

ASHMANSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Date: 20th May 2020 **Time:** 6.00 pm
Place: Meeting held virtually via Zoom
Present: Cllr Alan Cox (Chairman) Cllr Andrew Bays
Cllr Angela Harris Cllr Kieron Black
In Attendance: Sadie Owen (Clerk) 3 parishioners
Cllr Graham Falconer
Apologies: Cllr Sally Burch

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Cllr Sally Burch.
Cllr Cox thanked Cllr Bays for organising the meeting via Zoom.

2. Minutes of last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2020 were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record. Cllr Cox agreed to sign them and hand back to the Clerk.

**Cllr
Cox**

3. Planning applications

- a) Application update
20/00061/FUL Land at Manor Farm Barns. The applicant was present and explained that the application had been amended to change the use of the field from paddock to garden curtilage (required by Natural England); and to detach the garage from the house (required by the conservation officer). There were no objections.

4. Council business

- a) Chairman's annual report
The Chair provided a brief update on the work of the council over the preceding year (please see Appendix B).

Cllr Cox further reported that he had printed copies of the recent Neighbourcare newsletter and delivered it to the 8 residents in Ashmansworth without email.

- b) Clerk's report
The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from HCC informing the council that the 2020 priority vegetation cutting list of rights of way would be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. It was suggested that parish councils should, if possible, utilise the skills of the lengthsman to carry out such work.

The Clerk further reported that the first virtual BDBC planning committee meeting had successfully taken place that morning. The Clerk perceived this as a positive move back to 'business as usual'.

- c) Lengthsman tasks
Cllr Cox commented that the lengthsman was in the process of repairing a stile on footpath 3 and further, agreed to send an email to AshyPC email group to request suggestions for footpaths and rights of way that required clearing.
- d) Outstanding actions from past minutes
The council approved the award of a blue plaque by the homeowners of the former Post Office now known as The Flint House (commemorating Flight Sergeant Norman Scull and his role in the pioneering crossing of the Atlantic by the airship R34 in 1919).
- e) Update from Borough Councillor
Cllr Falconer referred to a recent spate of rural burglaries from outbuildings and farms and reported that the Leader of BDBC was in talks with the Borough Commander to try and address the issue of theft of in rural areas.

It was noted that there were only 8 rural police in Hampshire and so resources were likely to be stretched, however the Estate Director of Facombe commented that there was a strong WhatsApp group of local gamekeepers and landowners who worked together to share information and it was suggested that consultation with them would be beneficial when formulating a response and plan.

A local resident queried whether the crime extended to churches, however it was felt to predominantly concern outbuildings and farm machinery.

It was reported that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the borough councillors and mayor would all remain in their current roles for the forthcoming year.

It was reported that the Chief Executive of BDBC had recently resigned and would be taking up a new position in Nottingham in September.

Cllr Bays queried whether parish council precepts would be impacted by the crisis. Cllr Falconer responded that BDBC would be heavily impacted by lost car parking income and property rent, however the message was to carry on with business as usual.

5. Local Roads

Verge cutting – in response to a number of complaints at recent verge cutting, the Estate Director of Facombe Estates Ltd was present to explain the rationale for the early cutting.

The Estate Director apologised specifically to the Chair and explained that the verge outside his property had been cut by mistake. He further apologised if the general verge cutting had upset residents and explained that it had been undertaken with safety in mind.

It was reported that verges around the parish had been cut as part of a detailed environmental plan to fell a large number of dead or dying roadside trees and replace them with new ones later in the season. It was stated that the verges had been cut now in order to reduce the environmental damage done later in the tree replacement work.

The decision had been made having taken advice on timing to avoid harming any ground nesting birds, hedgehogs or similar and to make the most of any opportunity for any wild flowers to set seed. It was explained that an extensive roadside tree survey of the whole Facombe Estate had taken place which had identified a large number of trees that needed to be felled. Such work would involve the verges all

over the estate and so the decision was taken to cut the verges now in order to avoid undue mess and to make it easier to clear the felled timber.

It was reported that Faccombe Estate took environmental responsibilities seriously and that the estate was involved in an extensive scheme to promote wildflowers and biodiversity in conjunction with the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology. Further, the Estate had recently been nominated as a climate change champion.

The Estate Director offered to provide a tour of the estate and explain the work undertaken to any local residents that wished to know further.

The council thanked the Estate Director for his clear explanation and applauded the work undertaken by Faccombe Estates.

The Chair commented that as Ashmansworth village was a conservation area all trees therein were protected with TPOs, and so permission to fell would be required from BDBC. The Chair agreed to send the Estate Director a map of the conservation area for clarification.

**Cllr
Cox**

6. Footpaths

Covered under item 4 above.

7. Looking forward

Cllr Cox commented that he intended to circulate a discussion document to the Ashy PC email group suggesting items that would need to be addressed and things for all to think about when recovering from the coronavirus pandemic, and emerging from lockdown. Cllr Cox promised to report back at the next meeting.

**Cllr
Cox**

8. Coronavirus response and local needs

It was felt that the combined efforts of Neighbourcare, the Ashy PC email distribution list and actively delivering newsletter updates to those without email was providing a good level of support and assistance. The council expressed its sincere thanks to Neighbourcare.

9. Financial Matters

- a) Payments Approval – the Clerk presented the financial statement (Appendix A). The payments were unanimously approved.
- b) Certificate of exemption – Cllr Cox and the Clerk duly signed the Certificate of Exemption confirming that during the financial year 2019/20 neither the council's total gross income nor total gross expenditure exceeded £25,000.
- c) Annual governance statement 2019-20 – the Clerk presented the annual return to the council. The council approved the annual governance statement and Cllr Cox and the Clerk duly signed the relevant sections.
- d) Annual accounting statement 2019-20 – the council approved the annual accounting statements as an accurate representation of the council's financial position and its receipts and payments. Cllr Cox and the Clerk duly signed the relevant section.
- e) Internal audit findings - key points raised in the internal audit referred to the fact that the 2019 AGAR had not been approved by the legal deadline, that website links to members register of interests required an update and that all councillors should use council specific email addresses.

Clerk

Clerk

10. Date of next meeting

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm. Next meeting Tuesday 7th July at 6.00 pm

Appendix A

Financial Statement: Ashmansworth Parish Council

Meeting date: 20/05/2020

Balances:

Statement No: 20/05/20 Balance	Balance after reconciliation - 20/05/20
£5,327.01	£5,938.01

Payments since last meeting date:

Cheque No	Payee	Details	TOTAL COST
	Ashmansworth PCC	Donation	400.00
TOTAL			400.00

New items for payment

Date	Payee	Details	TOTAL COST
	HALC	Affiliation fees	146.72
	HALC	NALC levy	12.82
	A D Clark	Invoice 383	190.00
	Do the Numbers	Audit invoice	160.00
	Mrs S Owen	Clerk salary April	115.68
	HMRC	Month 1 Tax/NIC	28.80
	Mrs S Owen	Clerk salary May	115.68
	HMRC	Month 2 Tax/NIC	28.80
	HALC	LCPC membership	192.00
	GLEAM	Annual membership	15.00
	Came & Company	Insurance	330.00
TOTAL			£1,335.50

Receipts since last meeting date:

Receipt Date	Payer	Details	TOTAL AMOUNT
27/04/20	BDBC	Half precept	2,061.50
27/04/20	BDBC	Grass cutting grant	285.00
TOTAL			£2,346.50

Payments not yet presented

Cheque No	Payee	Details	TOTAL COST
TOTAL			0.00

Appendix B

Ashmansworth Parish Council review of 2019-20

We were enjoying a “normal” year until the virus lock-down.

We were due to have borough re-organisation and elections this month.

We were to become part of a new, larger ward, joined by East Woodhay to be called Evingar.

However, with elections cancelled, this change will wait until next year.

For the same reason, we are not holding an Annual Meeting this year, so these notes are our “Annual Report”.

With no Annual Meeting, our chair and vice-chair remain in post for another year.

During the past year, we had planning applications relating to 4 properties and tree requests for 2 properties. The two most recent applications, to replace the barns at Manor Farm and the garage at Beech Tree Cottage are delayed by the virus shut-down, but the others were all approved by the planners, including one at 6 Highfield which we objected to.

The lengthsman has done useful jobs of hedge and path clearance and stile repair. We look for further tasks for the new year.

Various potholes have been repaired, for which we are grateful. We reported concerns at dangerous tree branches, though no action was taken until they actually fell in the wind!

We remain concerned at vehicles speeding through Ashmansworth village and have started to study how to tackle this.

We are looking at the possibility of moving our website to a different provider, who appears to offer a free and more user-friendly service.

Due to the virus we have taken to holding our meetings via Zoom, which has been very successful. We have also set up a google group called Ashy PC, whereby all parishioners with email can post and receive messages to all. This has proved very popular and has greatly assisted people offering to help others who are isolated and need assistance, shopping etc. We also are members of EWH Neighbourcare which assists with collecting prescriptions, taking people to Woolton Hill surgery and a very informative weekly Newsletter.

Financial report:

The Precept remained the same as the previous year at £4,123. Income from BDBC was less than the previous year with a grass cutting grant of £282.

Very small reserves were accumulated throughout the year with an opening balance in April 2019 of £5,301 and a closing balance of £5,396.

The council’s internal audit took place on 12th May with no significant findings.

The council’s precept remains the same for the forthcoming year and small grants are available to worthy, local causes.