

Branston & Mere Parish Council
Minutes of the Virtual Meeting held by Teams on
Monday 6th July 2020 at 7pm.

Present: Cllrs. Adams, Blair, Catton, Clarke, Cucksey, Lundgren, Marchant, Newman, Penistan, Ross (Chair), Tebb and Willcox.

In Attendance: Clerks - Mrs Stead and Mrs Naylor.

Members of the Public: None.

Item 1 a) Apologies for absence and reasons given.

The Council noted and approved the reason for the apologies of Cllr Naulls.

He had sent 'apologies to the residents of Branston Booths for not being able to hold the once a year visit to the village due to the restrictions placed on us by the COVID virus. I appreciate we have representation on the Council but I do however hope residents have noticed the work we have undertaken within the village, namely the construction of a new bus shelter, new fencing and landscaping in the play area and installation of village gateways at the entrances to the village on the B1190. We continue to look at ways of improving facilities in the village and look forward to hearing from anyone with any suggestions to improve your quality of life'.

b) Declarations of Pecuniary & Non-Pecuniary Interests.

There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2 Public Forum.

No issues had been raised.

Item 3 Reports from representatives on outside bodies:

a) Police.

The online Police Newsletter reported that the team continued to carry out reassurance patrols relating to social distancing.

There had been antisocial behaviour involving vehicles and loud music at Washingborough and tips on shed security was offered following a surge in incidents at Washingborough.

b) County Council.

Cllr Oxby had provided a comprehensive report from the Council's AGM that had reported on the effects of COVID-19 in Lincolnshire:

- The overall infection rate had held steady at a little under 150 cases per 100,000 people. The average in England was 276 cases per 100,000 people. Around 1,147 people were known to have been infected in Lincolnshire with the loss of 141.
- There would be a lasting impact on local businesses and help had been given to access financial support and to diversify to operate differently and re-open safely. The leisure and tourism sector remained closed.
- 71 of the 288 care homes in Lincolnshire had reported an outbreak.
- Schools had continued to provide care for vulnerable pupils and children of keyworkers with over 3000 pupils attending daily up to the end of May and 17,000 pupils had returned as schools were partially re-opened.
- Although Libraries remained closed, the number of new members had increased by 712% in April and 225% in May and E-Book issues had been up 223% and 345% over the two months. Libraries would reopen on 13th July for 60% of their opening hours, a 'takeaway' service for books (no browsing) and limited computer use by public. There would be a review at the beginning of August with a view to support community hubs opening.
- Recycling centres had reopened with a popular and efficient 'Click and Tip' booking system that would continue.

- Public transport had been badly affected as passenger numbers collapsed. Around £1m had been allocated by the government to improve and support walking and cycling for commuting and short journeys.
- Work on the Lincoln Eastern Bypass had paused at the start of the coronavirus outbreak until social distancing measures had been put in place and the opening had been delayed until the end of the year. The cost increase was unknown.

c) District Council.

Cllr Lundgren had provided operational updates throughout the month.

- He said that the Council had taken a financial hit but not as hard as some councils. The future would be challenging but there was no immediate threat to District Council services.
- Scrutiny meetings were about to resume with updates on health, business support and community support during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Residents had raised concerns about an access issue on Windmill Meadow. The access from Silver Street was actually private property and NKDC enforcement had no jurisdiction over private property. Access for emergency vehicle access was a matter for the area Highways manager.
- He encouraged residents to report fly tipping.
- Cllr Cucksey reported that the District Council had issued approximately £20m of Business Grants within the district but businesses would still experience difficulties. The Government has issued additional grants for Council Tax Hardship Relief.
- A minority of residents had opted to delay Council Tax payments resulting in only a 1.54% reduction in collection rates.
- Property Services envisaged a six-month delay to schemes due to Covid-19 and expenditure on kitchens, bathrooms and roofing works would not be incurred during 2020/21.
- The Supreme Court had decided that internal and external ATMs should not be separately assessed for business rates and had dismissed the appeal. NKDC had made provision within the budget for £236,530 for related appeal cases.

d) Community Library.

The Volunteer Coordinator had reported that a new system, Capita Sonata, would be installed at the end of July, with training during August. Hubs were expected to have a phased reopening as training would be delayed by COVID restrictions. Main libraries would reopen on 13th July with a limited service. It was unlikely that Branston would open before the end of August and possibly on Saturdays only. It was unclear whether non-LCC owned hubs would be issued with Perspex screens.

Cllr Ross said that Branston's library was dependent on the school's rules and suggested that the prolonged closure and new system potentially risked losing volunteers.

e) Environment Warden Report.

No report had been received.

Item 4 a) To resolve that the notes of the meeting held on 1st June are approved as the Minutes.

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

b) Matters arising from the Minutes for clarification.

16462 Ref 16453 – The Chairman had drafted a Charity Donation Policy. It would be finalised during recess for approval in September.

Item 5 Correspondence:

a) Newsletters and Periodic Publications.

16463 Local Council Review & E-version Spring 2020.

b) Letters for information.

16464 The Parish Council had been made aware of an alternative design for the memorial bench at Windmill Meadow. Cllr Lundgren said that a planning application would be needed to alter the design. Members agreed that they were not averse to the new design but it was a community-led project with Taylor Wimpey.

c) LALC – LGA Code of Conduct consultation.

16465 The Local Government Association had launched a consultation on a new model Code of Conduct. It was agreed that individual responses should be submitted.

Item 6 Planning Applications & Tree Applications:**a) Report on Planning Committee decision on the Taylor Wimpey application.**

16466 The Chairman had spoken at the virtual planning meeting which had approved 9 additional dwellings on the community land. He had reported that it had not been an impartial process; the planning officer had compiled a report detailing the circumstances of the application, previous issues, and the legal position with the opinion that the application should be approved. He suggested that the officer should only provide the committee with the correct information and not influence them. It had been so biased towards the applicant that Taylor Wimpey's representative simply said that there was not much more to say other than what has been said by the planning officer.

The information in the report relating to the neighbourhood plan was incorrect. The officer stated that no weight could be applied to the plan which weakened the Parish Council's presentation.

Unfortunately, the current system had not allowed him or Cllr Lundgren to be questioned by councillors or correct misleading information.

The decision could not be challenged but it was agreed that a letter should be sent to NKDC's Chief Executive asking that the process, and the conduct of the planning officers in providing factually incorrect information to the committee, be reviewed.

b) Planning decisions received.

Planning permission had been granted on the following application:

20/0444 Single storey rear infill	24 Chartridge.
20/0197 Drop kerb	33 Moor Lane, Branston Booths
20/0401 Replacement livestock building	Brambles Farm, Mere Road

c) Planning Applications viewed during the month.

20/0634 Replacement slurry tank	Brambles Farm, Mere Rd.
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No objections.

20/0670 Six-foot high electric gates	82a Lincoln Road.
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No objections.

20/0794PNH – Single storey rear extension	56 Heathfield Ave
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No objections.

20/0800PNAGR – Agricultural building	Red House Farm, Branston Booths.
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No objections.

d) Tree Application Decisions received.

No decisions had been received.

e) Tree applications received.

20/0683 – Crown lift Fir, Acacia, Cherry & Whitebeam	40 Silver Street.
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No objections.

Item 7 Other Reports:**a) To confirm the Office purchase, refurbishment & valuation.**

16467 NKDC had revised the loan contract and it had been signed by Cllrs Naulls and Ross. The loan had been received, prior to exchange and completion on 1st July.

Came & Co had confirmed insurance cover at no additional cost, prior to the annual renewal in October. It had been recommended that the property should be valued for insurance purposes and Mundy's Estate Agents, had provided a valuation without charge.

16468 Some refurbishment was needed to improve the insulation and décor ahead of the new clerk starting in September. The Chairman had advised that the usual process, in 'normal' times, would require three quotes prior to appointing a contractor and waiting for their availability to carry out the work.

Cllrs Naulls and Ross proposed that that financial regulations be suspended to allow a known contractor to be appointed, to avoid issues around social distancing and the tight timeframe ahead of the appointment of the new clerk. Each member voted to suspend the Financial Regulations.

16469 Cllr Ross proposed that Butler Construction be appointed to carry out the work because they were local, reputable, available, and had previously carried out good quality work with very competitive quotes; most recently the fence in the Memorial Garden. That would prevent unnecessary delay, ensure that public money had been spent wisely, prevent unnecessary contact with multiple people during the COVID-19 crisis and remain on track for the new clerk's start date.

Cllr Clarke seconded the proposal in principle, subject to a quote based on a User's Requirement document. All in favour.

b) To accept the final documents for the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan.

16470 Cllr Lundgren said that the details of the site for community use at Windmill Meadow had been changed in the submission draft following the approval for 9 homes to be built on the land. The Plan, Consultation Statement and Basic Conditions were ready for submission, subject to the Parish Council's approval.

Cllr Cucksey asked who had compiled the section on the history of the village and said that it had several errors that needed correcting.

Subject to those amendments, submission of the Plan was approved.

c) Emergency Plan & ongoing community help.

16471 Cllr Marchant reported 689 responses to 143 residents in the parish and surrounding area. He intended that the group would remain active until at least 1st September and still had 55 active volunteers, after some had returned to work post-furlough.

Twelve volunteers had expressed an interest in establishing a constituted Community Group as part of a lasting legacy that would provide a single point of contact and coordinate with other clubs and groups for the good of the village; supporting those in need and empowering residents to get involved in organising community projects. There would be a scoping phase to test the viability.

d) Latest update on the Pavilion project.

16472 Cllr Tebb displayed the latest plan that would refurbish the existing pavilion to create improved changing facilities, a meeting room, shared kitchen and toilets, including a disabled washroom, and an extension to provide a 140m² function room. The build cost was expected to be between £250-300k with grants covering half of the cost. He invited members to consider the proposal and comment.

e) Community Speed Initiative.

16473 Cllr Naulls had reported that 6 people had expressed an interest in forming a team; the minimum number required. He asked for the Council's agreement in principle to purchase the necessary equipment at a cost of about £450, if it was determined that a community run group could be formed.

After discussion, the proposal was proposed by Cllr Lundgren and seconded by Cllr Marchant.

f) Future maintenance & plans for the Jungle field.

16474 Following a delay in mowing the Jungle field, it had been decided to allow it to grow wild with a mown path around the perimeter and seating areas. The area would need cutting and clearing at the end of the summer at the same time as the Wildflower Meadow in the Garden of Rest.

Hill Holt Wood suggested that additional planting or seed to enhance the wildflower content for future years or it could be allowed it to develop on its own. Cllr Lundgren had previously suggested developing a community orchard and mentioned an NKDC initiative. The idea would be added to a future agenda for consideration.

g) To approve the repair to the boardwalk at Waterwheel Lane.

16475 The repair to the Waterwheel Lane boardwalk had been approved during the month and had been carried out at a cost of £435. A additional repair was needed to the bridge post that had a section of rot. The bridge was 9 years old but driving a stake through the post could extend its life.

Cllr Clarke proposed and Cllr Newman seconded carrying out the repair.

h) To consider re-opening the skate park.

16476 People had continued to access the skate park during the closure and leisure restrictions had recently been eased. There was no physical danger to warrant the closure and the Police had advised that other skate parks in the area were open.

It was agreed the fencing should be removed, Skateboard England signage displayed, and the responsibility devolved to the individuals to follow social distancing rules.

i) Payment for hire of protective track.

16477 The hire cost was £4200 but, because the track had not been laid properly, it had shifted with vehicular movement and had caused considerable damage to the ground.

Cllr Adams stated that it had not been fit for purpose and the bill should not be paid. The contract had been between Bemus and Lovell Homes and the matter would be referred to Lovell Homes to resolve.

Item 8 Governance Review –**a) Risk Assessment.**

16478 Consideration was needed to arrangement to allow facilities to be reopened as restrictions were eased - additional signage, guidance, hand sanitiser, cleaning regimes and procedures would be put in place.

b) To review & adopt the revised Standing Orders.

14679 Proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Clarke.

c) To review & adopt the revised Financial Regulations.

14680 Proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Clarke.

d) To adopt the Data Retention policy to support Standing Order 10b.

14681 Proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Clarke.

e) To adopt Terms of Reference for the Pavilion Working Group.

16482 Proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Clarke.

f) To consider & approve a credit card.

16483 Permitted by Financial Reg 6.16, members approved submitting an application for a credit card for pre-approved purchases.

Item 9 Finance:**a) To approve payments to be made.**

16484 Approval of the payments was proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Newman.

T Mobile	Mobile Tariff	8.00
Staff payments	Wages & Expenses	4892.96
HMRC	Tax & NI	802.25
NEST	Pension	364.93
A Marchant	Emergency phone top ups	130.99
M Cummins	Env Warden - May	262.50
CB Ground Maintenance	Grass cutting	644.10
Hill Holt Wood	Jungle maintenance & repairs	894.00
B Knight & Son Ltd	Wood for bench repair	181.50
ESPO	Cleaning/Maintenance	45.98
NKDC	Lotteries licence renewal	20.00
LAB Planning Services	Submission version of N Plan	1500.00
Jackie Ponwaye Design	Artwork for N Plan cover	48.00
British Gas	Environmental Lighting	55.70
	Total Payments.	£ 9850.91

The balance for the office purchase and solicitor's fees had been paid during the month: £81,237.44

b) To authorise payments to be made during recess.

16485 It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate accounts for approval on 3rd August to allow payments to be made during recess. Proposed by Cllr Ross and seconded by Cllr Catton.

c) First Quarter report.

16486 The report was accepted.

Item 10 Items for information.

16487 The Clerk advised that a second adult football team would be based at Moor Lane for the next season. The league would ensure that Engine FC's matches did not clash with HBW's home games.

There would also potentially be 2 junior teams playing back at Moor Lane.

16488 Cllr Ross questioned why the gateway on Lincoln Road was hidden by the hedge. The Clerk advised that it had been installed the wrong side of the footpath and the Chairman was making arrangements for it to be repositioned.

16489 Cllr Marchant said that a Data Breach Policy should be drawn up.

16490 Cllr Newman had reported 10 potholes between Linden Avenue and Willow Road and their repair had been scheduled.

16491 Cllr Tebb questioned why the 'Sandbox' had been removed from agendas and asked for it to be included in September. The Clerk said that the agendas had been reduced with the advent of virtual meetings.

16492 Cllr Tebb considered that responses to issues on the Branston Local Information Facebook page were sketchy and that they should be made as Branston & Mere Parish Council rather than from an individual. The Assistant Clerk would liaise with the group's admin.

Item 11 To resolve on whether the Council will move into closed session.

Cllr Ross proposed and Cllr Newman seconded the resolution in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.