

# Longhirst Parish Council

## Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting

7PM on THURSDAY, 04 JUNE 2020  
Video Conference (Councillors only)

### MINUTES (draft)

#### **PRESENT:**

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

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Maureen Lowes

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Clerk:** Helyn Douglas

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies are listed above.

The Clerk reported that she had been in touch with Cllr Maureen Lowes to update her on current issues and to get her views. Cllr Lowes has confirmed that she is not able to take part in online meetings (as she does not have broadband). The Clerk has agreed to ring Cllr Lowes before and after each meeting to exchange information and feedback any questions.

#### **2 PREVIOUS MINUTES - [07 MAY 2020](#)**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. Any matters arising will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### **3 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019/20 (AGAR, Part 2)**

##### **3.1 [Annual Accounts for 2019/20](#) (see also [Audit Contents List 19/20](#))**

Having had the information in advance the Councillors considered the bank reconciliation, bank statements, invoices, and associated documents. There were no issues raised and the accounts were agreed.

##### **3.2 [Internal Auditor's Notes](#)**

Councillors noted the comments made by the internal auditor, and feel that the revised practices adopted during the year should prevent a repeat of any of the omissions noted.

##### **3.3 Certificate of Exemption (AGAR p3)**

Having reviewed the figures above the Councillors agreed that the Parish Council fits the criteria for exemption. The Certificate of Exemption will be posted out for signature and then emailed to the external auditors as soon as possible, or by 31 July at the latest.

**3.4 Internal Audit Formal Report (AGAR p4)**

The internal auditor has read through the checklist and agrees that adequate procedures are now in place for the proper control of the finances, noting the significant improvements made during the year.

**3.5 Annual Governance Statement (AGAR p5)**

Councillors reviewed the questions listed in the Annual Governance Statement, and agreed that policies and procedures do meet the necessary requirements. A significant effort had been made during the year to revise or adopt good practice and up-to-date policies.

**3.6 Accounting Statement (AGAR p6)**

Councillors reviewed the Accounting Statement, including the Variances and Reserves reports. Councillors agreed that the statement is accurate and reflects the information in the bank reconciliation and can be signed.

Variances

The receipts during the year were higher due to receiving a grant from the Freemasons. And staff costs had appeared to go down due to the hiatus between the previous Clerk resigning and the new Clerk taking post, as well as some changes to the terms and conditions of the new Clerk (relating to expenses).

Reserves

Increased funding has been set aside to allow the Parish Council to support more village activities during the year.

**3.7 [Exercise of Public Rights](#)**

The Clerk declared that the period of time where the public can view the accounts will be set as per the dates suggested by the external auditor: Monday 15 June 2020 to Friday 24 July 2020. This right is set out in legislation and during this time period any member of the public can inspect the accounts and raise any queries. However the easiest way to view the information is on the Parish Council website.

As this meeting was held by video conference it was not possible to sign the documentation on the day. The Clerk is to post out the paperwork to the Chair for signature. All draft documentation will be posted on to the website by 15 June, followed by a final signed version as soon as possible, or by the deadline of 31 July 2020 at the latest.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**4 REVIEW OF POLICIES & PROCEDURES****4.1 [Risk Management Policy](#) and [Risk Assessment Schedule](#) (NEW)**

This policy formally sets out the steps to be taken by the Council to ensure it identifies and reviews risks (this having been done less formally in the past). The schedule lists the specific activities undertaken, along with mitigation measures. Councillors agreed to adopt the policy, and were satisfied that the list provided does adequately cover all relevant activities.

**4.11 [Standing Orders](#)**

Although initially no changes were thought necessary, in line with the advice from the internal auditor a small change has been made to the Standing Orders. This reflects that internet banking is carried out by the Parish Council, and cross-references to the relevant sections of the Financial Regulations.

- 4.2 [Publication Scheme](#)
- 4.3 [Casual Vacancy](#)
- 4.4 [Code of Conduct](#)
- 4.5 [Data Protection & Subject Access](#)
- 4.6 [Document Retention](#)
- 4.7 [Donations](#)
- 4.8 [Financial Regulations](#)
- 4.9 [Public Participation at Meetings](#)
- 4.10 [Records Management](#)
- 4.12 [Structure Diagram](#)

All of the remaining policies were reviewed and Councillors agreed that no changes were necessary.

## 5 BUDGET

### 5.1 [Bank Statements 20/21](#) & [Budget Forecast 20/21](#)

The Bank Statements were made available, showing all transactions (these are available online). The Budget Forecast for the year was reviewed. Councillors noted the information.

### 5.2 [Advance Payment Authorisation 20/21](#)

The Clerk presented a list of regular payments expected during the year (such as monthly payments for the website hosting, or annual payments for membership fees). The list includes an indication of costs - Councillors authorised that these bills can be paid as required during the year (though all costs are still to be reported at each meeting).

#### Video Conference Software

Having tried out both Google Hangouts and Zoom, Councillors prefer Zoom and agreed to purchase the 'premium' version (as the free version is limited to 40 minutes. These costs are off-set by not needing to pay for Village Hall room hire. This is initially for a 3 month period - then to be reviewed to see if it is still required. Councillors opted for a "pay as you go" service - that cost is slightly higher than for an annual licence, but the advantage is that it can be cancelled at short notice. The Clerk is to take out this subscription and can be reimbursed on a monthly basis.

**ACTION: CLERK**

### 5.3 **Income / Expenditure (inc gift for Auditor)**

The Parish Council agreed to a gift card for the internal auditor of £30. No other items of income or expenditure were required.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## 6 PLANNING

*The planning item was moved to the end of the agenda to allow Cllr Marr to be present for the remainder of the agenda.*

## 7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**7.1 Future Meetings / use of video conferencing**

The Councillors all agreed that the preference is for in-person meetings as soon as this is possible (a point echoed by Cllr Lowes during her conversation with the Clerk). In the meantime online meetings will be used to allow business to continue.

**7.2 Election of Chair / new legislation**

The Clerk reported that she clarified for Cllr Lowes that there is no legal requirement to vote-in a new Chair this year and that the current Chair, Cllr Farrell, is able to remain in post for now.

**7.3 Letter of Thanks for Planting**

Cllr M Lowes had asked if a letter of thanks could be sent to Lawrence Carey regarding his upkeep of the planters at the War Memorial.

**ACTION: CLERK****8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING****Date, time and wider involvement**

NCC Cllr David Towns has been in touch to say that he is able to attend the July meeting (and can use Zoom), but would prefer an earlier time. As the Parish Council is keen for Cllr Towns to take part the suggestion is to move the time back (the earliest time allowed is 6pm).

Now that a suitable video conferencing software has been identified and trialed, Councillors feel able to technically manage the process of involving members of the public. They agreed to invite representatives from the three main Residents' Associations and include a specific standing item on the agenda for them.

**ACTION: CLERK****6 PLANNING**

[Land East of Old Vicarage - 20/00109/FUL](#) (response deadline 09 Jun 20)

Cllr Chris Marr declared an interest in this item and agreed to exit the meeting. Before leaving the other Councillors asked him for some background on the proposal. Cllr Marr explained that if planning permission is granted he intends to move in to and live in that new property (selling The Old Vicarage). Cllr Marr then left the meeting and took no part in the discussion that followed or in the decision-making.

Councillors noted there had been some objections raised by the immediate neighbours (though none had been raised by any other residents). Councillors also reviewed the summary report from the County Council Planning Department. That report indicated that a building at that location potentially could get planning permission, but raised a number of practical issues, in particular around parking and road safety for vehicles exiting the property. That report suggested that the applicant supply revised plans.

Councillors agreed with a number of the concerns raised by the neighbours:

- That the proposed new dwelling is too large in scale for the location
- There are issues around lack of parking

- The existing wall would need to be taken down and replaced further back from the road to increase visibility for drivers
- That the use of brick for the garage would not be in keeping with the adjacent properties
- It was unclear whether any of the mature trees would need to be removed (noting that the the village is within a conservation area)

Councillors felt that a smaller property might not produce as many objections, but that a number of potentially costly practical issues remain to be resolved. (Cllr Lowes' views as given to the Clerk were broadly in line with those discussed during the meeting.)

The members also considered the option of holding a second meeting to allow residents to raise their concerns - this was also suggested by Cllr Lowes. (Under normal circumstances members of the public would have been able to be present tonight, but due to previous technical difficulties had not been invited.) Bearing in mind the short timescale the Vice Chair suggested contacting the immediate neighbours in the first instance to gauge if an additional meeting is needed. In the meantime the Clerk is to draft a letter and a formal response is to be submitted by Tuesday, 09 June.

**ACTION: CLLR P COATES / CLERK**

## **8 DATE & TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- 6pm on Thursday, 02 July 2020

CLOSE OF MEETING 8.15PM