



**Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council
Wednesday 17 June 2020
7.30pm**

Present

Cllrs Paul Berry (Chairman), Graeme Acraman, Barry Barnes, Edna Benger, Sandy Duck Garry Commins, Alan Grant, Dave Homer, Jon Perks, Ken Peters, Mary Wild and Sarah Wilson.

In attendance, via ZOOM.

G Burt, Clerk to the Council

3 applicants for cooption: Craig Gale, Brian Spicer and Douglas Waller.

40/20 Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman

- a. Reiterated the guidelines, previously circulated to all Councillors, by which he would conduct this first virtual meeting of the Council. He also reminded Members that the meeting was being streamed on the internet.
- b. Thanked the Clerk and his team for keeping the Council ticking over in the past few months adding "I have heard some very complimentary comments from Councillors regarding how helpful staff members have been in helping them to get used to having to do things so differently, especially when it comes to the new technology we are having to embrace. Staff haven't just been dealing with council matters but have also been helping members of the public and other organisations and local companies during recent difficult times."
- c. Confirmed that the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan has now entered its final consultation phase and the Council's Annual Report is now on the website.

41/20 Apologies for Absence.

None

42/20 To Receive Declarations of Interest and consider any requests for a dispensation.

Cllr Mary Wild disclosed a personal interest as a family member had a gate onto Council land.

Cllr Jon Perks disclosed a pecuniary interest as he is employed as an Access Consultant.

Adjournment for

43/20 Public Session (Members of the Public may speak for up to 3 minutes at the discretion of the Chairman).

The public had been offered the opportunity to either join the meeting to ask a question, or have the Clerk read out a question submitted in advance.

Mr R Martin had submitted the following which the Clerk then read out:

Is the Parish Council aware of the imminent threat of a built development to the area in Maple Road which the Parish Council has designated as Local Green Space #13, under Policy BILL15 of the Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan?

The Clerk then gave an update on this issue: the land was privately owned but was designated highway and maintained by the highway authority, West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The current owner was selling the site at auction on the 24th June. The Parish Council had already included the site for Local Green Space Designation (LGS) under its draft Neighborhood Plan, which should give it considerable protection to be kept as is. Horsham District Council (HDC) had advised that the process to have it registered as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) was lengthy and would offer no immediate protection. The Council noted the current position and residents concern. It was agreed that in the absence of anything the Council could do in the interim, it would, at its July meeting, consider whether to seek to have it registered as an ACV.

Resume Meeting

44/20 Gates Policy.

Following the creation of a gate from a private dwelling onto Council open space, Councillors had been considering what action the Council can take on this, and gates that had been in situ for longer.

Councillors at the Property Committee of 19 February 2020 considered National Association of Local Councils (NALC) advice and options, suggested by professional advisors, on how best to manage or regularise the matter. They were minded to agree that it may be best to issue licences for new gates, but were mindful to what extent this could be applied retrospectively to those gates that had been in situ for many years, if not decades, especially as whatever action they agreed to take needed to be fairly applied and not discriminatory. It had been deferred pending further information.

The Solicitor had since advised that a standard model licence could be used and amended to suit each case.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Barry Barnes, **RESOLVED** to regularise via formal licence, gates onto Council land, as appropriate, with detailed conditions to be delegated to the Clerk, and that no fee be charged at the present time, but that this be kept under review.

45/20 To receive the Internal Audit Report 2019-20.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman, **RESOLVED** to receive the Internal Audit Report 2019-20. Cllr Jon Perks asked what progress had been made on moving bank / internet banking? The Clerk replied that new account applications had been put on hold due to the national situation. The F&GP Committee would look in more detail at any recommendations.

46/20 Annual Return 2019-20 - Annual Governance Statement.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019-20 – Appendix A.

47/20 Annual Return 2019-20 -Accounting Statements.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman **RESOLVED** to approve the Accounting Statements for 2019-20 – Appendix B.

48/20 Investigation of improved walking and cycling routes.

The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted considerable interest in the availability of walking and cycling routes as alternatives to car and public transport; the government had announced a £2billion fund being made available.

A non-policy action of the draft Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan was to seek to improve non-motorised access within the parish, particularly to connect the various settlements. To achieve this, in the first instance it would be necessary to approach landowners to negotiate both new routes and enhancements to existing paths, so establishing what is feasible to progress. Cllr Jon Perks had offered to undertake this initial work with costs likely limited to the cost of Land Registry searches.

The desirability of having shovel-ready projects in assisting WSCC *et al* spend considerable \$106 monies generated by the parish for transport-related projects was highlighted.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Mary Wild **RESOLVED** that Cllr Jon Perks' offer be accepted.

49/20 COVID-19 Support Group.

Cllr Paul Berry reported that

I wanted to add this item to the agenda in case the group wanted to ask the Council for any additional support. This is not the case currently but I will take the opportunity to update Councillors with the group's activities. As a result of the group being set up, over 100 volunteers came forward. As of Monday, the volunteers have delivered over 400 prescriptions, undertaken over 170 shopping trips, made over 130 'listening ear' calls, made and distributed over 220 facemasks and delivered 15 food parcels.

The group continues to offer these services, although demand is understandably reducing and the group regularly evaluates its activities as COVID19 restrictions gradually ease.

It is worth remembering that the group was set up very quickly indeed in Billingshurst, even before HDC had set up one of its support hubs to cover the area. The group was set up by members of Billingshurst Family Church, St Marys Church, The Billingshurst branch of West Sussex Minibus, Billingshurst Community Partnership, Billingshurst Community Transport and was assisted by the Parish Council in the shape of our Clerk and his team helping to publicise the group and the services they provide. A number of councillors have been involved in the groups committee and by undertaking deliveries etc. I am sure that I speak on behalf of us all when I offer our sincere thanks to everyone involved in the group for everything they have done for our community in the past few months.

Whilst on this subject, I also reiterate the thanks I gave in the Village Tweet and in the Annual Report to everyone in the parish, to the retailers, pubs and take-aways in and around Billingshurst, to those in healthcare including our local pharmacies, surgery, carers and NHS staff. Our postal workers, refuse collectors and delivery drivers and our local teachers and playgroup staff. To everyone in fact who has continued to offer excellent services to our community during very difficult times.

50/20 Co-options - to consider applications (4) to fill one vacancy.

The Council had widely publicised the casual vacancy. Written submissions from 4 candidates (Jake Edsor, Craig Gale, Brian Spicer and Douglas Waller) had been circulated to all Councillors. All candidates had been invited to attend this virtual meeting. The three in attendance all then briefly spoke in support of their applications. At a vote, **RESOLVED** that Craig Gale be co-opted to the Council accordingly.

The Chairman thanked Sue Kingston for her time on the Council, whose resignation caused the vacancy. He also encouraged those who had been unsuccessful to reapply in the future and thanked them for their interest.

51/20 Any other matters for information only.

The Chairman said that now the Council had held its first virtual meeting, the Council would keep under review restarting Committees virtually also.

52/20 Date of Next Meeting – Wed 15 July 2020 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 8.48pm.

Chairman

Date

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed		Yes* means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.		✓	<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes ✓	No	N/A <i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

17/06/2020

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE 46/20

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman 

Clerk 

Other information required by the Transparency Codes (not part of Annual Governance Statement)
 Authority web address
 AUTHORITY WEBSITE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	435,392	409,175	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	335,932	352,463	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	RESTATED 125,768	545,826	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	RESTATED 197,735	184,440	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	20,257	20,257	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	269,926	691,514	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	409,175	411,253	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	387,437	269,275	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	1,461,721	1,778,620	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	137,507	458,553	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets. N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.
	✓		

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

Gregory Burt

Date

12/06/2020

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

17/06/2020

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE
47/20

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED