BROAD CHALKE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the 1025th Meeting of the

Broad Chalke Parish Council

held remotely via Zoom Pro

Wednesday 13th May 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Mr T Hitchings (Chairman)

Mr M Pickford

Mrs R Holland

Mr D Gilbert

Mr J Dutson

Mr Tim Cave-Gibbs

Mr A Truluck, and the Clerk, Mr C Rothwell were in attendance.

**Introduction by the Chairman** covering meeting protocol and arrangements for enabling councillors and members of the public to speak.

If a vote is required, those attending by video will be asked to raise their hand until they have been advised that their vote has been recorded. Any members attending by telephone will be asked to express their vote vocally.

Members of the public are reminded that the Council cannot make any decisions on matters that do not appear on the agenda. If members of the public have questions about matters not on the agenda, they are requested to contact the Clerk outside of the meeting.

There were no requests to attend the Zoom meeting from Members of the public.

**AGENDA**

1. **To receive apologies for absence**. Apologies were received from Mr J Allison, Mrs J Green and Mrs N Tinkler.
2. **To record declarations of interest from Members regarding items on the Agenda.**

There were none.

1. **Chairman’s Announcements.**
2. The Chairman accepted update from Mr A Truluck on the Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Truluck reported that final draft had now incorporated comments from the March 2020 consultation process and that this would go to Wiltshire Council this week. Unfortunately, with no elections or referendum taking place consequent of Covid-19, it is unlikely that anything further is going to happen until spring 2021.

Mr Truluck also reported on progress within the Community Land Trust and that a good scheme for the affordable housing has been received that demonstrate a modern yet traditional design in keeping with the village. However, this will also now be on hold along with the Neighbourhood Plan.

1. The Chairman accepted update from Councillor Cave-Gibbs on his inspection of the playground at it was agreed that Councillor Gibbs contact Lee Parker to investigate works to improve stability of the slide platform.
2. The Chairman also reported that he had received expression of interest from Emma Richter to join the Council and it was unanimously agreed to co-opt Emma as a non-voting member of the Council. The Chairman to speak with her.
3. **To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2020 and the notes of the postponed Meeting from 8 April 2020 as a true and accurate record**. These were accepted but will await signature at a face to face Council meeting at some time in the future.
4. **Matters Arising from the April 2020 Meeting**

None arising

**Matters Arising from March 2020 Meeting.**

* **Council Priorities:** Although it has not been possible to undertake further work on priorities in light of current Covid-19 restrictions, Lead Councillors are asked to keep these firmly in mind and to raise any issues as required.
* **Schedule of Meetings:** This item is on the Agenda.

1. **Covid-19 Support Network. Update.**

Nicki Tinkler’s report on progress and further update following Prime Ministers announcement on 10 May 2020 had been circulated.

There was discussion presented by the Clerk on building from the excellent work undertaken by Nicki and Nigel Tinkler to establish lessons learned and the infrastructure and knowledge into an Emergency Plan. This was reinforced by Mr Truluck in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan in that Wiltshire Council had indicated that an Emergency Plan should ideally sit alongside the NP. Mr Truluck also commented that flooding issues have changed over recent times and work ought to be put into updating the records. The Clerk was able to respond that the Flood Group at Wiltshire Council has done work to update plans and, with Bishopstone Parish Council and Bowerchalke Parish Council there is a desire to move this work forward as soon as circumstances permit. Mr Pickford had been identified as councillor to lead on this work.

A decision required at a future meeting as to nominating a lead Councillor to take responsibility for this work.

There was then discussion about recognising volunteers. As High Sheriff, Mr Truluck has had some initial conversations with the Lord Lieutenant and some thought is being given to both a series of local and a countywide event to mark the contribution made by volunteers. A possible thought is for the local community to nominate its volunteer champions and select one (or a group) to be put forward to a County recognition scheme.

The Council wholeheartedly supported this as well as considering some way of marking the work of all volunteers, perhaps in a public recognition board.

It was agreed that the Clerk should raise both these thoughts in an edition of the Broadsheet once we are is sight of coming out of the current crisis.

1. **End of Year Accounts and Annual Governance and Accounting Review (AGAR).**

The pre audited end of year accounts had been circulated, together with the draft of the AGAR. These documents and supporting files had been passed to Clifford Fry for internal audit review and the Clerk was able to report that there were no issues arising from the Internal Audit. Once approved by the Council documents can be passed to External Audit. They do still require a ‘wet signature from the Chairman and Clerk.

The Clerk reported change to procedures from previous years in that the Council do not fall beneath the de-minimus level of £25,000 that has enabled the Council to declare itself exempt from sending the completed AGAR to the external auditor for a limited assurance review. This is not the case for 2019/20 as the Council exceed the expenditure threshold (£28,716.24). This is largely consequent of the Neighbourhood Plan expenditure and a couple of one-off projects (Oil tank and playground fence).

As a result, the Clerk has been required to follow a different approach to that which has been the case over recent years. The draft AGAR is attached for Council approval.

Under the regime of submitting for limited assurance review, the Clerk considers there may be some risks that the Council are exposed to that could give rise to adverse auditor comment. The Clerk has undertaken some further work to mitigate the potential risks identified and had circulated additional Council documents for approval (Bank Reconciliation, Assets Register, explanation of key variances and Risk Register). Also circulated for approval was a summary expenditure record.

The Clerk has not been able to mitigate any risks that might arise through HMRC employment regulations and the practices followed for payment of stipend.

There was discussion as to appropriateness of submitting to External Audit bearing in mind the one-off cost (primarily Neighbourhood Plan) that had pushed expenditure over £25,000. It was suggested the Clerk talk to Stephen Whitmore as there had been a previous year wen expenditure was incurred on the building of the Sports Centre and recollections that Mr Whitmore had been able to present that this expenditure should be treated as ringfenced.

The AGAR and accounts need to be approved by the Parish Council and have to be submitted to the external auditor BEFORE 31 July 2020. There is a cost for this of £200+VAT. Note this was NOT included in our budget. Late submissions incur additional charge of £40 +VAT. There was discussion as to the Neighbourhood Plan underspend being used to fund this cost if the Council is not able to declare itself exempt from limited assurance review, but Mr Truluck advised that audit function was not an approved cost for this budget. It was agreed that the Council would fund out of its reserves for the year.

Both the accounts and the AGAR MUST be published on the Council’s website BEFORE 1 September 2020 together with declaration that the accounting statements are, as yet, unaudited AND Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights also has to be published.

Not later the 1 December 2020 the Council must publish

* Notice of conclusion of audit
* External Auditor Report and Certificate
* Section 1 & 2 of AGAR including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review.

The Council approved the accounts, Internal Audit Report, AGAR; the Risk Assessment; Explanation of key variances; Bank reconciliation and Asset Register with the inclusion in key variances of expenditure on Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council also agreed the Public Rights Period at the earliest opportunity when the Clerk has all the documentation in order.

The Clerk also reported that the VAT claim has now been submitted for 2019/20. A breakdown had been circulated. A total if £2753.31 is due.

1. **Future Meetings approach and Annual Parish Meeting.**

The Clerk reported that the Annual Parish Meeting has been postponed because of the restrictions around social distancing.

Guidance received is that an APM does not need to take place until the Council is able to, and this could be next year. Councillor positions just role forward. Mr M Pickford was nominated at the March meeting as Vice Chairman. This cannot be formalised until the APM but it is proposed that, where the Chairman is not able to attend future meetings, Mr Pickford is asked at each relevant meeting to deputises in his absence and this was agreed.

The law still requires a minimum of 4 meetings in the Municipal year. This May meeting being the Council’s first.

The Council discussed the frequency and mechanism for meetings during this Covid-19 period.

It was agreed to plan for monthly meetings but to make a final decision a week in advance ahead of Agenda being published.

It was also agreed to continue to use Zoom Pro during this period. The Chairman is able to access Zoom Pro currently. Mrs Holland and Mr Truluck also offered access to their Zoom Pro should the need arise, and this meant that the Council did not need to fund additional costs of £11.99/month.

When the lockdown eases it is likely that elements of the community will still not be allowed at public gatherings but may wish to attend meetings. The practical way forward would be through an on-line platform. It would also be a good way to provide greater flexibility for councillor’s remote attendance to meetings in the future, promote greater public participation and could assist in the dilemma the Chairman has about clash of business and parish meetings.

1. **Village Handyman and approach to finding replacement.**

A report had been circulated by the Clerk.

Following the retirement of Ron Chalk after many years serving the village, there is a need to find a suitable replacement. The Clerk has been undertaking the work pending decision, and this will be invoiced separately to hours worked as Clerk.

There is no schedule of work nor specification setting out the Council’s requirements. Ron had been employed as a self-employed ‘contractor’, undertaking the work without daily supervision and had used his own equipment and included costs within his hourly rate. Ron had the necessary Public Liability insurances in place.

The Clerk briefed the Council as to its Financial Regulations (11.1h specifically) that require the Council to ensure value-for-money and to achieve this when looking at services that cost in excess of £1500 by seeking a minimum of three competitive quotes.

As the handyman function has previously been undertaken without a written schedule, the Clerk has put a draft specification and pricing document in place for Council approval. The Clerk reported that this would be the appropriate way to set out the service requirements and to ensure quotes are received on the same basis and thereby ensure Best Value.

It should be noted that the Budget has been established based on the hourly rate and hours worked under historic arrangements. The Clerk considers it unlikely that a replacement provider would be found at this rate and that this will have a consequent impact on the Council’s budget. This will need to be addressed at the precept meeting in October/November.

Prospective interested parties will be required to have their own equipment and to provide consumable materials (fuel). Relevant insurances will also need to be in place.

The Chairman expressed a desire to maintain a flexible approach and had some concerns as to the Council ‘contracting’ the handyman services. Councillor Gilbert felt that the draft specification set out the requirements well enough. There was discussion as to potential providers of the service in the village and some suggestions were put forward.

The Clerk was asked to review the documents that he had prepared to ‘soften’ the approach and that an item in the Broad sheet seeking interested parties to come forward may be part of the approach.

In the mean-time the Clerk will continue to discharge the handyman functions.

1. **Councillor Annual Declarations.**

Members are reminded that they should review their Declarations of Interest published on Wiltshire Council website and make any changes.

1. **Planning Applications.**

Members considered the below planning applications.

* Planning application 20/02606/FUL: Manor Farm, Fourways Crossroads. Proposed new site entrance.

The Council voted unanimously to object to this application on highways safety grounds.

* Tree application: 20/03524/TCA. Underhill, South St. Fell Beech tree.

The Council had no comments on this application.

1. **Date of Next Meeting. Provisionally Wednesday 10 June via Zoom.** To be confirmed.