

**ASHFORD HILL with HEADLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

**HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**Present**

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

Cllrs Mellor, Rhatigan and Kinnear were also present and a number of the general public.

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**

No apologies had been received.

**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 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were approved.

**4. Matters arising**

Cllr Cochrane had reported the water on the highway problem to Southern Water and the matter had been resolved.

Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that the company that had provided Cllr Stewart with a quotation for a building on Headley recreation ground had no connection with any Councillor from the Borough Council and therefore there was no potential conflict of interest to consider.

**5. Highways**

There was a discussion regarding the true condition of the A339 as far as the size and number of potholes. Cllr Mellor was content, following a recent inspection, that the road had no major potholes which would merit work sooner than the 8 week timescale. The work of the Highways department was rightly focused on road gritting work and dealing with flood related works. Cllr Mellor further confirmed that in order for the white lining repair on the A339, there would be a need for the road to be closed and was not currently regarded as a priority.

The Chairman had reported a pothole close to the Wheathold junction on the B3051, caused by the water main leak, raised last month. The Chairman further reported water coming up out of the manhole covers from the storm water pond off Oakfield Lane again on the 29<sup>th</sup> January.

The 'No Horses' and 'Footpath Walkers Only' signs had been installed on the 31<sup>st</sup> January.

The Chairman posed a question to County Councillor Mellor; "What is the process through HCC Highways whereby we can get a track used for 40+ yrs unchallenged by the land owner to be converted to a footpath ? " \*

## **6. Planning Applications**

The planning application relating to the removal of trees and stumps on land adjacent to the A339 where the sight line from the Saw Mill housing development was being undertaken, had received an extended period of consultation from the Case Officer following a request from Cllr Saunders via the Clerk. The application was objected to partially as it was felt unnecessary to remove all the trees requested to be removed. A detailed letter from Cllr Saunders had been sent to the Case Officer.

## **7. Neighbourhood Plan**

Following a briefing note from the Chair of the Steering Group regarding the legality of undertaking the consultation stage with residents as it relates to the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has advised the Steering Group to take the legal advice from the Borough Council and suspend the consultation exercise until after the May 2021 local elections.

## **8. Ashford Hill Car Park Project**

The Clerk had received two competitive quotations from contractors for the resurfacing of the car park in Ashford Hill. The cheapest quotation was from Reading Asphalt for £13,767 + VAT and an additional £240 + VAT for the supply of a rising bollard and installation into a concrete pad. The proposal to undertake the work was proposed by Cllr Cochrane and seconded by Cllr Wyatt. The Clerk confirmed that work would hopefully commence in March 2021 when there were improved weather conditions.

## **9. Reports**

### **County Councillor**

Cllr Mellor's verbatim report;

#### **“ COVID**

There is real optimism as the vaccination count flies past 16M that the downward trend in the R rate to 0.7 to 0.9, the substantial drop in volume of cases and indeed the hospitalisation figure are now looking to be more positive.

Morbidly, the total number of cases of deaths involving those who had tested positive within 28 days of their death, in Hampshire rose to 2039. One real issue being the wide reporting of the death of 22 in one private care home in Basingstoke which was the result of one of the early Kent transmissions. Latterly the news of one, albeit no symptoms, person in Bramley suffering the South Africa variant brings the matter close to home in a week where all over 70's have been offered the vaccination. HCC Public Health is supervising next week the testing in some 2000 local households. Last week's full briefing for Councillors on the developments was interesting. The focus is very much on vaccinations, getting the kids back to school, introducing more job creating schemes/apprenticeships etc. On the subject of vaccinations, last month I was pushing for some form of GP hub- difficult with only two surgeries under the same management!- in my patch to accelerate the programme but this was not to be and hence we had the problem of some having to travel to the likes of Oxford, Marlow and even Slough or Southampton from Tadley. (Obviously many in the likes of Headley, Bishops Green would avail themselves of the Newbury facility.) There were a few complaints re the cost, indirect transportation etc but with additional outlets in Basingstoke this is now averted. However, for those in real need I have created a local facility (funded) with Basingstoke Neighbourcare to transport to the facilities in the B & D area. Just call Neighbourcare and transport can be arranged at two days notice; only limitation being the number of drivers available at any one time. There is also an HCC Community First arrangement now in place for transportation but with the under 65's now the target for vaccination, demand is not expected to be high. Nevertheless we cannot have lack of transport as an excuse for a vulnerable person not taking up their appointment. Test and trace is working well with 90% success rate in Hampshire; lets round off by saying the peak is well over and we look to be on the up.

#### **Budget**

Cabinet sat today to approve the budget that will be put before the full council next week. Budget is c.£2.1BN. I worked through the 300+ pages of notes and justifications at the weekend ; the outcome better than expected as HMG has been replenishing some of our £100M + COVID HCC expenditure in drips and drabs. The promised additional funding for roads has not been fully forthcoming to HCC as much of it has gone to the more centralised Highways England pot. This is being contended as although we have performed well in terms of potholes etc in Hampshire in the past year, we do need more than we have.

Adult Social Care and Childrens Services - about 75% of the budget – dominate but my real interest was on Highways, Climate Change and the overall effect on Council Tax. In respect of the latter, it will be set at 4.99%...3% of that is due to Social Care and the balance is driven by higher costs. We continue to innovate with COBOT manpower methods in the care homes as well as expand usage of Alexa to help with less additional manpower; indeed more HCC care homes are planned and we continue to recruit more Social /care workers. Have to say that Hampshire will still be the second lowest shire Council tax in the country and despite the high rises they are still below inflation over the past decade where for several years we had a Council Tax freeze.

Not too sure where the request at the end from the Police for an increase in the Police precept by £15 per annum per household stands as HMG have funded the additional Officers currently being recruited but they do attach a pledge to further improve Policing. No mention of traffic offences in their objectives and this has been pursued. Am aware and grateful that Parish Councils continue to set the same precept as for the previous year.

On Highways we will be operating at a very slightly reduced budget level as last year; fortunately on Maintenance and as covered in the reports sent to the Parish Clerk each month, the capital investment in Dragon Patchers is paying off in terms of productivity and this will offset marginal drop in the Maintenance budget hopefully. (HCC budget no longer receives the Reserve Support Grant which reduces our income effectively by some £80M). Thus last month with record rainfalls the focus has been on drains as well as manning the gritters and last weekend the ploughs - with local trade support - has taken prominence. Again the drains work in your patch has paid off as indeed has the local effort at clearing gullies.

The Operation Resilience programme is covering several hundred small and large resurfacing projects- in my division the resurfacing of lengthy Wolverton Road, Almswood Road in Tadley, Shaw Lane in Baughurst , the A340 next month at Tadley Hill are just examples. Of course, the bad weather and record rainfall dictating ongoing high water table/flood warnings from the Environment Agency will add to any pothole issues. The budget does incorporate a further £18M for Cycling and walking routes; more electrification- now targeting more charge points than petrol stations- and an increase in our Operation Resilience programme. The schools programme also includes more new school facilities , renovation including solarisation of all schools over the next few years as part of the Net Zero Carbon target attainment. All our subsidies seem to be in place and on Capital programmes the likes of additional care homes, new roads etc in conjunction with the likes of the LEP's should aid economic recovery.

Children Services. More grants were made to assist those in need and these are run in consultation with the schools and e.g the Troubled Families programme; additional monies approved this week for half term facilities. One frightening statistic is that primarily because of 'key worker' status, some of the local schools, despite lockdown, still have attendance of 25 to 30% and this adds to the problem of home schooling/online lessons and teaching those face to face . The schools are coping well although all seem to be happy with a return on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

In respect of grants, HCC has still been funding the likes of Age Concern - additional £20k this month, an additional £100k for the Citizens Advice in Hampshire to assist on specific projects usually linked with some benefits advice – another £22000 to homeless projects in Basingstoke and Deane are just examples and I can't speak too highly of the excellently run local Tadley CA.

Additionally, the Community First, MHA Communities and other organisations have all had additional grants for actions in the community, again with a focus on the young be they towards the expanding apprenticeship schemes or just some activity in the half term break. The HCC 'Connect4Communities' programme is still the focus for people seeking help.

### **Highways issues**

With Environment Agency/Met Office warnings re potential flooding in the County now regular happenings, the good state of the gullies in our area, the volume of drains - some of course with insufficient capacity to meet the flow immediately - and the lack of rivers have actually led to few problems if one discounts the effect of new housing developments. Verge damage on rural roads is primarily due to the increase in online sales delivery / utility vehicles with restricted access to the residences and it is hard to see where we go on this. It is under debate in HCC. Locally the issues of the ponds off the A339 – primarily Headley - continues with no formal drainage, raised land and some either interim or DIY attempts many years ago to handle the water.

One task underway is the possibility of extending the current Lengthsman arrangement where a small grant is given to a local Parish Council (actually 185 of the PC's in Hampshire out of 299 participate) so that small one-off roadside tasks can be undertaken. At present, some roadside work is precluded for legal reasons and there are instances where a Lengthsman could handle instantaneously vis a vis the need to schedule an operative from HCC. If e.g one rural drain is blocked then it is difficult for our Highways Ops to schedule an immediate visit 'miles' away from the base or next job and the Lengthsman can be trained and financially rewarded to fix . More on that later.

The recent storms took out a few trees ; nothing serious and local landowners reacted well to minimise any disruption on the road. The studies on the Thames Valley/Hampshire North South connectivity seem to be in abeyance owing to some substantial planning applications in the west of the borough - not least the Manydown project, a few thousand more houses south of the M3, a hospital to be probably re-sited and some good industrial development. There will be some connection between the A30 SW of the town circa Junction 7 and the A339 - no specific points yet. The debate continues as does the issue of an HWRC in the area as two sites are being investigated in the Kingsclere area."

### **Borough Councillors**

Cllr Kinnear confirmed the opening of the Fire & Rescue station as a vaccination centre and that work to ensure all shops were COVID-19 secure had been completed.

A tribute by the Borough Council had been conducted in memory of the NHS fundraiser Captain Sir Tom Moore.

Cllr Kinnear confirmed that the local elections would be taking place on Thursday 6 May 2021.

Cllr Rhatigan reported that the review of the refuse bin collection had been successful and it was hoped that the improvements observed will be maintained by the crews.

Whilst the appeal made to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the rejected planning application for housing on the second field site in Ashford Hill was disappointing, there had been useful discussion with the co-owner of the land with the consideration of the prospect of the planning application being withdrawn if another use of the land could be found to realise a commercial gain. Work to encourage local residents to further object to the planning proposal was under discussion with the Editor of the Parish Magazine later in the week. Cllr Rhatigan as Leader of the Borough Council remained strongly opposed to the planning proposal and would be utilising all the resources available to him to oppose the planning application and remained confident that there were strong grounds for the planning proposal to be resisted.

Whilst the additional police service activity was to be welcomed in the area, Cllr Rhatigan repeated his plea to local residents to secure their property adequately in order to prevent crime being committed.

Cllr Rhatigan suggested that an additional litter bin and dog fouling bin be located on the new path from the Oakfield development which leads to the main road.\*

There would be a Borough Council budget meeting later in the week and it was hoped that the CIL payment from Catts Place could be used to fund the proposed 'social venue' facility for the Headley recreation ground.

### **Chairman**

The Chairman's verbatim report;

"Two residents have indicated they are interested in joining the Parish Council for Headley, I suggest we have separate Zoom call with Headley Cllrs to review the applications with a view to Co-opt someone on at the next meeting. We are still in urgent need of a Cllr in Ashford Hill. To those interested to apply, please contact Steven Marshall our Parish Clerk - [ashfordhillheadley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ashfordhillheadley@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Walkers Only No Horses signage vandalised days after installation from accessing Redlands Copse**

Just days after the new signs had been installed a sign as you enter Redlands Copse from Little Aldershot Lane was snapped in half. This route into the woods is a footpath and riders have been witnessed using this route to access the woodland area. It is unlawful to ride a horse on a footpath, and I can only assume the act of vandalism of County owned property has been carried out by horse rider or mountain biker.

## **Headley football pitches**

I have spoken to the Cold Ash Junior Football Club to say we would be happy to host their training and matches on a Sunday. I plan to meet them soon to discuss their needs.

## **Village tidy ups in 2021**

As you know we ask Cllrs and the residents to join us on our annual village tidy ups. These take place in Headley from Common Road up to the Ashford Hill Church and in Ashford Hill from the Ship to the Pineapple (La Capanna). Date for this very worthwhile activity is Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March, for a 9:30am start, to help avoid the traffic. If you are keen to make our villages look nice please join us on this very rewarding activity!! Subject to local Covid restriction guidelines.”

## **Parish Councillors**

Cllr Stewart reported on the ‘social venue’ facility for the Headley recreation ground and following comments from the Chairman regarding the proposed layout of the building, an amended planning application would be sent to the Planning department. Expenditure to cover the cost of the application was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Wyatt.

Work had been approved outside of the meeting by the Chairman and the RFO to allow Cllr Stewart to authorise tree surgery work on Headley recreation ground to the value of £600 + VAT.

Cllr Stewart reported that the concern from local residents that access via an unofficial footpath through land owned by Headley Stud was no longer available due to an area being fenced off had been discussed with a view to a potential compromise being reached.

## **10. Recess**

There was a discussion with the Chairman and members of the public regarding their concern over the planning application to remove trees at the Saw Mill housing development. Cllr Rhatigan confirmed that an extension to the consultation period for the planning application would be allowed to ensure that all expressions of objection had been logged appropriately.

There was also concern expressed about the general road safety in the area and suggestion made for the lowering of the national speed limit. Cllr Mellor commented on the fact that any such decision was always based on the accident statistics for a particular stretch of road. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of appropriate control over hgv's entering the development and Cllr Rhatigan agreed to investigate the matter and report back to the Chairman.\*

With regard to the planning application appeal for the second field housing development in Ashford Hill, the Chairman confirmed that letters of objection that were originally logged at the application stage would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate process together with any new letters of objection which Cllr Rhatigan encouraged residents to undertake and would be promoting such action via a leaflet drop and other initiatives in conjunction with the Parish Magazine.

#### **11. Financial Statement**

The Lloyds TSB current account of the Parish Council stood at £26,285.

The Lloyds TSB deposit account of the Parish Council stood at £10,843.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.14pm.