



**To All Councillors,**

You are summoned to an **ONLINE** meeting of Billingshurst Parish Council (in adherence to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392) on **Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 7pm**. A link will be sent to you explaining how to join this meeting.

**To Members of the Public,**

This meeting will be streamed on the internet. Follow link from website or Facebook page. This will enable you to see and hear Councillors.

If you would like to ask a question,

- a. you can either submit it to the Clerk at least 24 hours prior, who will then read it out, or
- b. you can ask it directly, but you must still notify the Clerk at least 24 hours prior, so you can be sent a link that you will enable you to join the meeting for the duration of public questions.

G.C. Burt

Clerk to the Council

24 February 2021

## **A G E N D A**

1. Chairman's Announcements.
2. Apologies for Absence.
3. To Receive Declarations of Interest and consider any requests for a dispensation.  
*Adjournment for*
4. Public Session (Members of the Public may speak for up to 3 minutes at the discretion of the Chairman).
5. To welcome the new Neighbourhood Warden, Julie Green.
6. To receive a presentation from Aaron Barton, Operations Manager, Billingshurst Surgery and TBC.
7. To receive written reports given in advance from District and County Cllrs, and for them to take resulting questions.
8. To receive reports from Council representatives on outside organisations, **plus on any training recently attended.**  
*Resume Meeting*
9. Approval of the Minutes of the Meetings held 6 January 2021. (Previously sent)

10. Matters Arising – that are not separate agenda items
11. To agree not to hold an Annual Parish Meeting of Electors in 2021.
12. To consider request for landlord's consent to allow construction of further Tennis Court at Billingshurst Tennis Club, Lower Station Road Recreation Ground – details previously circulated. (DEFERRED from Property Committee of 18 February 2021)  
(Any comments received from public, to follow.)
13. To consider **RECOMMENDATION** from the F&GP Committee of 27 January 2021 that the Council's Corporate Risk Assessment be approved. (Minute 13/21 refers)
14. To receive the External Audit Report for 2019-20, consider any issues and refer to F&GP Committee if appropriate - Appendix A.
15. To receive the report of the External Auditor following a complaint and refer the matter to the Working Practices Committee for resolution - Appendix B.
16. To receive Minutes as approved by the following Committees:
  - a. Planning & Environment 3 & 16 December 2020 and 7 January 2021
  - b. F&GP 16 December 2020 and 27 January 2021
  - c. Property 18 November 2020(all previously circulated / on website.)
17. To note receipt of response from HDC regarding Cedar's Orchard (previously circulated to all Cllrs) and consider further action as appropriate.
18. To consider the following request from the Billingshurst Flood Action Group.  
*Further to my request of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and the copy of the Billingshurst Flood Plan (V1) received from HDC in November 2020 would the Parish Council update this version and add it to Council documents, as a stand-alone plan until such time as the Parish Council progresses an Emergency Plan?* - Appendix C.
19. To consider applications to fill one councillor vacancy by cooption – Appendix D.
20. To review appointments to committees etc.– Appendix E.
21. To receive Wardens' Reports for January and February, previously circulated.
22. Any other matters for information only.
23. **Date of Next Meeting** – 5 May 2021

**Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its Committees or Sub-Committees will be deemed as the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present.**

**Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20**

In respect of **Billingham Parish Council**

**1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor**

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2020; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not constitute an audit** carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

**2 External auditor report 2019/20**

~~(Except for the matter reported below)~~ on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with the Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

(\*delete as appropriate)

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

**Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:**

We draw attention to the prior year restatement in Section 2 of the Return which corrects income and expenses which were netted off in the prior year. The adjustment now correctly reflects these items and as a result boxes 2 and 4 have each increased by £48,447.

The Council has not entered their web address on the Annual Governance Statement as required under the transparency code.

**3 External auditor certificate 2019/20**

We certify/ ~~do not certify~~\* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020.

~~\*We do not certify completion because:~~

External Auditor Name



External Auditor Signature

*Moore*

Date

09/02/2021

\*Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website ([www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk))

**Subject:** FW: Complaint raised to External Auditor in respect of Billingshurst Parish Council

**From:** Wsussex Sa <wsussex.sa@moore.co.uk>

**Sent:** 11 February 2021 16:11

**To:** Paul Berry <paul.berry@billingshurst.gov.uk>; Billingshurst Parish Clerk <clerk@billingshurst.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Complaint raised to External Auditor in respect of Billingshurst Parish Council

Dear Cllr Berry and Mr. Burt

As you are aware I am the External Auditor to Billingshurst Parish Council.

You are also aware a complaint has been made to me primarily against Mr. Burt as Clerk for the Parish Council.

The complaint is that a business support grant was applied for in the name of the Treasurer for Adversane Hall without his permission.

I have reviewed the information passed to me from various sources including yourselves and the Treasurer and can clearly see that a grant has been applied for and the grant money received.

That correspondence reports that the grant was received into the Hall's own bank account and not into some other account.

The correspondence also reports that the grant application was undertaken by the Clerk and information was provided to him by member(s) of the committee to facilitate that application.

The emails between the parties show an increasing urgency to provide the information, if the application was to be made, due to there being a deadline.

The email sending the information appears to be in response to urgent request for the Treasurer to send the information to the Clerk, by the then Cllr with external responsibility to/of the Hall.

It is also clear that immediately following on from the application's submission that the Hall's Committee had not met or otherwise discussed making the application nor given a formal authority for the grant to be applied for.

I am not suggesting that there was any intention by the Clerk to apply for the grant in any other capacity other than on behalf of the Hall's Committee in the belief it was their wish and with the Council's permission to assist.

However, the fact that this complaint has been raised shows that there may be gaps in governance policy which show themselves when your protocols are put under pressure, such as in this instance.

From an External Audit perspective within the Smaller Authorities regime, I have a fairly tight remit.

My first concern was whether there is an inaccurate or fraudulent item of account within the records of the Council. Following my review, my findings noted above are that the money was received directly by the Hall and therefore there is not an inaccurate or fraudulent item of account within the Parish Councils records.

I now need to consider what happened in regard to potential governance issues. Primarily, why and how the Clerk came to be making the application on behalf of the Hall.

#### **Overview of events**

The first contact was from the Clerk about 12 days before the application deadline, to bring the availability of the grant funding to the attention of the Hall's treasurer. Of itself, I can see no contentious issue here.

The Treasurer responded that he were not sure the hall qualified for the grant and the Clerk then replied explaining that other similar halls had successfully applied. Again I do not feel this is contentious. It is simply knowledge sharing.

In the days just before the deadline, the Clerk then went on to remind both the treasurer and others, including the then Cllr Grant, who 'sat' on the management committee of the Hall on the Council's behalf at that time, if an application was to be made time was running out. Emails then went around between the various parties marked urgent and requesting the information required to complete the application. As a result of these emails, information was supplied to the Clerk and the application made on the deadline day for applications.

### **Observations from the overview**

#### *Limitations:*

*I have no remit in regard to the actions of the Hall's Trustees as they are a body independent of the Council. It is also not relevant to my review whether or not the grant money can or will be repaid to HDC.*

*My comments/observations below are in relation to the overall situation and the impact for/on the Parish Council as I understand it.*

It is clear looking back at the correspondence that time pressure has played the major part in this.

What is less clear is whether the Hall's Trustees questioned why the information was being requested or understood that by providing the information, an application for these funds would be made on their behalf.

I cannot see in the correspondence I have received a direct request/statement from the Trustees for the application to be made.

I do not know at this point if the Clerk was informing and reminding other similar local bodies of the availability of this and any other similar grants.

I do not know at this point if it was a common practice of this Clerk/Council to keep local halls, charities, businesses, people informed of available grants and funding.

I do not know at this point whether the Clerk had been asked by the Council to undertake this task either specifically or in general, or whether the Clerk was acting as a 'civic minded individual' and not in his official position as Clerk to the Parish Council.

It is apparent from the correspondence that as soon as the confirmation relating to the application was provided back to the Trustees, that they had not discussed the available funding (and their need for it) and therefore not made a formal decision to make an application.

Furthermore, it is clear after the event that the Hall Trustees did not feel that they required the funding.

### **Next steps**

Good governance practice would suggest that following an issue such as this, you, as a council, review your policies and protocols surrounding what happened. You need to satisfy yourselves, and me, that your policies going forward are robust enough to identify what is and what isn't Council business. You may need to update/clarify any policies to assist everyone to know what is appropriate to be done in the name of the Council either as a Councillor or within the office of Clerk and what is not. The Council should also address any potential conflicts of interest aspects of this. It is important in such circumstances to be able to demonstrate both to the individuals involved and the wider public that the Council takes its responsibilities seriously and wishes to ensure no-one can be placed in a similar position in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you, with your conclusions, once your review is complete.

Finally, as this matter does not, in my opinion, impact the 2019-20 year, I have completed my review and report on the 2020 Annual Governance and Accountability Return but you will need to consider any outcomes of your review when completing your 2020-21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

**Carolyn Rossiter**

Partner

▪  
**Wsussex Sa**

Moore East Midlands

**From:** lesley wilding ·  
**Sent:** 14 January 2021 13:25  
**To:** Billingshurst Parish Clerk  
**Cc:** Graeme Acraman; 'Chris.Brown'; 'Kate.Rowbottom'; 'Nigel.Jupp'  
**Subject:** FW: Drainage issues, Billingshurst  
**Attachments:** Billingshurst Parish Community Flood Plan 1.doc

Dear Greg, cc. Cllr Acraman, Cllr Brown, Cllr Jupp and Cllr Rowbottom,

Belated Happy New Year to you all.

Further to my email below on behalf of the Billingshurst Flood Action Group, is it possible to put the Billingshurst Flood Plan, sent by HDC's Martin Brightwell, Drainage Engineer, for the Parish Council to update at the Parish Council next Full Council meeting?

As you know, the Full Council meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019 resolved unanimously to add a Flood Plan to the Emergency Plan when progressed; the Winter Maintenance Plan is a stand-alone plan and it would help residents if the Flood Plan was treated the same.

With the flooding in Billingshurst during 2020 in February, October and November, as well as the possibility of more pressures on both the Penny Brook and Par Brook with future development East of Billingshurst, this is a ready-made Plan that just needs updating from 2014 as very little has changed with regard to flooding. Both the EA CCTV and the Billingshurst Surface Water Management Plan are not yet included in the Plan.

If you need me to put in writing this request to go to Full Council I would suggest:-

Further to my request of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and the copy of the Billingshurst Flood Plan (V1) received from HDC in November 2020 would the Parish Council update this version and add it to Council documents, as a stand-alone plan until such time as the Parish Council progresses an Emergency Plan?

Kind Regards  
Lesley

On behalf of the Billingshurst Flood Action Group

**PLAN NOT SHOWN  
HERE AS MAY  
CONTAIN SENSITIVE  
INFORMATION**

Please outline below why you would like to become a Parish Councillor and include 3 qualities or talents that you could bring to the organisation.

APPENDIX D

I have wanted to get more involved with the village since I moved here 10 years ago. I enjoy living here & would like to make more of a contribution. I feel I have a balanced approach to life and have always made sure

I have full access to all the facts before making decisions.

I want the village to prosper & be sustainable into the future & think that by joining the Parish Council I would be able to contribute to the success of the village both for the residents & the traders. I am an accountant, so

I enjoy & have experience with budgeting.

I also think I have an ability to listen & not rush into decisions based solely on my personal perspective.

FROM CAROLINE BERESFORD PRATT



## BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

## COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

2020-21

(The Council has set the max. membership for Committees to 10 members.)

<b>COMMITTEES</b>	
Planning & Environment	GA, EB, <b>GC</b> , <b>DH</b> , JP, SW, DW
Property	<b>BB</b> , PB, GC, SD, DH, RM, CG
Finance & General Purposes	GA, BB, EB, PB, DH, RM, <b>KP</b> , <b>CG</b>
Working Practices	PB, DH, RM, <b>MW</b> , DW, <b>SD</b>
Billingshurst Centre	GA, <b>KP</b> , <b>SW</b> , SD, CG, RM
Flooding	
Complaints (5 members Max)	PB, SD, RM
Complaints Chairman	<b>SD</b>
<b>WORKING PARTIES</b>	
Neighbourhood Plan	SD, <b>JP</b> , MW
Emergency Planning	GA, EB,
Internal Audit	GA, DH, RM
East St Traffic Calming	PB, JP
Youth Liaison	RM, MW, SW
Jubilee Skatepark WP	BB, PB, DH, CG
CCTV	PB, GC, RM, GA
Local Plan	DH, BB, <b>JP</b> , GA

***Bold** indicates Chairman/Vice Chairman*

<b>REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES</b>	
Allotments Society	EB
Adversane Traffic WP	JP
B'hurst Sports & Recn. Assn. (BSRA) x4	GC, SD, CG
Friends of Station Road Gardens x1	BB
HALC (H'ham Assn Local Ccls)	GA + SD
N'hood Warden Steering Group x2	GA, SD, PB, Clerk
Public Art Steering Group	Clerk
SPD Working Group	SD + Clerk
Trustee of Adversane Hall x1	PB (SD reserve)
Trustee of Dauxwood Pre-School x1	MW
West Sussex Association Local Councils (WSALC) AGM x2	SD, GA
Youth Council	MW
B'hurst Flood Action Group	GA