

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Parish Council was held virtually on Thursday 4th June 2020, commencing at 6.30pm.

Present: Mr T Ansell (Chairman), Mr N Morse, Mr I Macfarlane, Mr G Harris, Mrs L Sharp, Mrs J Ansell, Mr P Lawrence, Mr C Greaves, Ms A Gallagher, Mr B Neilson, Mr D Kellaway, Mrs C Jackson-Doerge, Miss M Cresser, Dr R Longton, Mrs A Hales (*present intermittently due to connection issues*)

In Attendance: Clerk to the Parish Council & Assistant Clerk, 1 Member of the public

Apologies: Mr I Morrin

Absent: Mr D Godwin

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Cllr A Gallagher requested to raise a point of order:

As there is a myriad of documentation for discussion at tonight's meeting it may be quite a long one. Mindful of this, I ask for consideration to be given to my concerns, which are as follows:

- a) direction of travel of the agenda*
- b) items raised to influence current emphasis*
- c) monopolisation of the agenda by a minority of members of the council*

As councillors we have a duty to discuss, debate and decide upon issues pertinent to the parish and parishioners who voted us on to the council; the current pandemic making our role of significant importance. Questions being forwarded and seconded for inclusion on any agenda should be within the spirit of the purpose of a parish council and not relating to matters which need clarification only around such areas as standing orders or legality. We have an experienced, knowledgeable clerk who can answer queries before or after meetings. Items tabled by councillors for inclusion on any agenda should therefore only be ones which require consideration by us all to determine outcomes as is the democratic purpose of the meetings.

In response to the statement presented by Cllr Gallagher, the following members expressed their support in requesting an explanation from both the proposer and seconder of the various questions and proposals upon the agenda:

Cllr C Greaves, Cllr J Ansell, Cllr C Jackson-Doerge, Cllr N Morse, Cllr R Longton, Cllr L Sharp, Cllr B Neilson, Cllr Ian Macfarlane.

The Chairman requested that a clear explanation is provided at the relevant point in the agenda.

1.06 To report, approve and record apologies for absence (and the reasons) from members of the Parish Council

Apologies for absence were presented, received, and accepted from the following members: Mr Ian Morrin

2.06 Declaration of any personal or financial interests

No declarations were made by members in relation to a personal or financial interest in any specific matter on the agenda for consideration.

3.06 Applications for Dispensations

There were no items upon the agenda that necessitated a member to present a written request for dispensations for a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

4.06 Minutes of the last Parish Council meeting

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 24 March 2020 be approved as a true and correct record by members present. Proposed by Cllr J Ansell and seconded by Cllr A Gallagher and **resolved** unanimously

5.06 Co-option

- i) To consider the application for the Casual Vacancy and co-opt a new Councillor

Further to an expression of interest by Mrs J Kellaway, members present considered the co-option process for filling the vacancy. Proposed by Cllr C Greaves, seconded by Cllr J Ansell and **resolved** for the co-option of Mrs J Kellaway with immediate effect.

- ii) To receive the signed Acceptance of Office from the newly co-opted Councillor

Mrs J Kellaway signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, being witnessed by the Proper Officer of the Council. The documentation is to be returned to the Clerk for countersigning accordingly.

6.06 Clerks update

The Clerk provided a written report updating members and advising of any specific actions taken following the recent outbreak of Covid-19.

7.06 To receive a verbal report from the Chairman

The Chairman advised that he had not attended anything, but significant time had been spent on answering emails during the lockdown period.

8.06 Questions to the chairman previously submitted in writing

- i) To receive the following question previously submitted in writing by Cllr G Harris

“Can the Chairman explain how the definition of Openness in the Burghfield Parish Council Code of Conduct was upheld with regards to the recent vote on postponing the Annual Council Meeting.

It states:

‘Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands’. With regards to the e-mail vote, only 1 councillor gave a reason why the meeting should be postponed.”

Cllr G Harris advised of his intention to withdraw the question.

9.06 Delegated Decisions

- i) To note the decisions taken by the Clerk, and approved by the Chair and Vice-Chair, under delegated powers during the Coronavirus lockdown period

Members present received the report highlighting the decisions taken to date under Delegated powers during the lockdown period.

10.06 To receive a report in relation to the Village Hall and the schedule of payments for June 2020

The Clerk provided a written report updating members and advising of any specific actions taken following the recent outbreak of Covid-19.

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

11.06 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Finance Committee held virtually on 21 May 2020 approve the recommendations therein

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Governance & Finance Committee held on 21 May 2020 be approved as a true and correct record by members present. Proposed by Cllr M Cresser and seconded by Cllr A Gallagher and **resolved** unanimously

i) To receive the 'Protocol for Remote Meetings' policy

Members present received the 'Protocol for Remote Meetings Policy' for immediate implementation. Proposed by Cllr A Gallagher seconded by Cllr C Greaves and **resolved** unanimously.

ii) To receive the 'Remote Meetings Guidelines for the Public' policy

Members present received the 'Remote Meetings Guidelines for the Public' for immediate implementation. Proposed by Cllr L Sharp seconded by Cllr C Greaves and **resolved** unanimously

iii) To receive the addendum to the Standing Orders relating to virtual meetings

Resolved by members present for the addendum to the Standing Orders relating to virtual meetings be adopted and implemented immediately. Proposed by Cllr M Cresser and seconded by Cllr C Greaves and **resolved** by a majority vote.
Cllr G Harris abstained from voting.

12.06 To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held virtually on 13 May 2020 and approve the recommendations therein

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 13 May 2020 be approved as a true and correct record by members present. Proposed by Cllr J Ansell and seconded by Cllr L Sharp and **resolved** by a majority vote.
Cllr R Longton & Cllr G Harris abstained from voting.

13.06 To receive a summary of planning applications observations submitted to WBC

Members present noted the summary of planning applications submitted to West Berkshire Council under Delegated Authority during the lockdown period.

14.06 Notice of Proposal's received from Cllr G Harris

In response to the statement presented by Cllr Gallagher, and members expressing their request for an explanation from both the proposer and seconder of the various questions and proposals upon the agenda, Cllr G Harris advised of his wish to withdraw three of the following proposals listed. Proposals 2,3 and 4 were withdrawn accordingly. Cllr G Harris advised that no hidden agenda was within his proposals. Cllr M Cresser raised the issue of the proposals being discussed without the seconder present. Due to connection issues, Cllr A Hales was unable to clarify her position regarding the seconding of the proposals.

i) **Proposal 1:**

Whilst online video conferencing is being used to facilitate Council and committee proceedings, all matters which are to be discussed after the Exclusion of Press and Public, should be dealt with PRIOR to the Exclusion.

(This will prevent those excluded from not being party to matters on an Agenda after the exclusion. This will ensure that all members of the public can be present for all items which they are entitled to be)

The motion is seconded by Cllr Andrea Hales

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Further to the Chairman advising that Part 2 (Exclusion of the Public & Press) had been moved to the end of the agenda from the beginning to ensure ease of access for any member of the public observing the meeting, clarification was sought from Cllr G Harris as to the specific items upon the agenda that were presented after the exclusion. Cllr G Harris advised that there were two items, “*matters for future discussion*” and “*items for information*”.

Proposed by Cllr G Harris, seconded by Cllr D Kellaway and **resolved** unanimously that all items are to precede the exclusion of the public and press.

i) **Proposal 2:**

Council and committee decisions should only be made at a properly convened meetings and to facilitate this the Council should now re-instate a full programme of committee meetings.

(Zoom conferencing has proved successful so there is no reason why it cannot be utilised and to re-start council functioning)

The motion is seconded by Cllr Andrea Hales

Cllr G Harris withdrew the proposal.

ii) **Proposal 3:**

Details of any meeting of committee members or council members is noted and published on the parish website. Importantly, any ad-hoc and ‘catch-up’ meetings should be specifically recorded, particularly if decisions have been made at those meetings.

(Decisions made should be available to be seen by members of the public).

The motion is seconded by Cllr Andrea Hales

Cllr G Harris withdrew the proposal.

iii) **Proposal 4:**

All decisions made whilst delegated authority has been in force, should be listed and published on the Parish website.

(This maintains openness and accountability)

The motion is seconded by Cllr Andrea Hales

Cllr G Harris withdrew the proposal.

iv) **Proposal 5:**

Any e-mail request to ‘express views’ or ‘give consideration’ etc to matters should be replied to and copied to all other committee members or council members as the case may be.

(As with normal meetings, whether face to face or ‘virtual’, matters are discussed and debated in public (with the exception of staffing matters) and everyone has the ability to hear what everybody else has to say. By copying everybody into responses, openness is maintained).

The motion is seconded by Cllr Andrea Hales

The Chairman advised that the proposal would not be accepted as presented, advising that individual views via email would not be sought in the future.

Comments were received from various members upon the council, reiterating that the council, or a councillor, cannot stipulate the way individual members respond to questions and that any response is at the discretion of each individual.

15.06 Financial Matters

i) **Bank Account Reconciliation Statement as at 31 May 2020**

The accounts reconciliation statements for the month ending 31 May 2020 were noted, being appended to the minutes.

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

ii) Accounts for Payment

Items for payment, shown on the list attached to the minutes, were noted and as such sums are to be debited to the account of the Parish Council

iii) To receive an update in relation to the end of year Financial Statements and changes in legislation regarding the AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Review)

Due to Covid-19, the government issued changes in legislation in respect of authorities subject to the limited assurance regime. Statutory Instrument 2020/404 removes the requirement for a common period for the exercise of public rights, extending the deadline for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to be published from 30 September 2020 to 30 November 2020.

16.06 To consider the suitability of projects eligible to receive grant funding from a Members Bid

Members discussed potential projects for Members bids, with a request for the following items to be investigated in further detail:

- Installation of two water fountains for public use
- Installation of an electric charging point at the village hall

17.06 Matters for Future Discussion - *To consider any matters accepted by the Chairman for discussion and/or inclusion on a future Council/Committee agenda. (Discussions will not be minuted)*

18.06 Items for information

Cllr M Cresser advised that the Burghfield & Mortimer Volunteer Bureau required a new organiser. If anyone was interested to please get in touch as soon as possible.

Close of meeting – 19.32pm