

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of **Warboys Parish Council** held remotely on 9th November 2020.

PRESENT

Councillor Dr S C Withams, Chairman

Councillors Mrs J M Cole, R J Dykstra, D W England, Ms L A Gifford, S J Green, Mrs M H Harlock, J A Parker, R A Payne, P S Potts and G C M Willis.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Councillor T V Rogers,
District Councillor G J Bull.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs C Evans, Mrs J E Tavener, Mrs S C Wilcox and Mrs A R Wyatt.

87/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members and also some members of the public to the first meeting of the Council that had been held remotely as a result of the current lockdown arrangements imposed by the Government to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

In view of the present situation, the Chairman explained that it would not be possible to have the annual social gathering with employees prior to the December meeting of the Council. She indicated that she would write to staff on behalf of the Council to thank them for their work over the past year and would keep the situation under review as to the possibility of meeting them socially at Easter.

88/20 MINUTES

Upon being moved and seconded, the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

89/20 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Clerk reported that Councillor England had declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No. 98/20 entitled 'Sports Holiday Proposal' as he was a trustee of the Sports Field and Chairman of the Sports Field Committee. He had submitted an application for a dispensation to speak and but not vote on the matter but had been granted a dispensation in this respect by the Council previously.

Councillor England declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No. 100/20 entitled 'Replacement Parish Centre' for the same reason. He also declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No 107/20 entitled 'Purchase of Land' as he farmed land nearby. Councillor England had received prior dispensations to speak but not vote on both matters.

90/20 REPORTS BY COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

The Chairman thanked both County Councillor Rogers and District Councillor Bull for attending the meeting remotely. As both Members needed to leave the meeting early, the Chairman asked them if they wished to raise any particular matters at this stage in the proceedings.

Councillor Rogers drew attention to the impact of the pandemic on the County Council and the services that they provided. Many officers had been diverted to other duties to support the vulnerable in the community during the first lockdown and were doing so again now in the second lockdown period. He mentioned that this was having severe consequences for the County Council's budget which was now facing a much larger deficit than anticipated. Additional support had been requested from the Government but this had yet to be forthcoming. He also mentioned that a number of schools were reporting that children had returned positive tests for the virus.

Councillor Bull reiterated the remarks about the effects of the pandemic on staff of the District Council, most of which were working from home. He indicated that he was aware of concerns about delays in the planning system in particular. Councillor Bull reported that he had contacted the Conservation Team to urge progress in resolving the situation with regard to 66 High Street now that the property was in new ownership.

(Councillor Bull then left the meeting.)

91/20 MATTERS ARISING

The Council considered the following matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2020:-

(a) Damage to Sheepwash

Further to Minute No. 65/20(b), the Clerk reported that it had been necessary for the Handymen to clear away briars that had grown over the Sheepwash during the summer before photographs could be taken of the damage caused in a road traffic accident. The photos would now be sent to the insurers of the driver involved to seek reimbursement for the cost of repair.

(b) Adams Lyons Playground – Trees

Further to Minute No. 65/20(d), the Clerk reported that Global Tree Solutions had received confirmation from the District Council that there was no objection to the proposed tree surgery at Adams Lyons playground and the company hoped to carry out the work in the near future.

With regard to the request from the occupier of a property in Farriers Way about a branch in Jubilee Park overhanging his garden and greenhouse, the Clerk reported that he had met another two tree surgeons to discuss the work. Only one additional quotation had been received which was significantly lower than the price quoted by Global Tree Solutions. It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the quotation received from Ayres Tree Care in the sum of £200 be accepted and the Clerk requested to arrange for the work to be undertaken.

(c) Dredging of The Weir

Arising from Minute No. 65/20(e), the Clerk reported that he had been unable to yet contact other contractors with a view to the possible dredging of The Weir.

(d) A141 Speed Reduction Measures

Further to Minute No. 68/20, the Clerk reported that County Councillor Rogers had also expressed his support for the request for speed reduction measures on the A141 between Warboys and Chatteris. A reply had been received from the County Council advising that the matter had been passed to the Highways Projects and Road Safety Manager who would be responding in due course.

Councillor Rogers referred to the inability of the highway infrastructure to cope with the scale of development locally. He advised that he was receiving numerous complaints from residents in his Division about the excessive speed of traffic and rat-running to avoid the additional distance involved in using the re-aligned route of the A14.

(e) Footpath Link to the Furrows Development

Arising from Minute No. 70/20, Councillor Willis drew attention to the deterioration of the footpath link provided to date between the Furrows development and Jubilee Park. As the footpath had been built on a steep slope, the top surface material was being washed away by recent rainfall. It was suggested that the type of material used would be unsuitable for the link to the internal footpath in Jubilee Park and the Clerk indicated that he would discuss the matter with the Bellway site manager.

(f) Outfall Ditch from The Furrows Development

Arising from Minute No. 71/20 and in response to a question from Councillor Willis, the Clerk reported that he had not received any further information from the County Council about the clearance of the culvert between the rear gardens of properties in Madecroft and the High Street. As Councillor Willis advised that the ditch was now filling with stagnant water, the Clerk undertook to ask the County Council for a progress report.

(Councillor Parker arrived at the meeting at this point in the proceedings and County Councillor Rogers left the meeting.)

(g) Remembrance Sunday Arrangements

Further to Minute No. 73/20, the Chairman reported on the arrangements made for the Remembrance Sunday service and laying of wreaths at the war memorial. These had been subject to change throughout the previous week as Government's guidance in response to the Covid-19 pandemic had been updated. The Rector had decided finally to hold a service by Zoom at the Parish Church, followed by a short service at the war memorial which had included the two minutes silence at 11.00 a.m., lowering of the Royal British Legion standard and Last Post.

The Chairman reported that she had laid the Parish Council's wreath slightly earlier in the morning but had remained for the service at the war memorial

which had been attended by some 40 – 50 socially distanced members of the public. Councillor Mrs Cole also mentioned that she and other residents of the High Street had observed the two minutes silence in their front gardens.

Members commended the Rector and those involved in managing to organise the event during the current lockdown.

(h) Display Boards

Further to Minute No. 79/20, the Clerk reported that the display board at the Parish Centre containing the names of Council chairmen had been taken to Michael Murray Signs of Pidley for the names of parish clerks to be added.

(i) Pop-up Bistro

Further to Minute No. 80/20, the Clerk reported that the Council's decision in response to the request for a pop-up bistro in Warboys had been sent to the person concerned but a reply had not been received.

92/20 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12th October 2020 be received.

93/20 POLICE REPORT

Attention was drawn to the information on crimes recorded in the Parish which was contained in the weekly updates provided by the Police and forwarded by the Clerk to Members. Particular attention was drawn to the report of a number of vehicles having been broken into overnight on 5th November in various locations in the village. Councillor Ms Gifford advised that she had posted the information on the Council's Facebook page to alert residents to the incidents.

The Clerk also drew attention to an announcement by the Chief Constable regarding plans to reduce the number of PCSOs in the County, together with other cuts in service, to achieve savings in the Constabulary's budget. However the Chief Constable had also drawn attention to the fact that the number of police officers allocated to neighbourhood policing teams was expected to increase by 75 officers over a three year period from 2018.

94/20 WARBOYS RESIDENTS AGAINST NOISY TRAFFIC (RANT)

Further to Minute No. 65/20(f), a report was submitted by the Clerk (copies of which had been circulated) following the receipt of the analysis supplied by Community Roadwatch (CRW) of a survey questionnaire undertaken on behalf of Warboys RANT.

The Clerk advised Members that the report had been highly critical of the Parish Council which was accused of ignoring the complaints of residents about traffic in the village. The Clerk suggested that the language used in the survey and report had been unfortunate as it had been accusatory in tone and had lacked an appreciation of the

powers available to the Council. 54 out of 201 survey forms delivered had been returned which represented a response rate of 27%. Of those, 29% (16 replies) considered that there was a persistent problem compared with the remainder either considering that there wasn't a problem, being undecided or having returned what CRW described as being unhelpful or abusive replies.

The report submitted by the Clerk listed the many occasions that highways reports had been considered at meetings of the Council and discussions had taken place in the past two years, the number of successful Local Highway Improvement bids that had been achieved and other expenditure incurred on highways improvements. The Council had undertaken several consultation exercises in that time to obtain the views of residents on highway improvements and the Clerk therefore suggested that it was incorrect to accuse the Council of ignoring the concerns of residents.

Members expressed their disappointment that the members of RANT remained anonymous and were unwilling to provide their names which meant that all correspondence had to be channelled through CRW. Reference also was made to inaccuracies in the report and a general misunderstanding of the powers available to the Council.

The Clerk reported that the survey report had summarised the concerns of residents as being the number of HGVs travelling through the village, the speed of and times at which tractors were driven through the village, and cars and motorbikes, some with modified exhausts, being driven too fast and causing a noise nuisance. Various courses of action had been suggested for the Council to consider, most of which had either been discussed previously by the Council, were impractical or would generate unintended consequences which could outweigh the problems identified.

With regard to the question of tractors, Members acknowledged that the harvest was weather dependent and farmers often had to work late at night to gather crops when weather conditions were suitable.

At the invitation of the Chairman, two members of the public who were in attendance at the meeting addressed Members with their concerns and asked particularly if tractors could be diverted to use New Road and Church Road to prevent them from travelling along the High Street.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that further consideration of the survey results be deferred and a working party established comprising Councillors Green, Payne and Willis to meet the residents in attendance at the meeting to discuss the issues raised.

95/20 LAY-BY AT ST MARY'S GREEN

Further to Minute No. 69/20, the Clerk submitted a further report on the lay-by at St Mary's Green (copies of which had been circulated) following the receipt of further correspondence from Community Roadwatch (CRW).

At their previous meeting, the Council had rejected a recommendation by CRW for the construction of a footway at the St Mary's Green lay-by. CRW had responded by claiming that the Parish Council had a duty of care to protect its residents and that an

advance warning sign of pedestrians in the carriageway should be erected in Ramsey Road. CRW had suggested that white lines be painted across the lay-by to mimic a footway and had also offered to survey pedestrians to ask whether they felt safe when crossing the lay-by.

The Clerk reported that he had received confirmation from County Council highway officers that they would not support the installation of the sign requested, both because pedestrians were not in the carriageway when they crossed the lay-by and the required advance visibility could not be provided. The officers also had rejected the idea of a footway delineated by markings in the lay-by as this might result in pedestrians having less regard for their own safety.

The Clerk invited Members to reject CRW's contention that the Parish Council had a duty of care to act to protect the highway safety of pedestrians which was the function of the highway authority. While the Parish Council could raise concerns on behalf of residents, it was impractical for the Parish Council to accept responsibility for matters that were the function of other statutory public bodies.

RESOLVED

that the report be received and no further action taken.

96/20 66 HIGH STREET

Further to Minute No. 65/20(a), the Clerk and Councillor Willis reported that there had been a change in ownership of No 66 High Street and that they had met the new owner on site at his invitation. Members were informed that the premises and outbuildings had deteriorated significantly and required substantial investment.

The owner had contacted the District Council's Conservation Team to discuss his proposals for the future of the premises and District Councillor Bull had added his support in trying to achieve the refurbishment of the building after many years of it having lain empty and being an eyesore in the centre of the High Street.

97/20 WARBOYS LANDFILL SITE

Members were reminded that the Section 106 Agreement accompanying the planning permission for a combined heat and power plant at the Landfill Site required the creation of a separate site liaison committee which contained two representatives of the Parish Council. The committee had yet to meet and the owner of the Landfill Site had advised that the CHP plant was unlikely to proceed in the near future. Nevertheless the owner had invited comments on landscaping required by the Section 106 Agreement to improve the appearance of the entrance to the site. A copy of the proposed landscaping plans had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

The Clerk reported that he had received an assurance from the County Council's case officer that the landscaping proposed would not constitute a commencement of the development of the CHP plant which was required within three years of the permission having been granted.

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillors Mrs Cole and England, with the Clerk as substitute, be appointed to the CHP site liaison committee; and
- (b) that no objection be raised to the landscaping scheme proposed.

98/20 SPORTS HOLIDAY CLUB PROPOSAL

The Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) following an approach from a fitness company with a proposal to run sports activities for children in school holidays in Warboys. Members were also informed that the District Council's Active Leisure team had organised holiday sports clubs in association with parish councils and a flyer was attached to the report showing a case study of activities in association with The Offords Parish Council.

The cost of providing a week of activities was likely to be in the region of £1,500 but the Clerk reported that he had approached Whittome Wind Trust who had indicated that they would be prepared to meet half of the cost. A number of potential outdoor venues for the activities were suggested, including Adams Lyons playground, the Sports Field and Primary Academy but indoor space would also be required in the event of bad weather and for the use of toilet facilities, etc.

Having expressed their support for the idea, Members asked the Clerk to investigate the possibility of a scheme being organised in 2021 and report back to a future meeting.

99/20 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

Further to Minute No. 75/20, the rising infection rates from the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in a second national lockdown of activities until 2nd December. Although playgrounds could remain open, the Parish Centre had been closed with the exception of the Day Centre sessions were classified as an exemption to provide support for a vulnerable group. Members were informed that the Handymen would continue to work through the lockdown subject to a risk assessment to ensure that they met the necessary safety requirements.

As the Parish Centre had been closed, it had been necessary to hold Council meetings on-line and a monthly subscription had been opened with Zoom. The suggestion at the previous meeting for face-to-face meetings in the Parish Centre with on-line access for others unable to attend had been superseded but the Clerk reported that he had been unable to obtain further information from the Council's IT supplier. Enquiries with BT for a new land line to the Parish Centre had also encountered problems as the company were not prepared to quote unless the premises were included on Royal Mail's postcode locator and Royal Mail were unwilling to include the premises unless it had a post box for the receipt of mail.

100/20 REPLACEMENT PARISH CENTRE

Further to Minute No. 81/20, the Chairman reported that the representatives of the Sports Field Committee had been unable to attend a meeting arranged with them to discuss the replacement of the Parish Centre on 5th November and the meeting had been re-arranged to be held on 12th November.

101/20 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

Further to Minute Nos. 11/20 and 12/20, the Clerk reported that the audit of the Council's accounts for 2019/20 had been completed by the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP, and that there were no matters to bring to the attention of the Council.

102/20 OPEN FORUM

The Clerk reported that the only question raised at the Open Forum following the previous meeting of the Council had related to the cost of replacement of the Parish Centre which had been answered at the time.

103/20 ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED

that the following accounts be approved:-

		£
M J Buddle	Salary – October 2020	1,092.32
W E Batterbee	Salary – October 2020	1,090.72
R Edwards	Salary – October 2020	240.00
R Reeves	Salary - October 2020	1,045.58
Mrs N Everett	Salary – October 2020	569.30
HMRC	Tax & NIC – October 2020	1,493.04
R Reeves	Reimbursement – printer ink	22.99
R Reeves	Reimbursement – Zoom subscription	14.39.
Vodafone	Mobile phone contract (Timebank) (paid by direct debit)	10.66
E.ON	Electricity supply - Parish Centre (paid by direct debit)	65.00
E.ON	Gas supply - Parish Centre (paid by direct debit)	105.75
Chess ICT Ltd.	IT support – October (paid by direct debit)	157.67
Allstar	Fuel (paid by direct debit)	54.02
Total Gas & Power	UMS 1 street lighting electricity supply - October	5.55

Total Gas & Power	UMS 3 street lighting electricity Supply - October	5.04
ESPO	Miscellaneous supplies	112.29
ESPO	Cleaning materials	56.34
CPRE	Annual subscription	36.00
Cranbrook Plants	Bedding plants	163.80
Business Services at CAS Ltd	Annual insurance premium	3,180.97
PKF Littlejohn LLP	Audit fees	720.00
Smith of Derby Ltd	Repairs to Jubilee Clock	907.20
Ramsey Builders Merchants Ltd	Building materials	18.60
Balfour Beatty Living Places	Quarterly street lighting maintenance	144.90

104/20 BUDGETARY CONTROL

The Council received the budgetary control statement and the list of Parish Centre bookings for October together with the bank reconciliation statement for the second quarter of the year, copies of which had been circulated to all Members.

105/20 PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF TREE

The Chairman reported that she had agreed to admit the following item for consideration subsequent to the despatch of the agenda.

Members were informed that an approach had been received from the County Council's Local Highways Officer enquiring whether the Parish Council had any objection to a request by the owner of 96 High Street to the removal of an alder tree in the highway verge outside the property to enable them to widen the access to their driveway. An offer had been made to replace the tree with a flowering cherry.

RESOLVED

that no objection be raised to the request, subject to the replacement tree being of a suitable size and species.

106/20 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of the following item, on the grounds that it contained information relating to the potential sale price of land.

107/20 PURCHASE OF LAND

Further to Minute No. 86/20, the Clerk submitted a further report (copies of which had been circulated) with regard to the potential purchase of land adjoining the A141.

As a valuation had yet to be received from the agent engaged by the Council and the owner had advised the Clerk that he would not now be offering the land for sale until March 2021, it was

RESOLVED

that consideration of the matter be deferred to a future meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

Chairman.