

Chedburgh Parish Council

MINUTES

of a Meeting held at the Erskine Centre, Chevington Road, Chedburgh on

Monday 27th July 2020 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Margaret Rickard (Chair), Jon Cardy, Michael Chester, Teresa Landymore, Alan Noyes and Sue Roberts.

In attendance: Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council);
3 Members of the public.

1. Apologies

All members of the Council were present and so there were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

- a. There were no declarations of Pecuniary Interest in matters on this agenda.
- b. There were no declarations of Other Disclosable Interest in matters on this agenda.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 9th March 2020 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them as such.

4. Reports from County and District Councillors

- a. County Cllr Soons had submitted a report in advance and this was received by the Council.
- b. District Cllr Chester had submitted a report in advance and this was received by the Council.

5. Public Forum

No matters were raised by members of the public.

6. Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported that the almost five months since the previous meeting had been exceptionally busy, with emails and phone calls well above the norm, despite the fact that some normal business has been on hold. The end of year accounts had been finalised and, after a hiatus caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, the end of year internal audit had also been completed.

The Temporary Scheme of Delegation agreed by the Council had allowed business to function even if normal meetings were not possible. The Clerk observed that in normal circumstances all meetings must be physical and open to the public but that in April the Government had passed special legislation to allow for virtual meetings. However, the requirement for public access was maintained. There has been much debate about how this could be achieved in areas where broadband is not always reliable, as in Chedburgh, and whether excluding the considerable proportion of members of the public who do not have any IT was acceptable. Some parish councils held virtual meetings that worked successfully in their own terms while others used schemes of delegation similar to the one adopted by this council.

There were significant changes to the timetable for end of year reporting and the normal requirement to have an annual meeting, at which certain prescribed items of business must be transacted, was suspended. Effectively this means that the decisions of the previous Annual Meeting of the Council, such as the election of the Chair and review of key documents are deemed to be carried through until the 2021 Annual Meeting.

Delegated Business - The Clerk reported that the scheme of delegation has not been pressed into use

very much but a number of matters that had been dealt with in this way were ratified by the Council:

Planning Consultation Responses - Following consultation with Councillors, a number of responses had been submitted to the Planning Authority.

Insurance - The annual insurance was renewed and the payment was approved - there was a 2.8% increase (£23) in the premium, to £862.93. The latest three year price-fixed deal came to an end this year and it had been felt to be more appropriate to pay a one-off premium for the current year, so as to allow for normal discussion of a three year agreement at the 2021 renewal.

Community Council External Grants - It had been agreed that the Council would receive and hold grant funds on behalf of the Community Council, arising from their various applications for financial support in respect of renovation works to the Erskine Centre. The Council will simply hold the funds to the order of the Community Council and will not be responsible for monitoring their application.

Clerk's Pay - The Joint National Council (the body that decides on Clerks' pay) has not finalised negotiations for the current year but implementation of their recommendations is part of the standard national Clerks' contract and so any recommended increases are applied on a contractual basis each year. An interim update announced that an offer of 2.75% has been made by the Government, with further discussion ongoing. For the moment an increase of £163 for the whole year had been applied. This is slightly above the expected increase but within the total budget, as the budget includes a small element of contingency.

Village Environment - The Clerk reported that there had been a steady stream of complaints about potholes and pathways over the past months. Many of these have been reported to the Highways Authority (Suffolk County Council) by residents, as well as by him. Ian Leggett has also been assiduous in reporting these. It was noted that residents are encouraged to complain about potholes etc by reporting them directly using the SCC website as this is the quickest and most effective method of drawing them to the attention of the County Council. The same applies to matters relating to roadside paths, which should be reported to the District Council (there are links to both on the Parish Council's own website). The path on Queens Lane and the path up to the church have both been cleared very effectively. As we have been trying to get action on these for a long time this was pleasing, however, some potholes remain and the quality of repairs is still rather hit or miss, as is the administration that surrounds the work.

Grass Cutting should be returning to normal now but has been subject to much disruption due to Covid related staff absences (mostly people shielding, rather than actually suffering from Covid).

Emptying of bins, especially dog waste bins, has been problematic too and the Council should be getting back to normal on this too.

Potential Speed Watch Scheme - At the March meeting it was agreed to advertise in the parish magazine for potential volunteers for a Speed Watch scheme. The Clerk reported that, in the event, he had felt that it would be counter-productive to advertise at a time when we would be unable to do anything with any volunteers who came forward and so he had held that advertisement back. It has now been submitted for the next edition of the magazine.

Play Area Roundabout - Just before the Covid-19 lockdown, we had been given an installation date for the new play roundabout but unfortunately this was deferred almost immediately. The roundabout has now been installed and is working well but the surfacing around it has been less successful. The problem seems to be that the substrate has not been properly installed or prepared, with the result that the safety surface is sagging and bumping quite badly.

The Clerk reported that he had visited the site three times during installation, with the last visit being the day on which the final layer of substrate was being tamped down with a heavy hydraulic tool. It

did seem that this had been done very solidly but it seems that inadequate attention may have been given to the way in which water drains in this corner of the field and that the foundations were not sufficiently solid. If this is the case the installation will need complete renewal and, following a site visit, remedial work has been timetabled for the next fortnight. In the meantime, payment will be withheld until it is clear that the whole job has been completed satisfactorily.

Temporary Scheme of Delegation - The Clerk recommended that the Council should formally suspend use of the Temporary Scheme of Delegation but that, in view of the uncertainty around the progression of the Covid-19 pandemic, it should not yet be completely rescinded as this would make its reintroduction much easier, should that become necessary - clearly it is hoped that this eventuality will not be realised. The Council resolved to suspend but not rescind the Scheme.

7. Planning and Environment

a. To consider responses to planning application consultations:

i. **DC/20/1034/FUL; Pearsons, Bury Road, Chedburgh IP29 4UQ: Improvements to existing road for agricultural traffic.**

This application and two others relating to the same site were considered alongside each other as they are interlinked. The Council noted that this application states that it is for improvements to agricultural access from the main road and to the track leading up to two barns at the northern end of the site. However, as is made clear from the other two applications relating to the site, the barns are not in agricultural use and so the application should fail on that basis. The actual purpose appears to be to better facilitate the existing, but not approved, commercial and industrial uses of the two barns. Whilst the site does seem to have been used for agricultural purposes in the past the only recent agricultural use has been the grazing of a few sheep, which does not justify the proposed works.

The Council felt that this also raises questions as to the legality of the construction of one of the barns at it seems to have been built under permitted development rights pertaining to agricultural activity. However, none of this can be properly assessed as yet, given the contradictory nature and inadequacy of the information.

The Council resolved to **object** to the application for the above reasons and because much of the information provided was highly inaccurate, inconsistent and contradictory. There also appears to be information missing as the applicant states that an "email trail is provided *as part of the application*" but this apparently key information is not included in the documents made available. Furthermore the information tick boxes on the application form indicate that there are no trees, hedges, ditches or parking on the site all of which is untrue. All this makes a proper consideration of the application extremely difficult

The Council noted that the applicant had chosen to instruct different agents for this application and the subsequent two and felt that a single competent professional, properly instructed with the whole of the information covered by the three plans together, would have spotted the inconsistencies and been unlikely to have submitted any of these plans in their current form.

All in all it was felt that this application mis-states its nature and should be re-submitted with complete and accurate information, preferably consolidated with the two applications for the same site or, if distinct planning regimes relating to different elements mean that this is not possible, as two clearly cross-referenced applications.

Were the Planning Authority minded to approve this application at this stage, the Parish Council recommends that consideration be given to the proximity of the current track to the Mulberry Park development as there have already been reports of disturbance to residents of the nearby houses from vehicles using the track. This activity has started only after planning permission was granted for the new houses so The Council felt that consideration should be given to re-route the track to the further side of the site. There would appear to be little down

-side to this course of action and but a considerable amenity gain to nearby residents.

ii DC/20/1119/FUL; Pearsons, Bury Road, Chedburgh IP29 4UQ: Continued use of agricultural building as Office (Class B1) and Storage and Distribution (Class B8) Agriculture Building

The Council noted that, as with DC/20/1120, this application states that it is for 'continued use' and felt that this is both inaccurate and misleading as it implies that a permission has been granted previously but on a time limited basis. In fact no permission has ever been granted for the current uses and so the current proposal must be considered as a first application, albeit retrospective. Hence no presumption based on previous permissions (as there are none) should be made.

Furthermore the application makes it clear that there is no intention to use the building for agricultural purposes, stating that the proposal is for "*Change of use agricultural grainstore to office and storage and distribution. Construction of Office ,cantee and toilet.*" (sic) and that "*The building is currently used for the stoarage of electrical equipment which is used by the tenant in connection with the business. There is an office to the rear of the building.*" (sic)

The site is in the countryside but adjacent to housing and within an area designated for possible future housing development. The site is unsuitable for development as a quasi industrial estate and its currently unapproved use is already causing disturbance to neighbours.

The Council resolved to **object** to the application for the above reasons and because much of the information provided was highly inaccurate, inconsistent and contradictory. This includes the fact that the information tick boxes on the application form indicate that there are no trees, hedges, ditches or parking on the site all of which is untrue. All this makes proper consideration of the application extremely difficult

The Council noted that the applicant had chosen to instruct different agents for another current application and felt that a single competent professional, properly instructed with the whole of the information covered by the three current plans together, would have spotted the inconsistencies and been unlikely to have submitted any of these plans in their current form.

It was agreed that, should the applicant wish to pursue an application it would be helpful for this application to be withdrawn and consolidated with the two applications for the same site or, if distinct planning regimes relating to different elements mean that this is not possible, as just two clearly cross-referenced applications.

iii DC/20/1120/FUL; Pearsons, Bury Road, Chedburgh IP29 4UQ: Continued use of agricultural building as office and light industrial use (Class B1)

The Council noted that, as with DC/20/1119 this application states that it is for 'continued use' and felt that this is both inaccurate and misleading as it implies that a permission has been granted previously but on a time limited basis. In fact no permission has ever been granted for the current uses and so the current proposal must be considered as a first application, albeit retrospective. Hence no presumption based on previous permissions (as there are none) should be made.

The site is in the countryside but adjacent to housing and within an area designated for possible future housing development. The site is unsuitable for development as a quasi industrial estate and its currently unapproved use is already causing disturbance to neighbours.

The Council resolved to **object** to the application for the above reasons and because much of the information provided was highly inaccurate, inconsistent and contradictory. This includes the fact that the information tick boxes on the application form indicate that there are no trees, hedges, ditches or parking on the site all of which is untrue (whilst also stating that three

parking spaces will be removed). All this makes proper consideration of the application extremely difficult

The Council noted that the applicant had chosen to instruct different agents for another current application and felt that a single competent professional, properly instructed with the whole of the information covered by the three current plans together, would have spotted the inconsistencies and been unlikely to have submitted any of these plans in their current form.

It was agreed that, should the applicant wish to pursue an application it would be helpful for this application to be withdrawn and consolidated with the two current applications for the same site or, if distinct planning regimes relating to different elements mean that this is not possible, as just two clearly cross-referenced applications.

iv DC/20/1088/HH; 1 Chevington Road Chedburgh IP29 4UP; Single storey rear extension (removal of existing conservatory).

Following brief discussion, in which the size of the extension was considered, of itself and in relation to the size of the garden, the Council resolved to support this proposal.

b. Update reports - on applications considered previously.

i. DC/20/0214/OUT; 2 The Green, Chedburgh: Outline Planning Application - (all matters reserved) - 2no. dwellings with detached double garage and vehicular access. Permission has been granted.

ii. DC/19/0695/FUL; Land off Lime Kiln Lane: (i) improvements to existing access and track off Kiln Lane, (ii) landscaped security bund, (iii) farm office and welfare unit. (Part retrospective) Permission has been granted, following some amendments.

c. Grass Cutting - It was noted that the quality and consistency of cutting had been poorer this year, following a change of personnel. A close eye would be kept on this now that the disruption caused by lockdown was largely over. It was agreed that the tender process for grass cutting would be considered at the start of the calendar year in future.

d. Work to Trees on the Green - The Clerk reported that branches had grown over the neighbour's boundary and that work to cut them back would cost about £350 (and a maximum of £400). It was resolved to commission this work from Stuart Bradnam and to add trimming of the shrubs and hedges on the land owned by the Council to the south of the pub car park or, if Mr Bradnam could not undertake this work, to commission an alternative.

e. Brocket Park development - Enforcement action had not been taken with regard to the replanting that is required and the lack of maintenance to the Open Space in particular. D Cllr Chester agreed to follow this up with the District Council and also enquire as to what could be done about the closed-off parking for the Open Space.

f. The Marquis Cornwallis Pub /Community Hub - There was nothing to report at present other than the condition of both the building and the grounds continue to worsen.

8. Finance & Governance

a. The review of Financial and other risks and the risk management strategy was considered by the Council and it was resolved to agree the document as drafted.

b. Following some questions of clarification, the Council resolved to approve the 2019/20 Accounts, including the Bank Reconciliation and Asset Register.

c. After consideration and discussion, the Council resolved to receive the Internal Auditor's Report.

d. The council considered the Governance Statement at Part 2 Section 1 of the Annual Return (AGAR) and resolved to authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign it on behalf of the Council.

- e. The council considered the information provided at Part 2 Section 2 of the Annual Return and resolved to authorise the Chair to countersign it on behalf of the Council.
- f. The Council received the schedule of receipts and payments and resolved to approve the payments (see also item 9, below).
- g. The Council resolved to ratify the following dates for meetings for the rest the current administrative year: 14th September and 9th November 2020; 11th January, 8th March 2021 and 10th May 2021.

9. Grant Request - Little Teapots - The Council had a lengthy discussion, including an impromptu site visit, to consider a request for a grant towards the cost of a wooden outdoor classroom space. Jenny Snape and Linda Wright, from Little Teapots, were present and were invited by the Chair to speak to their request. They also gave a brief history and the development of the pre-school and answered questions from members. The pre-school is a charity with a strong background, including having recently been judged to be Excellent by Ofsted for the fourth consecutive inspection. The main purpose of the current plan is to provide extra and diverse space for the children. A more substantial, brick building had been planned (and remains a potential long-term ambition) but the need for social distancing has made the need for more space and flexibility more urgent and resulted in the current request. The total initial cost will be in the region of £6,000 of which £3,000 has been raised; further fundraising is ongoing. The Council resolved to make a grant of £1,250 and agreed that this payment would be added to the payments that had been approved under item 8f and for which cheques would be signed at the end of the meeting.

10. Locality Budget - The clerk reminded Members that two items had been considered as desirable and worth seeking funds for - a defibrillator and fencing for the play area. Given that the amount potentially available from the locality fund would make a significant contribution towards the former, it was resolved to apply to D Cllr for £475 towards the defibrillator. It was also agreed that quotations would be sought for fencing for the play area so that a pathway to achieving this ambition could be discussed at the next meeting.

11. Councillors’ reports and items for future agendas
There were no matters raised.

12. Staffing Matters
A discussion took place as reserved business and was recorded as a confidential minute.

The meeting closed at 9.27pm.

Signed as a true record by authority and on behalf of the Council:

..... Chair

..... Date