

KNEBWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 8 July 2020 at 8.08 p.m.

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

In attendance: The Clerk,

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Farr, Godfrey, and Jobling.

2. **To Receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensation**

Mr Stringer declared that he had an interest in the allotments, because his property backs on to the site.

3. **Public Participation**

None

4. **Minutes**

Proposed by Mrs Conybeare, seconded by Mr Ward and

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 10 June 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 10 June 2020 were noted.

6. **High Street Temporary Measures**

The County Council has benefited from a £1.25M grant from the Emergency Active Travel Fund to promote walking and cycling. It had drawn up temporary schemes for Knebworth which it hoped would resolve some of its long term traffic issues. However funding has to be spent within eight weeks and therefore schemes have to be agreed quickly.

Mr Ward outlined the proposals, which could be made permanent if successful.

1. On the High Street: parklets were proposed to create a green and pleasant space to spend time on the High Street. A parklet is a space on the highway the size of parking spaces, is created at the same level as the pavement and has seating and planters. The proposed location on the High Street would reduce parking spaces to sixteen. The parklets would replace the barriers, making the area more attractive and control the speed of traffic.

The Parish Council suggested that St Martins Road car park should be made free for 30 minutes, to mitigate any loss of parking on the High Street.

2. On Station Road: the proposal is to widen the footpath under the railway bridge. This would be achieved by creating a single carriageway with traffic lights either side of the railway bridge. It also requires the closure of the northern end of Gun Lane and Pondcroft Road to motorised vehicles. The roads would still be through routes for pedestrians and cyclists, as planters would be installed to create the closure. The closures would prevent conflict with the traffic lights and stop the rat run on these two roads. There was also discussion on closing the southern end of Deards End Lane.
3. Station Forecourt: To remove the southerly access and realign parking to create a piazza on the southern part of the forecourt. The bike storage would be relocated to the southern forecourt.

Whilst this could be an opportunity to do something positive about the issues within the village, further loss of parking was not considered a positive move. It was agreed that a meeting would be arranged to meet the tight deadlines required.

Mr Stringer commented that there had been an undertaking that the barriers would be removed when social distancing reduced to one metre.

Mrs Charter felt that the closure of the northern end of Pondcroft Road and Gun Lane would not be supported by residents.

7. Allotments

The Parish Council has an obligation to consider providing allotments. The Watton Road site, although small, is conveniently located near the centre of the village and is sustainably accessible to a large number of residents. The availability of agricultural land in the parish is extremely limited and there may be an opportunity in the future to extend them should the adjacent site be developed.

A third party had made the chairman aware that the owner would accept a minimum sum together with the agent's fee. This was conveyed to councillors and a proposal to make a bid at this level was agreed by the Council via email vote. The offer was made, accepted and a solicitor appointed.

Mrs Charter thought it unusual for the purchaser to pay commission. Mrs Nash stated that Mr Gilbert is very community spirited and offered to speak to him.

Mr Hemingway suggested that the private bidders might be willing to contribute to the purchase. He also mentioned a CIC, but thought the Parish Council could not have a share in one.

8. Christmas Lights

The Council approved the quote to repair and install the lights for Christmas 2020. It also agreed the quote to improve the lights on the tree on St Martins Green.

Lamps and Tubes also quoted to provide someone to attend a switch on event. It was highlighted that the government might place restrictions on gatherings due to the pandemic. A decision on whether to have a switch on event was deferred to the September meeting. The Council, however, agreed to advertise that it is looking at a switch on event and inviting any interested parties, who would like to organise it, to contact the Council.

9. Station Pub

The Council reviewed and approved the report on the pub. The clerk confirmed that planning permission has been granted for the external staircase.

10. Council Property

The Bowls and Tennis Clubs have both reopened.

Proposed by Mr Willcocks and

Resolved: to charge the Bowls and Tennis Clubs from 1 July 2020.

The Station Pub reopened on 4 July 2020 and trade is lower than pre Covid rates. Mr Rawling had provided industry information on reopening across the hospitality sector; rent is being based on turnover or profit share. He advised that rent should be reviewed monthly at present.

Proposed by Mr Willcocks, seconded by Mrs Charter and

Resolved: to charge rent for the first four weeks based on the recommendation, deferring payment for the first two weeks until the end of January 2021.

11. Clerk's Report

11.1 The playgrounds are now allowed to reopen subject to a risk assessment and government guidance. Mr Stringer has produced a risk assessment and appropriate signage for reopening. The clerk is to inform the insurance company.

11.2 Guidance has been issued for reopening village halls. A risk assessment is required and this is to be discussed by the Amenities Committee.

12. Finance

12.1 To review management accounts to 30 June 2020

The Council reviewed and approved the management accounts to 30 June 2020

12.2 To approve accounts paid from 1 June to 30 June 2020

Proposed by Mr Willcocks, seconded by Mr Stringer and

Resolved: to approve the accounts paid from 1 to 30 June 2020.

12.3 To approve quotes

A quote had been obtained for the services of a barrister to review the Licence to Operate for Stepping Stone Preschool. As the Preschool does not have access to the building outside the licence period, the Council agreed to defer the review.

12.4 To approve the bank reconciliation

Proposed by Mr Willcocks and

Resolved: to approve the bank reconciliation to 30 June 2020.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 The next meeting is scheduled for 9 September 2020.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21.56 p.m.

Chairman _____

Date _____

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