

KNEBORTH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on the 10 June 2020 at 8.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Roger Willcocks (Chairman), Adrienne Charter, Charlotte Cosson, Rosemary Conybeare, Philip Farr, Jeremy Godfrey, Jenny Harrison, Steve Hemingway, Paul Jobling, Lisa Nash, Colin Stringer and Paul Ward

In attendance: The Clerk, CC Thake plus one member of the public

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence. The chairman welcomed County Councillor Thake to the meeting.

2. To Receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensation

There were no declarations of interest

3. Public Participation

None

4. Minutes

Proposed by Mr Godfrey, seconded by Mrs Harrison and

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 13 May 2020 as a true record by the Chairman.

5. To Note the Minutes of Committee Meetings

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 13 May 2020 were noted.

6. Temporary Traffic Management due to Covid 19

County Councillor Thake reported that in his thirty plus years as a councillor, he has never had so many messages on one issue. He would like to assist with a dialogue between the Parish Council and Herts County Council officers to address the complaints which have arisen following the removal of parking on the High Street and the installation of barriers to create wider footpaths, to assist social distancing when non-essential shops reopen on 15 June 2020.

Mr McManus, Head of HCC Public Health, has to ensure that vulnerable people are kept safe with social distancing. Officers are to monitor following easing of restrictions and if they prove to be unnecessary they will react accordingly.

The introduction of measures has had a negative impact on the trade of the shops that have remained open and those which have reopened. The dry cleaner and Simmons are considering closing again as a result of the measures. The owner of the dry cleaners has also complained about the closure of the parking on the recreation grounds access road, although parking is restricted to three hours.

Mrs Charter asked how HCC is to monitor the situation from the 15 June and how will they come to a decision? Will shop keepers' opinions be taken into account and if shops close due to loss of revenue does that help the vulnerable?

CC Thake said the director of Public Health makes the final decision, he also advises government ministers. He has to ensure that vulnerable people stay safe and changes are likely if there is a relaxation in social distancing.

Mr Willcocks said that there was no consultation, although legislation states that there should have been some.

CC Thake expressed his disappointment in the lack of consultation and confirmed that he was not apprised of the situation before installation. There will be a retrospective review on the implementation of the measures.

Mrs Nash confirmed that she has entered a dialogue with NHDC to obtain free parking in St Martins Road Car park to help with the significant loss in the High Street. No decisions have been taken yet.

Mr Ward thought that it would be helpful if people had facts as to what analysis took place in Knebworth. What regulations and analysis justifies putting them in place.

CC Thake confirmed that he did not know. The process was not open but he assumed the basis was the B197, a busy road, and the width of the footpaths. He will obtain information on the rationality and reality.

Mr Farr asked who at County level authorised the restrictions, for the Parish Council to submit a Freedom of Information request.

CC Thake stated that Jim McManus, Head of Public Health, initiated the measures to bring back retail trading, making sure vulnerable people are kept safe. The highways rated B197 higher than B656 through Codicote. He confirmed that he is aware of the issues and will get the facts on the methodology and report back.

There was some support for a Freedom of Information request, but a decision was deferred. The Council wished to focus on removing some or all of the barriers on the High Street to allow some on street parking. The Council could not endorse the barriers being removed illegally.

The Council agreed to wait a week to allow CC Thake to gather the information and HCC to amend the barriers and provide temporary disabled spaces to assist the vulnerable.

It was also agreed to contact St Martins Church to ask if it would permit shoppers to use its car park.

The Council will inform residents and traders of steps taken.

CC Thake and the member of the public left the meeting.

7. Stepping Stone Preschool

The Preschool began operating from the pavilion on a temporary basis in 2012, however it is now evident that finding suitable alternative accommodation is unlikely. Mr Farr recommended seeking legal advice on accruing rights with the licence to operate. He is to obtain a quote from chambers.

Proposed by Mr Farr, seconded by Mr Ward and

Resolved: to permit a licence to operate in the pavilion for the school year 2020/21 at an annual charge of £4,020.

8. Station Pub

The tenant would like to erect a gate and fence around the car park for security and a temporary safe outside space.

Proposed by Mr Willcocks

Resolved: to approve the fence and gates subject to any planning requirements.

The council considered the proposal to employ someone to prepare regular reviews of the pub business. Three and six month reviews were considered, for the first year and it was agreed that quarterly monitoring would provide a clearer picture of the business in its first year.

Proposed by Mr Farr, seconded by Mrs Charter

Resolved: to accept Mr Rawling quote to provide quarterly reviews to the Council for one year.

9. Council Property

The Council discussed the impact of Covid 19 on use of the Tennis Courts which were closed but have recently reopened with restricted access.

The bowling green closed in March and has not reopened yet.

The clerk is to contact both clubs to obtain information on the impact of the pandemic on use of the facilities.

The Station Pub is still closed and will not reopen before 4 July at the earliest.

Fullers has waived rent for its tenants until the end of July.

Mr Hemingway stated that the Parish Council is not an expert and perhaps rent should be discussed with Mr Rawling.

It was agreed that that no rent would be charged until the next meeting on 8 July, when more information will be available.

The decision on the potential charges for reopening of the village hall was deferred until government has issued its guidelines.

10. Clerk's Report

10.1 Traffic lights have been installed on Station Approach to create two pedestrian crossing points as a result of the scaffolding put up for Redemption House.

10.2 The work to convert the tennis courts to all weather courts is to start at the end of June and will include the removal of the conifers. Replacement trees will be planted in the autumn.

10.3 The increase in usage of the recreation grounds due to the Covid 19 restrictions has seen significant increase in litter and household waste in the bins.

10.4 Grass cuttings and garden waste is being dumped in King George V Playing Fields.

10.5 A resident has requested that a SID be reinstated at the St Thomas More site because she is concerned about the speed of traffic. She is suggesting more measures should be introduced to reduce speed in and out of the village and combining resources with Woolmer Green

11. Finance

11.1 To approve accounts paid from 1 May to 31 May 2020
Proposed by Mr Godfrey seconded by Mr Stringer and
Resolved: to approve the accounts paid from 1 to 31 May 2020.

11.2 To approve quotes

11.2.1 Proposed by Mr Godfrey seconded by Mrs Charter and
Resolved: To accept Mr Wright's quote of £235 to install a fan to provide fresh air into the village hall kitchen.

11.2.2 Proposed by Mr Godfrey, seconded by Mr Hemingway and
Resolved: to accept Mr Wright's quote of £895 to provide a 32amp supply to the Coach House.

11.2.3 Proposed by Mr Hemingway, seconded by Mrs Cosson and
Resolved: to accept Mr Wright's quote to fit a PIR light at a cost of £115.

11.2.4 Proposed by Mr Ward, seconded by Mrs Charter and
Resolved: to employ Mr Willcocks as a handyman at a cost of £12 per hour, with a maximum spend of £1000.

11.3 To approve the bank reconciliation for May
Proposed by Mrs Conybeare, seconded by Mrs Harrison and
Resolved: to approve the bank reconciliation for May 2020.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Mrs Harrison requested that the access road barrier be opened at weekends. People visiting the park at weekends are parking dangerously in Bell Close and this would alleviate the problem.

12.2 Mrs Charter suggested that the gate could be left open beyond 5.00pm, when the groundsman leaves. However there is no one available to then lock it and it was agreed to leave it as it stands at present.

12.3 The next meeting is scheduled for 8 July 2020.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.27 p.m.

Chairman _____

Date _____