

Longhirst Parish Council

Bi-Monthly Parish Council Meeting
7PM on THURSDAY, 07 MAY 2020
online (Parish Councillors only)

MINUTES (draft)

[Minutes can also be found online](#)

PRESENT:

Chair: Cllr Catherine Farrell
Parish Councillors: Cllr Peter Coates, Cllr Glen Fahy, Cllr Chris Marr, Cllr Richard Tordoff

APOLOGIES:

Parish Councillors: Cllr Mark Davies, Cllr Maureen Lowes
NCC: Cllr David Towns

IN ATTENDANCE:

Clerk: Helyn Douglas

This meeting was open only to Councillors; this was felt necessary in order to 'test out' the functions of the software before inviting members of the public to join.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are listed above. During this Covid-19 lockdown the Chair has given permission for absence to any Councillors not able to join these online meetings.

2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

[Use this link to check individual Declarations of Interests for Longhirst Parish Council.](#)

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - [05 MARCH 2020](#)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. As this is a virtual meeting these cannot be signed at this time but will be at the earliest opportunity.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 [Update on matters arising from 05 March 2020](#)

The Clerk had circulated a short update on outstanding issues, and the following additional information was discussed:

Highways issues

Cllr P Coates has already tried to contact Martin King by email but has not had a response. Whilst accepting that under the current circumstances the majority of the works can wait, the main concern is the uncovered manholes in Ashington Road. As well as the large one that Cllr Coates has noticed, Cllr Fahy has seen several others. These are a potential hazard for anyone walking along that road.

Cllr Coates will contact Mr King again to ask if a site meeting can be arranged between himself, Cllr Fahy and Martin King. If manpower resources allow it would be preferable to have these holes repaired / covered. Cllr Coates will also invite Martin King to a future video conference meeting to discuss the remaining outstanding issues.

Cllr D Towns, NCC

The Clerk has written to Cllr Towns asking both about the option of moving the scheduled meetings to allow his attendance, and whether he would be able to attend a future video conference meeting. He has not replied as of yet.

Rob Murfin - Planning meeting

Rob Murfin has agreed to a virtual meeting. Councillors have a preference for an evening meeting and the Clerk is to arrange this with his PA.

ACTION: CLERK

Road Signs & Speed Reduction Measures

Some work had begun on this, including fitting the new 30mph speed signs (though these are currently covered as they are not yet in force), but the rest of the work remains to be done.

Anaerobic Digester - [18/04533/FUL](#)

This is likely to go to a virtual planning committee in the coming weeks/months. There is no meeting timetable as yet but we will be informed of the date once it is arranged.

Domino's Field - [19/00991/FUL](#)

The applicant is still submitting new information to NCC regarding this. As a reminder, if the Planning Officer decides to grant this application then it will go to a Planning Committee; but if she is minded to refuse it then it will not.

Two Dwellings NW of Micklewood House - [19/04265/REM](#)

This application was granted; the lack of work on site will be due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Fly Tipping

Cllr G Fahy offered for him and his children to clear the rubbish from Ashington Road if he can get the litter picking equipment from the Village Hall. Cllr R Tordoff has keys to the Village Hall and will arrange a date to hand those over (whilst observing social distancing rules).

ACTION: CLLR R TORDOFF / CLLR G FAHY

Colliery Bus Shelter

Thanks were given to Cllr G Fahy and his children for painting the shelter - everyone agreed that it now looks very smart.

5 FINANCES

5.1 Finance update (inc [budget forecast](#); [bank statements](#); [invoices](#))

The budget forecast was reviewed, including recent transactions:

- NALC Annual Membership and website hosting fee for 20/21 - £197.18
- Field Tenancy income has been paid and the signed contract received - £511.85

5.2 Financial Support for Village Hall

Cllr P Coates proposed that a donation of £2,000 be made as soon as possible to the Village Hall. The Treasurer for the Village Hall, Linda Rudd, has emailed Cllr Coates with accounts information for last year, demonstrating that in an average year the Hall's income would be c£11k, so over the past two months of the lockdown they have lost around £2k.

Having reviewed the bank balance Councillors agreed that the Parish Council can afford to do this. If the Village Hall does receive any grant through a government scheme then both parties can discuss the option of paying this back, depending upon circumstances. Cllr Coates is to send the Village Hall accounts information to the Clerk, who will then arrange payment.

ACTION: CLLR COATES / CLERK

5.3 Longhirst Leader printing costs

Cllr Coates also proposed that the Parish Council pay for the printing costs for the Longhirst Leader, at c£66 every second month.

In the past this has been paid for by local businesses (specifically Lawrence Carey and NE Grains). Due to the lockdown the newsletter cannot be printed at the moment so is being circulated by email. Whilst this is a cheaper option we find that more people read the paper version.

Councillors agreed that a printed version is better for the village and all members agreed that once the lockdown restrictions are lifted and printing once again becomes an option that these costs can be covered by the Parish Council, if an alternative sponsor cannot be found.

5.4 Postage expenses 19/20

The postage expenses incurred by the Clerk for 2019/20 were authorised for payment at £16.58 for the year.

5.5 Authorisation of annual / repeat payments - 20/21

The Clerk presented a list of annual / repeat payments due during 2020/21.

Councillors agreed that as long as the criteria listed are met, and the price is close to the estimate, then the Clerk is authorised to make these transactions as they occur. This avoids delays in payments to suppliers. All transactions will be reported back to the next available meeting.

5.6 Audit Timetable

The audit timetable was presented, the key date being that the exemption certificate has to be sent to the national auditors by 31 July. Ideally this would mean a meeting in June to review and sign-off the accounts, allowing time in July for the paperwork to be posted to the Chair for signature and then returned to the Clerk. Councillors agreed to this.

6 BUSINESS

6.1 Future meetings - use of video conferencing

Councillors are content to use video conferencing as an interim measure (though in the longer-term the preference is for face-to-face meetings). There were some concerns over the quality of the signal and functionality using Google Meet, so for the June meeting the Clerk is to use Zoom. That meeting will also be kept to Councillors only. The intention would then be to actively encourage members of the public to join in the scheduled July meeting.

The Clerk has been in touch with Cllr M Lowes to discuss this, as she does not have any internet connection. Cllr Lowes does not wish at this time to take part in virtual meetings, and is happy for the Clerk to ring her with updates as needed.

ACTION: CLERK

6.2 Policies & Procedures - schedule annual review

Most key policies are in place, these will be reviewed at the June meeting along with the accounts. One additional policy for 'Risk Management' will be required - the Clerk is to draft this.

ACTION: CLERK

7 CORRESPONDENCE (highlights)

7.1 See the Matters Arising update above

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9 SUGGESTED DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS:

- 7PM on THURSDAY, 04 JUNE 2020 (AGAR and Policies review)
- 7PM on THURSDAY, 02 JULY 2020 (Public invited)

CLOSE OF MEETING @ 8PM