechurch Cares. He stated that in the last three weeks since the leaflet drop there had been; 76 requests for assistance (*collection of prescriptions/basic food shop*) and that there were currently 22 volunteers (*this number excludes Steering Group Members*), he concluded by advising that the Steer Group were now considering how best to develop ideas further to meeting changing scenarios.

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Cllr Baxter reported that the Wythall ‘model’ was different in so much as volunteers were assigned to a regular volunteer until such time as the volunteer could no longer continue to commit.

Cllr Baxter continued by saying that she felt it important that those wishing to volunteer were utilised, a point echoed by Cllr Worrall.

11. **FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE**

It was noted that all relevant correspondence had already been disseminated.

12. **DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

Cllr Worrall referred to the following report which had been submitted by DCllrs Van der Plank and English:

1) All BDC meetings have been put on hold while the Council IT department set up Business Skype for everyone to use during this Corona crisis. It is hoped that meetings will then be online and accessible to members of the public. This is of course, extremely important for the democratic process especially with Planning meetings where members of the public often present to members of the Planning Committee or attend to listen to the debate. There is therefore little to report to APC with regards to BDC business.

2) One news story; however, that may have caught people's attention is about the Artrix in Bromsgrove being forced to close because of financial difficulties exacerbated by CV-19. There have been some posts and comments about this on the Alvechurch social media pages. There have also been petitions and calls for BDC to take over the running of the Artrix but the issue is complex. We will keep you informed.

3) There appears to have been an increase in fly tipping over the last few weeks. This may be because all tips are closed at the moment; however, it's still disappointing as householders shouldn't be arranging private rubbish collection as this wouldn't normally be classed as 'essential'. Both of us continue to try to raise awareness of the requirement to have a waste license when removing rubbish and householders responsibility to check this too.

4) In addition to the usual fly tipping, many charities are reporting difficulties in collecting and emptying donations from street charity collection bins and as a result items are being left in bags around the bins which then get damaged or block pavements. So although it's a good time for people to do some spring cleaning and sort out donations for the charity shop, we need to ask them to hold on to their donations until shops open up again.

5) Bonfires have been an emotive issue both locally and more widely across the District and the country. With people self isolating and many people suffering with respiratory conditions, smoke from garden bonfires is a real nuisance. At the moment there is no law against garden bonfires but government are being lobbied to look at this. In the meantime, BDC and WCC are putting out strong messages on social media advising people to be considerate and not have bonfires and we are both sharing these regularly.

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13. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Cllr Hotham had also kindly supplied a written report ahead of the meeting;

I hope you are all well and coping with the current necessary restrictions in order to beat this vile virus.

WCC have adopted working from home for most of the staff, a gold command meeting is held twice weekly to co-ordinate pandemic action. WCC have now established a county wide help webpage Here2help (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/Here2help. 01905 768053) to which residents in need of assistance are directed. This features links to Alvechurch Cares and I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those Alvechurch volunteers who are helping during this crisis.

At a local level the national shortage of PPE is also being felt and WCC are trying to source as much as possible to supply care homes and domiciliary Carers. This remains a significant problem and an email address is available for homes and Carers to report shortages (CoronavirusASC@Worcestershire.gov.uk).

On a more mundane level, WCC highways continue to operate a reduced service with emergency work being prioritised alongside some basic resurfacing and street works. All WCC Council and Committee meetings have been postponed the same is true at BDC. Both are investigating Zoom/Skype use moving forward.

Once again I wish you all the best in these difficult times.

14. COUNCILLORS REPORTS (*around the Parish*)

Bordesley - Cllr. Hornsby noted all drains continue to be jetted.

Rowney Green – Cllr Cypher suggested that the New Homes Bonus Grant could possibly look to improvements on the Rowney Green Playing Field. Cllr Cypher also reported that the ‘lend a hand’ scheme, active in Rowney Green, continued to work well.

15. PRESS RELEASE/STATEMENT

Cllr Humphries gave an undertaken to post on FB the Council’s reasons for its continued objection to the planning application relevant to 14 The Square.

Action: Cllr Humphries

16. MEETING DATES

It was agreed that an Extraordinary Meeting would be convened at the beginning of May.

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed @ 8.32pm

Chairman

Date