

**Minutes of the Meeting of
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL
held on Monday 18th May 2020**

PRESENT: Cllrs. M Phelps (retiring Chair), S Collins, L Isko, A Toomey, G Nicholas and C Griffiths

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Maliphant (Clerk), County Cllr. B Robinson and three local residents

1. Election of the Chair and Vice Chair for 2020/21

Lenette Isko was elected unopposed as chairman of the council for 2020/21, and Stephen Collins was elected unopposed as vice chairman of the council for 2020/21.

2. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. R Noblett, whose retirement statement was read out by the chairman. RN said he would still like to be involved in the recreation ground as a volunteer. MP also announced his immediate retirement, and gave a short summary of the parish council's work during the previous year:

- Longhope Recreation Ground – last year saw the dissolution of the Recreation Ground Management Committee leading to its replacement with new members. Research by the parish council into the charitable status and the trusteeship of the Recreation Ground led to the resignation of the trustees in favour of the parish council, and the research also formed the basis for drafting new rules for the management committee
- Longhope Community Land Trust – the project continues to make progress, with the appointment of a solicitor and an architect. An initial grant of £1,000 has been received from the District Council, and further grants are being pursued. The steering group has developed a good relationship with the Aster Group, who will be the housing association managing the completed affordable housing, and it was hoped to have a website soon for publicity
- Coronavirus – this has had a dramatic effect on all of us, and the parish council is developing a voucher system for the benefit of those who may become short of food and money. Social distancing and special awareness has led to the parish council using Zoom for online meetings, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future

MP wished councillors well for the future, and left the meeting. The parish council recorded a vote of thanks to MP and RN for all their work for the parish, particularly around the recreation ground.

3. There were no declarations of interest.

4. There were no questions in Public Forum

5. Planning

The circulated planning report was received with thanks. It was agreed to ask for a time extension to comment on the recently-received planning application P0585/20/FUL for a car port at the Anchorage, Station Lane. After discussion of the planning appeal over past application P1061/19/FUL for conversion of Shepherdine Top Barn on Yartleton Lane, it was agreed the parish council had nothing further to add to its previous comments.

6. Membership

Gemma Essex had applied to fill the current vacancy on the parish council. The parish council agreed unanimously to co-opt her, and the clerk was asked to contact Gemma with the relevant paperwork. **ACTION: AM**

7. Annual Meeting agenda items from standing orders:

- i. LI needed to deliver her acceptance of office form as Parish Chairman
- ii. The minutes of the meeting on April 20th were agreed as a true record, with the clarification under Members' Reports that LI had suggested that local people could be asked via the parish council's Facebook page to report potholes directly to County Highways
- iii. The delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, employees and other local authorities were confirmed as current, being the parish council's Planning Committee and Staff Committee
- iv. There were no proposed changes to the Staffing Committee terms of reference. It was agreed that the Planning Committee should hold publicised online meetings in August and December, when the parish council doesn't meet. **ACTION: AM**
- v. SC, AT and GN were nominated as members of the Planning Committee, and SC, AT and GN as members of the Staffing Committee.
- vi. GN and SC were nominated to be parish council representatives on the Recreation Ground Management Committee. Public members of the committee would be elected at the Recreation Ground AGM, date to be confirmed. In the meantime, it was agreed that any immediate issues around the Recreation Ground would be referred to the full parish council
- vii. The current standing orders and financial regulations were confirmed, as was the protocol for online parish council meetings during the current lockdown
- viii. The only regular arrangement with other authorities, street cleaning on behalf of the District Council, was noted to continue as before.
- ix. LI was nominated to be the parish council representative on the Latchen Room Management Committee
- x. The clerk reported advice received that items held in trust should only be recorded on the asset register with a value of £1. This meant changes to values on the asset register, with the only item changes being recent improvements to the vehicle-activated sign and the new dog waste bin for School Lane
- xi. The clerk reported that since the parish council was now the sole corporate trustee for the Recreation Ground, the current insurance cover had been extended to include the Recreation Ground charity at no extra premium
- xii. The council's membership of GAPTC and GPFA was confirmed
- xiii. The current complaints procedure was confirmed
- xiv. It was confirmed that in the event of receiving requests under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts, advice would be sought from the District Council monitoring officer.
- xv. The policy of councillors speaking to the media rather than the clerk was confirmed, with individual councillors being careful to direct press enquiries to the chairman
- xvi. It was agreed that the full parish council would meet on the third Monday of every month at 7 pm during 2020/210, except in August and December.

8. Members' Reports

BR had reported by email that he was receiving regular updates on Covid-19 from the County Council Leader and District Council Leader

The Health Scrutiny Committee that he chairs had met for a virtual question and answer session recently and received updates from Public Health, Gloucestershire's Health and Care Trust, Gloucester's Hospital Trust and Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group. Data suggests that The South West Region has the lowest level of infection in England but Gloucestershire has the highest level of infection within the South West. This is not out of line with neighbouring counties to the north of us that border the West Midlands where infection levels are higher. The previous week the county council had received confirmation that adequate supplies of personal protection equipment (PPE) were available in Gloucestershire in the hospitals, social care, care homes and other key workers.

Cinderford (Dilke) and Tewksbury Community hospitals have been used for Covid 19 patients but at the end of last week only 19 beds out of an available 91 in the county were being occupied by patients suffering from Covid 19. Care home deaths have occurred in the county and the Scrutiny Committee had been assured by public health officers that residents in care homes were being admitted to hospital if their medical needs and their own care plans required it. Discharge into care homes was carried out in a safe way and most care homes were segregating residents so that staff did not work with both infected and non-infected residents.

Community support - The County Council Help Hub is working with District Council and local community and parish groups to ensure those that need support receive it. This includes food parcels for those that are isolating and have requested support as well as those on free school meals. Help with shopping and medical prescriptions is also available. District Councillors have been contacting vulnerable residents to make sure no one has been overlooked.

Business support - The District Council is distributing business grants to those that are eligible and have applied. Grants are for between £10k and £25k. More than £15m has been distributed so far in the Forest of Dean District. Businesses need to request the grant.

District waste facilities continue to operate normally. The Recycling Centres are closed in the Forest but Hempstead has reopened in Gloucester. This requires residents to use a booking system to manage demand and maintain social distancing.

Roads - Evidence from Rudford vehicle-activated sign (VAS) suggests traffic volumes on the B4215 have been running at 40% of normal on weekdays and only 24% at weekends. The percentage speeding has risen from 36% to 51% showing that with fewer vehicles the speed has increased. In 2019 there were no road accident deaths on Forest of Dean roads. Unfortunately this year we have already had three fatalities.

Highways teams are continuing to operate when materials are available and the work can be completed while maintaining social distancing. Reported potholes has dropped by 50% because fewer people are using the roads. However, it is still important to report defects that will be inspected and fixed where possible. Community work teams (formerly lengthmen) will be operating again this year. It would be helpful to get work that the parish needs onto the list as soon as possible so work can be completed where it is safe to do so.

As BR is restricted in visiting parts of his Division he is also more reliant on Parish Councillors to highlight areas that need attention over the coming year such as pavements or road safety improvements.

Council - The County and District are working with various meeting software to enable meetings to function in the future. Planning Committee meetings are likely to be the first public-facing trial holding virtual meetings that the public can access. The County Council held its first planning meeting last week and the Forest has one set up for 27/5.

Finance - The Government has allocated additional funding to County and District Councils to help with the emergency. However, council income has dropped significantly and expenditure is higher. The situation is evolving rapidly and is an area Councillors will need to be focused on over coming months.

AT reported that May Hill didn't seem to be on the list for Gigaclear to install new fibre optic cables, would that be happening? BR replied he had taken that question away for answering, but not everyone was on the list as the Gigaclear solution was not good for more remote houses. BR suggested people could put their postcode into the link on the Fastershire website to see what the plans were for their area.

SC noted that with the retirement of RN, a platform step-ladder would be needed for safe maintenance of the vehicle-activated sign (VAS), and it was agreed in principle to buy a new step-ladder if necessary. SC also needed a refresher course in downloading speed data with the help of a laptop computer. The VAS battery also needed regular re-charging, its replacement by a solar panel was not a viable option.

9. Committee Reports

(a) Latchen Room Management Committee

GN reminded the parish council about the recent passing of Mo Cameron, and it was unanimously agreed to record grateful thanks for all she had done for the Latchen Room over many years.

(b) Longhope Emergency Fund

CG reported that no-one had yet asked for support from the emergency fund, all other requests for help had been successfully dealt with by the team of 70 volunteers. The help included supporting people in signing up for the Forest Food Bank, and referring particularly vulnerable people to the District Council where they were being successfully connected to Meals on Wheels.

Sarah the volunteer co-ordinator had set up a very good system whereby volunteers said every week when they were going shopping, and so could shop for others. CG was personally keeping an eye on about a dozen people, and commented that asking for help doesn't come easily. She was most concerned about Hopeswood Park, where residents couldn't even go for a walk safely, and she was very proud of all the volunteers, some of whom were going above and beyond the call of duty to cook meals for vulnerable people.

CG added that the corner shop was all set up to accept referrals under the Emergency Fund via GN, who said he could also offer advice on some legal issues thanks to his work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

(c) Recreation Ground Management Committee

GN presented a draft annual budget for the Recreation Ground, based on the recent annual accounts together with the previous year's expenditure by the parish council, and indicating a loss to the charity's funds in 2020/21 of £1,139. There had been a shortfall of income

over expenditure for several years, and this was likely to continue, not least as it was not known for how long the Recreation Ground would be closed due to the pandemic. There were a number of detailed aspects to address, but he felt the Recreation Ground needed to be run so as to become cost-neutral to the parish.

SC reported that a three-year business plan for the Recreation Ground was being drafted for discussion by a businessman with local connections who is currently on furlough. SC advised that the plan's author had maybe nearly rented out the tennis courts to Longford tennis club, adding that if we could rent the tennis courts out, we could generate maybe £6,000 per year. GN reported that he had been successful in gaining a £10,000 grant from the District Council, which he hoped could be used to improve the revenue potential of the Recreation Ground.

A number of other items and opportunities were raised in discussion, including:

- The whereabouts of the posts and net for one of the tennis courts
- The need for a stocktake within the pavilion
- Need to change the locks to secure the pavilion as it was not known who had keys
- Value of having WiFi in the pavilion
- Completion of the basket swing project
- Whether the Recreation Ground charity could reclaim VAT
- Option of buying a ride-on lawnmower

None of these matters could be reviewed or agreed at the current meeting, nor could any rental agreements be proposed or agreed without the proper authority. The clerk suggested that all these items should be discussed at a Recreation Ground Trustee meeting, and it was agreed to meet online on Monday 1st June from 7pm.

10. Clerk's Report & Correspondence

The clerk presented the Section 137 grant policy and application form drafted by GN, which was approved unanimously.

The clerk reported that a number of allotment holders had been cultivating the bank behind the bus stop, and several of them had now written in asking for formal permission to continue. After considerable discussion, it was unanimously agreed to allow those who had applied to continue for this year, with a review when the time came to assess the allotment fees for 2021/22. GN reported two other issues around unattended use of hosepipes and damage to fence posts which needed attention.

ACTION: AM/GN

The recent tree survey report had been circulated, and the clerk pointed out that while there were no emergency issues reported, a number of maintenance tasks were recommended over the next two years. It was agreed to issue a contract for tree surgery in the autumn, once the bird nesting season was over.

ACTION: AM

The clerk reported that while no confirmatory email had been received, the District Council had recently paid the full contract sum for street cleaning during 2020/21. It was agreed that the staffing committee would draft and issue a brief for a combined handyman and street cleaning contract, four hours per week @ £9.46 per hour.

ACTION: AM/SC/AT/GN

11. Finance

The clerk reported online payment of £65.60 for street cleaning in March, in correction of a past oversight, and the payment was unanimously approved.

The following invoices were approved for payment:

Merlin Waste	109.20	Dog waste collection
Glebe Contractors	137.87	Grass cutting
BJ Unwin Forest Consultancy	540.00	Tree survey
Andrew Maliphant	811.62	Salary - April
Andrew Maliphant	37.33	Expenses – April

The financial report for May was received with thanks. The clerk presented the previously circulated draft annual accounts for 2019/20, and it was agreed to reappoint Shirley Fowler to carry out the internal audit.

The budget for 2020/21 agreed at the April meeting was confirmed, which included a grant of £2,000 to the Recreation Ground.

12. Community Land Trust

The clerk gave a progress report on the community land trust (CLT) project, amplifying the comments made at the beginning of the meeting by MP. As Longhope CLT Ltd was now incorporated as a separate legal entity, it was agreed that the project would no longer be a regular agenda item at parish council meetings.

13. Next Meeting - Monday 15th June at 7 pm.

Signed:.....Chairman. Date:.....