

KNEBWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13 January 2021 at 8.45 p.m.

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

In attendance: The Clerk

1. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2. To Receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensation

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Participation

None

4. Minutes

Proposed by Mr Stringer, seconded by Mr Ward and

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 9 December 2020 as a true record by the Chairman.

5. To Note the Minutes of Committee Meetings

The Council noted the committee minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9 December 2020.

6. Assets of Community Value

6.1 Recreation Grounds

The whole of the recreation grounds, off Watton Road, is identified as Greenspace in the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan. The Council owns most of the site but has a short lease on five acres. The grounds have always been well used but it has seen increased usage by people of all ages during the pandemic. The site also includes the only vehicular access to the site.

Proposed by Mr Farr, seconded by Mr Godfrey

Resolved: to apply to register the land leased from Herts County Council, which forms part of Knebworth Recreation Grounds, as an Asset of Community Value.

6.2 Library

The whole library site was registered as an Asset of Community Value. Herts County Council asked the Parish Council to withdraw the registration so that it could negotiate a lease for a new doctors' surgery on the site. The Council agreed that it would withdraw but would seek registration once the development was complete.

The development has been completed and contains a doctors' surgery, library and pharmacy. The Council considered that the site remains a community asset.

Proposed by Mr Farr, seconded by Mr Godfrey and

Resolved: to register the original library site as an Asset of Community Value.

7. Land

Representatives for Herts County Council have asked what measures the Parish Council takes to prevent any rights accruing to residents. The clerk is to confirm the measures it considers necessary.

The clerk is also to contact a solicitor for advice.

8. Clerk's Report

8.1 The clerk has written to NHDC regarding completion of the footpath, from Deanscroft to Park Lane, on the Beverley Homes site. Residents have also contacted planning enforcement. NHDC enforcement has acknowledged receipt of the letter and will investigate.

8.2 HCC is consulting on a Specialist Resource Provision at the Priory School in Hitchin. This will provide resource for 20 secondary school children with speech and communication issues including autism. HCC is looking at providing SRP at four mainstream secondary schools, these are located at Hitchin, Bushey, Hemel Hempstead and Bishops Stortford.

8.3 Herts Annual Pension Forum is to be held via video link on 25, 26, 27 January

8.4 EU funding has provided two hand sanitiser units for the High Street. Provision of additional sanitiser is funded until March 2021. The Parish Council has installed them near Coasters and the Co-op.

8.5 The LGA Code of Conduct is being updated for higher tier councils and NHDC has asked parish councils if they would consider adopting it to provide some uniformity.

8.6 An email has been received from Steve McPartland requesting comment following correspondence he has received from a resident of Datchworth, saying that the barriers in the High Street are unnecessary and are diverting traffic onto other rural roads.

8.7 A NHDC Highways Liaison meeting is to be held on 15 February. Mr Ward is to attend

8.8 The Parish Council usually produces a newsletter for the annual meeting in May. Last year the meeting was cancelled due to pandemic and it is unlikely that a public meeting will be permitted this year. No decision was taken on production and distribution of a newsletter.

8.9 NHDC is using a reduced tax base for Knebworth for the 2021/22 band D calculation. The adjustment results in the band D council tax doubling the actual percentage increase in the precept.

8.10 The clerk attended the NHDC Transport Forum meeting, which discussed community transport. The next meeting will focus on cycling as a sustainable mode of transport.

8.11 WHBC is inviting councils to attend a meeting on its Climate Change Strategy on 28 January.

8.12 WHBC has further hearings scheduled for its Local Plan. It is consulting on windfall update and green belt boundaries. The Lisle's' site in Woolmer Green is being promoted as part of site HS15 in Woolmer Green. The inspector has commented that amount proposed development in Woolmer Green appears significant compared with other villages. The WHBC Local Plan is to be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.

9. Station Pub

The Fire Risk Assessment was undertaken in December and made a number of recommendations. There were some housekeeping issues, which the tenant has confirmed have been addressed. There were also recommendations to reduce the risk, which the clerk is looking at.

The risk assessment suggested that a metal plate on the external staircase could be installed rather than replacing the window and door, per building control requirements. The Council discussed the option, which building control would have to approve. The Council agreed that it would replace the door and window; it being a better long term solution.

The lights for the staircase have been installed. The bathroom window is in a poor state of repair and is adjacent to the staircase platform.

Proposed by Mr Ward, seconded by Mrs Cosson and
Resolved: to accept the quote to replace the bathroom window.

10. Finance

10.1 To review and approve management accounts for the quarter ended 31 December 2020

The Council reviewed and approved the management accounts to 31 December 2020.

10.2 To approve accounts paid from 1 to 31 December 2020.

Proposed by Mr Hemmingway, seconded by Mr Ward and
Resolved: to approve the accounts paid to from 1 December to 31 December 2020.

10.3 To approve quotes

Proposed by Mr Godfrey, seconded by Mr Stringer and
Resolved: to approve the 2 Commune fee for the website and domain name.

10.4 To approve bank reconciliation to 31 December 2020

Proposed by Mr Willcocks and Mrs Conybeare
Resolved: to approve the bank reconciliation to 31 December 2020.

11. Closure of Play Areas

As an emergency item, the chairman raised the issue of the possible closure of play areas. During the current lockdown the government has not required play areas to close, however Stevenage BC has just announced closure of its play areas, due to the increasing number of people testing positive with coronavirus and to try to prevent the Lister Hospital being overwhelmed with Covid 19 patients.

NHDC has put out a statement that it is keeping its play areas open in line with government guidelines.

The Council agreed that its play areas would be kept open in line with NHDC but would act if government guidelines changed. The clerk is to arrange for more posters to be put up in the parks.

12. Exclusion of Press and Public

Proposed by Mr Stringer, seconded by Mrs Conybeare and

Resolved: that under Section 100A (2) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business being transacted.

13. Station Pub rent

The pub was closed on 18 December 2020 and will remain closed until government guidelines are reviewed in mid-February.

Proposed by Mr Farr, seconded by Mrs Conybeare

Resolved: to charge rent for the flat whilst the pub is closed, with a review at the next meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21.45 p.m.

Chairman _____

Date _____