

Branston & Mere Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held by video-conference on
Monday 6th April 2020 at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs. Adams, Blair, Catton, Clarke, Cucksey, Lundgren, Marchant, Naulls, Penistan, Ross, Tebb and Willcox.

In Attendance: Clerks - Mrs Stead and Mrs Naylor.

The Chairman welcomed members to the first virtual meeting and thanked Cllr Catton and Octagon for their help in setting up Microsoft Teams.

Item 1 a) Apologies for absence and reasons given.

The Council noted and approved the reason for the apologies of Cllr Newman. All echoed the Chairman's thoughts and sympathy.

b) Declarations of Pecuniary & Non-Pecuniary Interests.

There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2 a) To resolve that the notes of the meeting held on 2nd March are approved as the Minutes.

Acceptance of the notes was proposed by Cllr Willcox and seconded by Cllr Ross.

b) Matters arising from the Minutes for clarification.

There were no matters arising.

Item 3 Correspondence:

a) Reports from outside bodies.

Reports circulated from Cllrs Oxby, Cucksey & Lundgren and the Police team were noted. No issues were raised.

County Council Report: All points in this report refers to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Cllr Oxby had reported that a very large portion of the workforce was working from home; requiring emails to be re-directed within the system and resulting in a slower process.
- Some Highway projects had been put on hold at the request of contractors, but the Eastern bypass work was continuing.
- Nine of the Adult Day Care Centres had closed and the remainder were being monitored.
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue had extended its range of facilities to help the communities.
- Daily Coronavirus reports echoed news channels.
- There had been an increase in scams; offering testing for COVID-19, demanding money as fines for leaving home, offering to do shopping but disappearing with the money.
- The first death in Washingborough had been recorded on 3rd April.

District Council: All points in Cllr Lundgren's report refers to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Cllr Lundgren had advised that NKDC was investigating the potential and legality for web-based council meetings, in an attempt to get the decision making process working again.
- Officers were focusing on addressing the needs of the community in lockdown; distributing emergency funds from central government; working with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum to provide support to the 1.5 million identified as very vulnerable by the NHS.
- The possibility of a crisis fund for those in urgent financial need was being investigated.
- Cllr Lundgren had raised potential problems with the Chief Executive for self-employed residents and those on zero-hour contracts and unable to work. The number awaiting a response from Universal Credit had exceeded 130k.
- He thanked everybody involved in the emergency response in Branston, addressing the initial problem of supporting those people self-isolating.
- The Food Voucher Scheme would ensure eligible children received meals during the school holidays.

- The Branston Food Bank, led by volunteers, had received generous donations from residents and businesses including cash and a grant from the Branston Charity, which would allow fresh food to be purchased when required.
- He had received complaints about people walking dogs or out jogging more than once a day and suggested that some people were struggling to cope with being shut in; some were shut in with abusive partners and some were trying to maintain their health and fitness. He suggested that before COVID-19, suicide was the biggest killer of young men; domestic abuse was the biggest cause of women being murdered and obesity caused by poor diet and lack of fitness was a mass killer; suggesting that tolerance was needed as long as social distancing was maintained.

Cllr Cucksey reported on Executive Board reports prior to the lockdown:

- The Heritage Strategy had been adopted.
- There had been 693 (16.6%) additions to NKDC's housing stock in 2018/19 with 99% due to new builds.
- Obesity figures showed that 22% of children (265) aged 4-5 years were classified as overweight or obese in 2018/19; marginally lower than national and regional figures at 23%.
- Life expectancy for females in North Kesteven was 84.1 years and 80.7 years for males.

Police:

The Police team would carry out patrols to reassure residents and promote social distancing.

b) Newsletters and Letters for information included in Clerk's report.

16377 Clerks & Councils Direct

March 2020

16378 LALC News

16379 Escape Youth Club had closed and all planned trips had been postponed. The Youth Club would not reopen as both leaders had stepped down, as previously advised.

Trips and specialist events would continue post-Coronavirus, when funds were available. Chris Morey had thanked the Parish Council and had said that without their financial support, the club would not have continued for as long as it had.

It was unclear whether other volunteers had been sought. The Chairman suggested that the school and Children's Services should be asked about their future intentions to provide a resource for young people.

c) LIVES – A request for funding support during COVID – 19.

16380 LIVES had advised that they desperately needed funding to keep responders on the road. Opportunities to raise funds through events, challenges and activities had been lost due to Coronavirus and their reserves were needed to supply additional PPE.

The Clerk advised that there had been no request for funding for 2020/21 but responders were still active in Branston and the surrounding area. Cllr Cucksey was aware of two recent incidents in the village that had been attended by LIVES.

After discussion it was resolved to contribute £1,000 from the General Contingency with further consideration if the situation worsened. Proposed by Cllr Lundgren; seconded by Cllr Ross.

Item 4

16381 Planning & Tree Applications.

Planning permission had been granted on the following applications:

19/1763	Grain storage building	Westfield Farm.
20/0101	Single storey extension	10 Shardloes.
20/0102	Conversion of garage to granny annexe	24 Wisteria Ave.
19/1339	The Appeal for a dwelling to the rear of 93 Lincoln Road was dismissed.	

Planning Applications viewed during the month:

20/0302	Flat roof extension	Branston surgery.
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No objection.

20/0444	Single storey rear infill extension	24 Chartridge.
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No objection.

Tree applications:

20/0371	Reduce height & spread of Silver Birch	The Bothy, Waterwheel Lane
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Branston & Mere Parish Council objects to this proposal.

The tree is well shaped and enhances the area. Councillors are concerned that the proposed work is too severe and that unnecessary work would put the tree at risk of infection.

Item 5 Other Reports:

a) To confirm the loan provider & issues relating to the Parish Office.

16382 The Chairman asked to ratify the decision to take a loan of £40,500 over 5 years to purchase 17a Church Road, based on the preferred option of members.

NKDC had confirmed that it would provide the loan and that the terms would be better than the PWLB, in terms of arrangements fees, interest rate and early repayment penalties.

It was resolved to accept a loan of £40,500 from NKDC, over 5 years; proposed by Cllr Ross; seconded by Cllr Adams.

The Clerk was authorised to finalise the offer from NKDC for the Council's approval.

The loan repayment for year one would be covered by the £10k community benefit from the solar farm extension.

16383 The application to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had been submitted but confirmation of the source of the loan and further information on the provision for the deposit and loan repayments within the budget, the proportion of flexible and inflexible expenditure, reserves projection and evidence of public consultation and support was required.

The reallocation of funds to form the deposit and the repayment was resolved; proposed by Cllr Ross, seconded by Cllr Willcox.

b) Activation of the Emergency Plan & ongoing community help.

16384 The Chairman said that the activation of the Plan on 23rd March and the practical support given to date had been a resounding success and congratulated Cllr Marchant and his team of over 300 volunteers.

Cllr Marchant said that the situation was fast moving and detailed in a daily blog on Facebook and the website. He said that requests for help for vulnerable residents in Branston had been received from family members across the UK, Ireland and the USA. All had been quickly dealt with by 70 active volunteers. He said that some particularly vulnerable people had been identified as needing additional social care but the majority just needed help with shopping, collecting prescriptions and a reassuring voice while isolating. He said that he was prepared for the long haul.

The Chairman said that the Council had always been confident that Cllr Marchant had produced a good plan but the way that it had been put into action without any hiccups, criticism or negativity had proved its worth.

c) To consider the continuation of developing the Pavilion project.

16385 Cllr Tebb advised that the working party had met three times to consider the scope of the project; the existing building and previous proposals. The group intended to continue to meet by video conference; potentially including the architects. They hoped to find a way to make the site work better by redeveloping what was already there.

d) Update on installation of 'gateways'.

16386 The Chairman confirmed that the order had been placed and the gates would be fitted when circumstances allowed.

e) Update on groundwork to Skate Park.

16387 Lovell Homes had delivered 5 tonne bags of topsoil to repair the damage caused by the track to Moor Lane Recreation Ground, before ceasing work due to Coronavirus. The work would be finished when restrictions were lifted and would be the end of their obligations. Cllr Lundgren offered to move the bags to prevent additional damage to the grass. The skate park remained closed.

Item 6 Governance Review –

a) Risk Assessment.

16388 Cllr Clarke advised that he had carried out a separate Risk Assessment to cover the work of the volunteers carrying out emergency support.

b) To ratify the resolution for additional delegated powers to the Clerk.

16389 Emergency proposals had been considered and agreed via email to ensure a continuation of business during the COVID-19 pandemic and required ratification:

1. To resolve that the Parish Council gives additional **delegated authority** for a period of **no longer than 4 months** (notwithstanding relative Government legislation or medical/relevant body advice or

best/safe practice)) to the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk in the absence of the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

- i) undertake day to day duties (wherever possible and within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in order to minimise disruption to service provision and ensure business continuity.
- ii) undertake any additional duties necessary (wherever possible within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in order to minimise disruption to service provision and ensure business continuity.
- iii) undertake decisive actions (within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in respect of cancelling any meetings of the Parish Council, its committees or working groups.
- iv) To undertake decisive actions (within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in respect of cancelling events or gatherings within Council operated properties.

2. To resolve that the Clerk, with approval from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and 5 councillors, makes the necessary payments to ensure effective business continuation and to minimise impact on local service delivery and local business with ratification by the Parish Council to be made at the earliest and safest opportunity.

Resolve to add clause 4.5 from the new model financial regulations to the Branston & Mere Parish Council Financial Regulations with a limit of £500.

3. To resolve to authorise an increase in the spending limit to the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman from any item below £500 to any amount below £ 5,000 in respect of any emergency or Health & Safety matter.

4. To resolve that the Parish Council authorises the Clerk to circulate planning applications by e-mail, collate responses and submit to NKDC (on a majority basis/minimum 5 responses).

It was unanimously resolved to accept the resolutions to give additional powers en bloc.

Proposed by Cllr Naulls; seconded by Cllr Ross.

c) Use of staff during the crisis and the need to furlough workers.

16390 After discussion, it was agreed that furloughing staff and reclaiming 80% of their wages was not an option for parish councils, whose income came from the Precept. Staff would continue to work where possible, in line with government guidance, or be redeployed.

The Clerk & Assistant Clerk would continue to work from home as usual. The Library coordinator was carrying out admin work from home while the Library was closed and could potentially assist Cllr Marchant's team.

There was a debate on whether the two Handymen could carry out duties in the community, resolved under Item 6d

d) To decide on the continuation of grass cutting & Environmental services.

16391 The growing season had started and, without regular maintenance, the Cemetery would become a particular problem later in the year. During the lockdown, the play equipment still needed to be regularly inspected to ensure that it was safe to use. Advice would be sought from other councils ahead of a decision.

16392 There was an apparent increase in dog walking in the village, since all but key workers were off work and restricted to exercising locally. The Environment Warden would continue his patrols while maintaining the required 2m social distancing and abide by NKDC recommendations.

e) Adverts for the Clerk's job.

16393 The Assistant Clerk had researched possible avenues for advertising the Clerk vacancy.

It was resolved to advertise as widely as possible including 2 paid adverts. The Assistant Clerk would arrange the adverts and be the contact for applicants.

Item 7 Finance:

a) To approve payments to be made.

16394 Approval of the payments was proposed by Cllr Naulls and seconded by Cllr Ross.

T Mobile	Mobile Tariff	11.29
Staff payments	Wages & Expenses	4552.30
HMRC	Tax & NI	712.72
NEST	Pension	367.41
A Marchant	Misc Emergency Plan	299.59
M Cummins	March	262.50
Technical Surfaces	Astro Maintenance	426.07
LALC	Annual Charge	759.64
LALC	Training Subscription	168.00
Octagon	Hosted emails	216.00
LK2	Pavilion	1620.00
Chattertons	Solicitors fee re Office purchase	250.00
LIVES	Donation	1000.00
	Total Payments.	10645.52

b) Fourth quarter report.

16395 The report had been circulated. No issues were raised.

Item 8 Items for information.

16396 The Forestry Commission had required clarification on the replanting scheme. A mix of Rowan, Silver Birch, Wild Cherry, Common Oak, Field Maple and Grey Willow would be planted at 2.5 metres intervals, in a triangle, across the corner of the recreation ground and would be provided by the Woodland Trust in November. The licence to fell was expected within 6 weeks.

16397 The amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan had been made prior to final proof reading by the steering group. It would then be submitted to NKDC.

16398 The bus shelter was ready for installation when possible. The choice of contractors had been approved by LCC and utilities in the area were being checked.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.