

Whixall Parish Council

Chairman: Ian Mercer

Minutes of the Parish Council's Monthly Meeting held on 11 March 2020 at
Whixall Social Centre starting at 7:30pm

Present:

Councillors: I Mercer (Chair); J Spenser; G Turnbull; A Hague; M Howard; B Harris; J Broadhead

County Councillors: C Mellings

Clerk: A Roberts

Members of the community: 0

Representatives of other bodies/ organisations: PCSO G Baines (West Mercia Police)
Phoebe Ashton (North Salop Wheelers)

24/20 Apologies for Absence

Cllr A Rawlinson

Cllr P Dee (Shropshire Council)

25/20 West Mercia Police Report

PCSO Baines thanked all who attended the event held on the previous Sunday. He described it as 'exceptionally beneficial' for all. The next event is planned in early Summer – date to be announced.

He gave a verbal report to members stating that there had been very little crime in the area since the last meeting. He provided a warning about scams that are currently being undertaken. These include World Cup Lottery sales and HMRC phone call scams. He gave a brief outline of the National Trading Standards Agency (NTS) initiative to provide call blockers to block nuisance calls. These are currently free of charge

26/20 North Salop Wheelers Update

Phoebe Ashton explained that the NSW are very short of volunteers. A telephone meeting was due to take place with Owen Patterson in order to discuss the situation.

Cllr Turnbull suggested that NSW should use Social Media, especially Facebook, to raise their profile and get more volunteers.

Phoebe is going to send an advert to the Clerk. This will be put on the Parish Council Noticeboards and Website.

27/20 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded of their obligation to declare any interests/ gifts/ hospitality. The following declarations of non-pecuniary interest were declared:

JS – Item 10c (requests for funding). Reason: Trustee of the URC Graveyard Trust

BH – Item 10c (requests for funding). Reason: Member of the Fields MA Trust

GT – Item 8. Reason: Member of Whixall Social Centre Committee

GT – Item 10c (requests for funding). Reason: Member of WSSC Committee and the PC representative on the URC Graveyard Trust.

Resolved: Those councillors with a non-pecuniary interest are not required to leave the meeting and may take part in discussions. They may not vote in relation to the matters for which they have declared an interest.

28/20 Minutes of Previous Meetings

Meeting of Whixall Parish Council held on 12 February 2020:

It was proposed by Cllr Broadhead that the draft minutes, of the meeting detailed above, were an accurate record. This was seconded by Cllr Spenser and agreed by all present.

29/20 Planning

- a. No planning applications had been received.
- b. Planning application decisions noted

| Reference | Detail | Decision |
|--------------|--|------------------|
| 19/04932/FUL | Conversion of outbuilding to form self-contained residential unit as ancillary accommodation to the main house. 2 Abbey Green, SY13 2PT | Grant permission |

30/20 Social Centre Boundary Issues

Cllr Turnbull explained that correspondence had been passed from the Social Centre Committee to the Clerk in relation to responsibilities for maintenance of the social centre and old burial ground sites. He made the following points:

- The Social Centre Committee (SCC) believes its responsibility to be the buildings and the metal-fenced boundary around the car park itself.
- There is no formal agreement regarding maintenance responsibility
- The Parish Council (PC) cuts the grass
- There is no maintenance plan for the trees or the old burial ground
- Money generated by SCC goes into the fabric of the Social Centre
- SCC need to plan their spending and understanding/agreeing where the boundary is, will assist with this.

Cllr Mercer explained the background re the bowling club lease and the process that was undertaken to identify parish council assets generally. He also raised the following points:

- The Old Burial Ground land is not registered or identified yet.
- SCC has a rough conveyancing plan for the Social Centre but the boundary line is unclear
- The Clerk can be asked to find information and seek title through the Land Registry
- There is much work to be done and a Joint Working Group is a possible approach for surety on both sides

Cllr Hague pointed out the need to budget for liabilities once they have been identified.

Cllr Turnbull raised the possibility that the Diocese still owns the land. The clerk will follow this up with a search through the Parish Council's records and, if necessary will raise the question with the Diocese.

Cllr Broadhead questioned the outcome that the Parish Council hoped to achieve – do we want to own the land, in which case he suggested we should tell the Diocese this but if we do not want to own it we should make that clear too.

Cllr Harris explained that nothing can be done to the land itself until 100 years has passed since the last burial (which was in 1932).

Resolved: The Parish Council should write to the Diocese with the aim of taking, or confirming ownership of the Old Burial Ground. Following this a task and finish group should be initiated. The Clerk will provide support to the group. The group will agree proposals which will be presented to both the Parish Council and the Social Centre Committee.

Proposed: Cllr Mercer. Seconded: Cllr Hague. (Cllr Turnbull did not participate in the vote).

Cllr Mercer suggested that the Clerk should agree the content of the letter to the Diocese with Cllr Broadhead. This will then be agreed by The Chair and Vice Chair before it is sent.

Cllr Turnbull raised concerns about the time this process might take, when there may be some tree maintenance required before an agreement is reached. As this related to health and safety

concerns the Social Centre Committee will arrange for the trees to be inspected so that interim costs can be discussed.

31/20 Clerk's Report

Correspondence

1. The clerk reported that she had received the following information from NALC:
 - a. Some national and regional events have now been cancelled as a preventative measure against Coronavirus. NALC has advised that this may impact on Annual Parish Meetings, although at present there is no allowance for this in legislation. NALC will advise should this become necessary.
 - b. Tree Charter Day will be held on 28 November. This is an opportunity to receive free trees from the Woodland Trust. The Clerk suggested that she should liaise with Cllr Turnbull and apply as soon as possible.
2. Two requests for funding have been received and circulated to members along with a request previously received from the school. These will be discussed in item 10c.
3. Since the last meeting the clerk has written to the following:
 - Natural England to thank them for their work at the Marlot. This has been acknowledged.
 - St Mary's Church PCC to explain why the Parish Council cannot make a donation for the upkeep of the graveyard

Actions Since the Last Meeting

All actions since the last meeting relate to items on the agenda (item 8, 10 and 11)

32/20 Financial Matters

- a) To receive monthly bank balance record.
The Clerk advised the council of the council's bank balances.

| DATE | ACCOUNT NAME | AMOUNT |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 29 January 2020 | Community Account | £5,016.29 |
| | Business Saver Account | £.927.78 |
| TOTAL | | £5,989.07 |

- b) To resolve to approve outstanding accounts.
Orders for the payment of outstanding invoices (under "Power to Spend" LGA1972 s.112(2) and 124(1)). As per the financial report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)/ Clerk proposed by Cllr Hague, seconded by Cllr Spenser and agreed by all present.

Resolved: The outstanding accounts should be paid and the cheques signed by two authorised councillors

- c) To Consider Requests for Funding

Written requests had been received from Whixall URC Graveyard Trust, Whixall Primary School and North Salop Wheelers.

Resolved: The following donations should be made: Whixall URC Graveyard Trust (£50), Whixall Primary School (£100) and North Salop Wheelers (£100).

Proposed AH. Seconded IM. (Those councillors who had declared an interest did not vote).

- d) Online Banking

The Clerk has started the process of moving to online banking but, because this involves closing the existing accounts, the process will not be completed until after the 2020/21

precept has been paid into the existing account. It is anticipated that the precept will be paid at the end of April.

33/20 Parish Matters

a. The Marlot – Asset Management Update

Cllr Turnbull provided a verbal update:

Very little has been achieved since the last meeting because of the weather. However the first newt survey has been completed. Issues identified recently include piles of logs which have been scattered, probably by trailbikes and the outstanding need for safety signs at the ponds.

An indigenous seed mix has been identified for sowing in the front meadow.

Resolved: An additional £80-100 of funding will be provided for the purchase of seed (£80) and signs (£20)

b. The Marlot – Proposed Local Nature Reserve Status

IM suggested that this should be the topic for the Annual Parish Meeting.

Following discussions at the February meeting, the clerk had provided Cllr Turnbull with an explanation of the differences between Parish Council Committees and Parish Council Task and Finish Groups. Cllr Turnbull stated that he believed this proposal should be dealt with by a committee as it involves dealings with a government agency. Natural England have indicated willingness to sit on a committee. The process would include an updated management plan for a minimum of twenty years.

Suggested membership for a committee would be Cllr Turnbull, Martin Spenser, Bob Harris, a Natural England representative and the Clerk.

IM argued that the appropriate body would be a task and finish group which would bring proposals back to the Full Council who he believed were the body who should be making these decisions.

Cllr Turnbull's reasons for preferring a committee to a task and finish group are that committee meetings would be minuted for granularity in case of negative responses by parishioners as this would provide visibility. He believed that a committee was the best body to ensure that everything is followed through and to lead on the development of local by-laws.

Cllr Mercer stated that a task and finish group would also do this and would bring the proposals back to the main meeting.

Cllr Harris raised the question of whether Natural England, who will make the LNR decision, would be comfortable sitting on a formal committee.

Cllr Turnbull raised concerns that there would be a delay if decisions had to come back to the main meeting. Cllr Hague suggested this could be overcome by including a standing agenda item which required a decision.

It was stated that a T&F group would require terms of reference and would be required to formally note its proposals for minuting at the following Parish Council meeting. It was noted that the PC has the facility to call a meeting in August and December should decisions be required.

Resolved: A task and finish group will be established to oversee the process of gaining and implementing LNR status for the Marlot. The proposed terms of reference and membership are to be agreed by the Parish Council.

Proposed JB. Seconded JS. (Cllr Turnbull did not vote).

The terms of reference and membership will be approved at the next meeting of the council.

c. The Parish Plan

Cllr Harris gave a verbal report to members, stating that the Plan had been produced in 2013 and needed to be reviewed. He suggested that the Clerk should send an editable version to all councillors for checking and commenting.

Cllr Broadhead stated that in future the Plan should be reviewed more frequently, say every three years.

d. Annual Parish Meeting

The format for the meeting was agreed as was the fact that it would provide a launch pad for the LNR process with the key message being that the site needs to be managed.

34/20 Councillor Reports

a. Parish Councillors

- Cllr Mercer was due to attend a meeting of the Helicopter Noise Liaison Group

b. Shropshire Councillors

Cllr Mellings circulated his report by email prior to the meeting.

Scheduled date of next meeting: **8 April 2020**

The meeting closed at 9.50pm