

ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 14th DECEMBER 2020

HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present

Mr J Woodford (Chairman), Mrs K Saunders, Mr G Stewart, Mr P Wyatt and the Clerk, Mr S Marshall.

Cllrs Mellor and Rhatigan were also present.

The meeting started at the earlier time of 7.00pm which will be the new start time of all Parish Council meetings conducted virtually.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Kinnear, Cochrane and Grist.

2. Declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting for approval

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020 were approved.

4. Matters arising

The Clerk reported that Baikie Landscape Construction Ltd had undertaken a site survey of the car park at Ashford Hill recreation ground with a view to provide a quotation and specification upon which other quotations can be obtained by the Clerk. The Chairman confirmed that quotations had been obtained from different manufacturers for the sole supply of materials to undertake the work in a particular method of road surface construction.

Cllr Grist had previously confirmed that a collapsable bollard would be recommended for the car park entrance in order to allow pedestrian access at all times and the cost of this would be in the region of £80-100. Cllr Grist would try to source an installer for such an item.*

Cllr Rhatigan was unavailable at this stage of the meeting to comment upon the action point relating to the consideration by the Oakfield developer to install a footpath to serve the new car park.*

5. Highways

Cllr Stewart reported on the problem of dead leaves accumulating and compacting on the roads and as such road sweeping was required to resolve the problem.

Whilst what appeared to be road cracking on the A339 and had been reported to the Highways department, Cllr Mellor explained that this was normally caused by the addition of white lining material on top of the road surface and was therefore not a road repair that would be considered a priority.

Cllr Mellor further commented that an indication that the car park at the Ashford Hill school had been completed would be needed in order to have the school warning lights relocated in that location.

6. Planning Applications

An objection had been lodged regarding the planning application for Laurazan on the Ashford Hill Road as it was considered to be an overdevelopment of the site as a significant scale of work was already underway.

7. Neighbourhood Plan

There were no matters to report.

8. Precept 2021/2022

The Clerk had sent Councillors a projected outturn for 2020/2021 and a proposed budget for 2021/2022, in order to determine the level of the precept for 2021/2022. The outturn was projected to be a surplus in excess of £5000 as opposed to a budgeted deficit of £1600. In light of strict financial management resulting in the projected outturn, the Clerk recommended a 0% in the level of precept. The proposal was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Stewart.

9. Grounds maintenance contract – 2021-2024

The Clerk had received tenders from three companies following receipt of the Council's specification for the maintenance of its recreation grounds. As a base cost comparison, Simon Hiscock charged an annual invoice value of £7600. The lowest tender received was for £4355 which was in the opinion of the Clerk suspiciously low to be tenable. The remaining two tenders were only separated by £550 per annum. The Clerk had researched his favoured tender from Scofell who had scrutinised the Council's specification and had ensured that several additional items were included in their tender.

The company is based at Wash Common and has a dedicated Schools and Parish Councils Contracts Manager to ensure standards are maintained and client requests carried out. The company has clients who have similar requirements as far as the maintenance of playing fields and are equipped with modern and versatile equipment together with specialist staff to offer advise and carry out specialist work such as tree surgery.

Following the Clerk's recommendation to offer Scofell the grounds maintenance contract, the Chairman proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Stewart. The Clerk concluded that he would now attempt to secure a three year contract with Scofell at a fixed annual cost of £6050.

10. Reports

County Councillor

Cllr Mellor's verbatim report;

“Covid-19

Reluctantly put out a few stats as by the time the minutes have been published, they will be way out of date. Suffice to say, we expect Hampshire to remain in Tier 2 effective Dec 16th update and we may be alone at that. Virus is spreading but hopefully countered by the vaccination programme now underway; first location in the county is Portsmouth Teaching Hospital but more locations being added quickly. Important that all are aware that NHS will call patients when their turn is due.

HCC Public Health has expanded the test and trace system and reports an 85% success rate;' regrettably' we saw the success of T n T in cases involving local schools where the virus source was remote. HCC is also coordinating the Public Health in the Isle of Wight where cases in this Tier 1 area are minimal.

School/Children Services

Yes a couple of hiccoughs with COVID leading to isolation of some children. In November, school attendance in Hampshire was some 6% above national average. Additional Home to School Transport due to non usage of public transport and social distancing on the buses has seen the costs escalate; indeed scheduling has become difficult in some areas with schools adjusting times of closure etc- a local example being different closing times between Hampshire and West Berks. Financial support to hard pressed families continues with grants being made available for e.g Free School Meals in the holiday period, foodbank support etc.

Adult Social Care

HCC was selected to pilot the introduction of visits to care homes; too early to record the success or otherwise- suffice to say the move has been popular with residents and visitors. We have to be innovative to meet the demand and we have little choice where cost is involved. Robotics now introduced at some care homes to assist the staff in moving patients. Even introducing the carriage of medication from the mainland to selected destinations in the I o W by drone to overcome distribution hold ups. Recruitment of more graduate social workers continues at pace. The Connect4Communities programme driven by HCC continues to handle a vast amount of callers.

Finance

Like all 'first Tier ' Councils with high expenditure commitments- many statutory, we are struggling to make ends meet as we have not yet been reimbursed by HMG for all the Covid expense which is currently - accumulated since March - £180M. HCC is recognised as very financially prudent and advises several other councils; we do not really want to delve into our £600M+ reserves nor add to the Council Tax bill and hopefully the Govt is about to honour the commitment which in turn will mean HCC can continue with progressive plans for the next 3 years.

Highways

Monthly report dispatched to the Clerk re pothole/gullies etc ; the major capital programmes continue such as Brighton Hill. The "West Basingstoke" proposals involving the A339 etc should there be even more housing ('South Manydown'/) hospital at M3/J7 etc) will be progressed in the Spring. Ultimately there has in the strategy to be a direct connection between the A30 and the A339 (at which point is not finalised) to reduce possible congestion/ traffic on the latter. The North Hants/Thames Valley project to link the North -South roads is underway through the Transport for SE programme; it is long term to say the least and very focussed on the Reading - Basingstoke link or 'bottleneck'. The HCC maps reflect few incidents of potholes etc being reported in the area - some will of course return after all the wet weather and after a record period in terms of completion of defects on the local roads, a few issues of white lining requests (centre of the A339 where HGV's have to straddle the markings anyway) appear. The problems of the surface water on the B3051 just past the junction with the C111 caused by a poor drainage system from the new development have now been sorted between Southern Water and HCC. Heavy rainfalls will always highlight drains with insufficient storm capability. It was good to note from the affected residents that they were all aware that the drains had been cleared; like my own village, the drains work on the B3051 had been undertaken at night. To the future, flooding is going to be one of the issues on Climate Change in respect of the County as the waters rise....thankfully not before 2080 and there are several projects ongoing to ensure this will not be the problem. Bucksin, Test Valley at Romsey, Winchester all examples where we have a current expensive programmes to eliminate the threat. No flooding evident in AH.

Local Issues

a/ Request from a resident and local P Cllr in respect of alleged speeding, southbound on the C111 just past the Thornford Road crossroads - all agreed that the only solution considering road width, directional issue, C road limitations is more occasional enforcement.

b/ Request to assist with deterring cyclists from using the Footpaths/Right of Ways in the Parish. Common problem- HCC introduced new signage to this end and will be made available for the entrances to the footpaths. As to whether HCC can install or , as in other Parishes, use the Lengthsman facility is to be determined. I did raise the issue of a Rural Fund access to contribute to new 'kissing' gates etc as a deterrent.

c/ Thornford Road, Headley; while there is little sign of the flooding off the A339 caused by the negligence to the pond in January 2020 at the then vacant Headley stud, HCC has gone out of its way and spent many man hours with equipment to investigate the resultant drainage issue in the houses along Thornford Road. Hopefully when given access to the houses by the owners, the job can be finished giving peace of mind to all that the cause of the problem has now been eradicated. Having said that there is an incidence of excess water on the junction AH Road and the A339 caused by a new drop kerb; problem now with the contractor.

Crime

Obviously the crime figures relating to rural crime have increased throughout the rural parts of the county and the re-inforced Police manpower presence is now officially tasked with getting to grips with equipment theft etc in the rural areas.

Lengthsman Scheme

HCC is considering expansion of the plan now that Lengthsman will be allowed to work on the highways.”

Borough Councillors

Cllr Rhatigan commented on the brownfield development site at the Saw Mill where improvements to the sight lines for exiting the site were being undertaken which may require the removal of a particular Tree Protection Order.

The continuing development of the Neighbourhood Plan was important insofar as benefiting from the maximum distribution of the CIL funding available through the Borough Council. Cllr Rhatigan was pleased to learn of the Parish Council’s decision to freeze the level of Precept for the forthcoming financial year, as a result of sound financial management.

Whilst the Oakfield development car park, which serves the school, had benefited from some landscaping, there were still a number of bare patches that would need attention.

The Oakfield development retention pond was working well and coping with recent rainfall now that remedial work on drainage had been completed.

The Borough Council was manging local business grants from central government funding and Cllr Rhatigan encouraged small local businesses to apply for funding due to the effect that COVID-19 was having on their businesses. Further information regarding such funding can be found at; <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/local-restrictions-support-grant>

Cllr Rhatigan reported that police authority patrols were circulating throughout Ashford Hill, Headley and Kingsclere on a regular daily basis.

Cllr Rhatigan confirmed his understanding that the borough would remain in tier 2 of the COVID-19 restrictions and was impressed to see how social distancing was being maintained inside the local community shop.

Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that S106 funding to the value of £7000 had been awarded to the Jiminy Cricket playgroup in order to resolve the waste water problems at their location.

Chairman

The Chairman's verbatim report;

“Highways

An unfortunate vehicle accident opposite Sascron happened Saturday 12th December. A car went through the hedge opposite Sascron and Carey Lodge and travelled several 10's of meters into the field. Clearly the car was carrying some momentum to have reached that distance and facing 180 degree to the direction it entered when it left the road within the 40 MPH zone. We believe the driver was OK as they were spotted by the roadside by a Cllr who passed minutes after it had occurred.

In an isolated incident a Sascron delivery driver pasted me on the B3051 next to a SID at 39 MPH, but did slow eventually. I have contacted the Customer Care Manager and reported the vehicle. I have yet to hear from Sascron on this matter.

I have once again reported the missing white lines on the B3051.

Recently I had a call with HCC Highways about the 'White Gate' project which is progressing.

Bikes still using the footpaths in Ashford Hill woodland

I'm sharing with you some pictures of tracks left on footpaths by some bikes using the woods as off road tracks. Can I ask the PC to allow me to purchase 10 signs to place on the footpath marker posts to point out "No Bikes" on the footpaths. Each sign is 300x200mm ridge plastic and costs £6.79 each. *During the meeting Cllr Mellor kindly offered to help with this issue through the use of HCC Highway Rangers installing some signs. Locations where needed will be shared.*

Open Councillor position in Headley

We presently have an open position for a Councillor in Headley. All applicants are welcome but must be 18 or over and live in the Parish, please apply to the Clerk.

January 2021 meeting

For the foreseeable future we will be holding virtual meetings. New web links will be issued per meeting per month. As we will not need to travel we have suggested the start time is 7pm."

Parish Councillors

Cllr Saunders confirmed that the contact details of a resident had been passed to the Clerk* who was interested in the co-opted position of Councillor for the ward of Headley. Cllr Saunders further raised the issue of school children having to self-isolate due to their bus travelling arrangements as well as local interest in the Hampshire Broadband scheme which ran a voucher scheme to improve local connectivity within areas not benefiting from the convenience of more conventional means of connectivity.

Cllr Wyatt confirmed that it was the responsibility of landowners to address water egress problems that emanated from their property onto neighbouring properties. The A339 was suffering from the accumulation of compacted leaves despite the drains being recently cleared and the Chairman confirmed that individual problems should be reported to HCC via their online reporting system.

Cllr Stewart suggested the installation of white village 'gates' somewhere from Common Road to Thornford Road together with red warning road surfaces to ease the traffic speeding problem in this area. Cllr Mellor confirmed that the proposition had been considered in the past but the verge width was too narrow for a gate installation.

Cllr Stewart further reported on his attendance at the Borough Council meeting where the proposal to charge Parish Councils for playground inspections was discussed. The proposed charge of £500 per visit had been opposed by many attendees and it had been confirmed that a 'competent' person could in fact carry out a weekly inspection. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council's insurance company required sight of an annual condition audit of the playgrounds. The Chairman commented on how unjust he felt such a charge would be if it were imposed on Parish Councils.

It was agreed that Cllr Stewart could proceed with the assistance of local volunteers to clear insignificant saplings on Headley recreation ground.

11. Recess

There were no members of the public present.

12. Financial Statement

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £32,170.70

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stood at £10,842.57

13. Accounts for approval & payment

C Butler – Litter Warden’s salary – January - March 2021 - £589.43

J Kirkby – Litter Warden’s salary – January – March 2021 - £476.37

S Marshall – Clerk’s salary Jan-Mar 2021 & expenses - £3134.25

J Woodford – SLR battery - £58.99

Headley with Ashford Hill Community Shop – Room hire - £18.00

G Stewart – Remembrance wreaths x 2 & miscellaneous plants - £51.97

PKF Littlejohn LLP – Audit Commission fee - £240.00

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.18pm.