

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SHAVINGTON-CUM-GRESTY PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 23 JULY 2020**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS  
UNDER S.78 OF THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Councillor B Gibbs	Chairman
	Councillor V Adams	Councillor J Hassall
	Councillor L Buchanan	Councillor G McIntyre
	Councillor N Cooper	Councillor R Hancock
	Councillor K Gibbs	Councillor R Moore
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Borough Councillor David Marren	Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
	Mr W Atteridge	Meller Speakman
	Ms K McLean	
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	Councillor M Ferguson	

Note: Councillor Cooper lost her internet connection part-way through the meeting and she was unable to participate fully.

**262 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any (a) disclosable pecuniary interest; (b) personal interest; or (c) prejudicial interest which they had in any item of business on the agenda, the nature of that interest, and in respect of disclosable interests and prejudicial interests, to leave the meeting prior to the discussion of that item.

No declarations were made.

**263 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Members of the public were able to ask questions under the Parish Council's Standing Orders.

There were no questions from members of the public.

**264 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That in accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items owing to the confidential nature of the business to transacted and the public interest would not be served in disclosing that information.

Note: As an exception to the rule, Mr Atteridge was permitted to remain in the meeting by virtue of his position as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, as the land availability assessment impinged on the Neighbourhood Plan.

**265 LAND ASSESSMENT – AVAILABILITY OF LAND FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES**

The Parish Council had engaged Meller Speakman, land agents, to assess the availability of land in the parish which could be used as recreational land for all ages.

Ms Kate McLean (Director of Planning and Development at Meller Speakman) presented her Stage 1 'high level' report on behalf of her company and referenced a High Court case [Lochailort Investments Ltd. (claimant), Mendip District Council (defendant) and Norton St Philip Parish Council (interested party)] heard on 20 March 2020]. The result of the case was that the claim was dismissed. Ms McLean reported that this case was likely to be appealed in early 2021.

Stage 2 would be to approach landowners and those with a controlling interest and to consider the relationship with the Neighbourhood Plan process.

The report identified 12 potential sites with an estimate of their value. Members suggested a further two sites for inclusion.

Following a full discussion, it was –

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meet to review the report over the next four weeks; and

(b) That, in due course, the Environment and Recreation Committee consider the next steps to be taken.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

Note: Although Mr W Atteridge had planned to contribute to the discussion, owing to technical difficulties, he was only able to observe.

## 266 RE-ADMITTANCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED:** That the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

## 267 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS – 2019-2020 (DOCUMENTS PREVIOUSLY ISSUED WITH THE AGENDA FOR 15 JULY 2020)

The Parish Council considered the following documents.

- Internal Auditor's Report (with annotations by the Clerk).
- Annual Governance and Accountability Review (AGAR)
- Full expenditure ledger for the main Parish Council account.
- Full ledger for the Village Hall account showing expenditure and receipts.
- Summary Receipts & Payments statement for main Parish Council account.
- Summary Receipts & Payments statement for Village Hall account.
- Clerk's investigation into current value of fixed assets.
- Revised Fixed Assets List.

### 267.1 Internal Audit – JDH Business Services Ltd.

The accounts had now been audited by the Internal Auditor and his report was submitted. The Parish Council was invited to comment on the points raised. The schedule had been annotated to include the Clerk's comments on the various recommendations.

On the basis of the internal audit work carried out, the Internal Auditor's view was that the Council's system of internal controls was *inadequate and ineffective for the purpose intended and the Council, therefore, does NOT have a system in place.*

The recommendations in the action plan need to be implemented promptly. Key points which would need to be addressed are:

- Ensure that Regulation 15 of the Account and Audit Regulations 2015 was adhered to by publishing the exercise of public rights by the deadline dates.
- Ensure that a photograph of the notice, as displayed in a notice-board, was taken and retained as evidence for the audit of the accounts in 2020-2021.
- Review where Councillors had undertaken roles in Village Hall administration committing the Council to expenditure.
- Re-establish internal controls over hall hire and ensure that all documentation could be made available for audit purposes.
- Set up a Task Group to review the fixed assets register.
- The Clerk to ensure that she resolved the issue of the VAT incurred on the refurbishment at the Village Hall by seeking specialist advice.
- Ensure that budgetary control was improved during 2020-21.

- Re-investigate the shortfall of £315 in the Village Hall accounts, as identified during the 2018-19 audit.

The Clerk's view was that many of the criticisms were a result of inadequate resourcing and the Parish Council would need to address this to avoid similar issues arising during the financial year 2020-2021.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the Parish Council review the issues raised by the Internal Auditor, at each monthly meeting;

(b) That an item be placed on the next agenda to review the resourcing issues as raised by the Clerk;

(c) That consideration be given to purchasing a software accounting package to improve the accounting process; and

(d) That the Clerk contact local accountants to seek quotations for carrying out the accounting process, whilst retaining the Clerk's role as the Responsible Financial Officer.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

#### **267.2 Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit**

The Parish Council was asked to review the effectiveness of the internal audit process using page 1 of the Internal Auditor's report as the checklist against which the process should be judged.

The Internal Auditor's report showed that a robust audit had been carried out and the Parish Council was recommended to accept that the audit had been effective, and all requirements had been met.

**RESOLVED:** That the Internal Audit carried out in 2019-2020 be confirmed as effective with all requirements having been met, in accordance with the checklist on page 1 of the Audit Report.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

#### **267.3 Annual Governance and Accountability Review (AGAR) – Part 3**

The Annual Governance and Accountability Review document was enclosed. The order in which the sections of the AGAR are to be approved was specific and must be considered in the following order. Although not applicable for this meeting, local councils were able to approve Section 1 at one meeting, and Section 2 at a separate meeting.

Despite the new arrangements under the Coronavirus Act 2020, there was still a requirement for a wet signature on the AGAR. When the AGAR had been approved, it would be posted to the Chairman for signature and return to the Clerk.

#### **267.4 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement – 2019-2020**

The Parish Council was asked to give specific consideration to points 1 – 9 as it was the Council's responsibility to ensure that there was a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the accounting statements.

In view of the Internal Auditor's observations, the Parish Council was recommended to acknowledge these by ticking 'No' to Points 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7. Point 9 related to trust funds and the response was N/A.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the Parish Council respond 'no' on Points 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 on the Annual Governance Statement; and

(b) That the Parish Council respond 'yes' on Points 3, 5 and 8 on the Statement.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

#### **267.5 Section 2 - Accounting Statement 2019-2020**

The Parish Council was asked to approve Section 2 – Accounting Statement 2019-2020 for submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP, external auditor.

Members did not accept the valuations on the fixed assets register.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That, notwithstanding that the Fixed Assets register was inaccurate, the Accounting Statement for 2019-2020 be approved for submission to PKF Littlejohn LLP, the external auditor; and

(b) That the Fixed Assets Register be reviewed, with a view to employing a professional valuer to value all the assets. (See also Minute No. 267.6 below).

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

#### **267.6 Review of Fixed Assets Register**

As part of the internal audit, the Clerk had been required to carry out an investigation into the history of the values as recorded on the fixed assets register. The Clerk's report, together with a revised assets register was submitted.

During the audit in 2019/20 the Clerk had investigated back to 2015-16, and following investigation prepared a revised Fixed Assets Register which brought the total assets value to £752,118. The Clerk had, therefore, restated the value of the fixed assets from £640,955 in 2018-2019 to £752,118, and also for the year ended 31 March 2020.

The AGAR had been amended to reflect that the value of the assets in 2018-2019 was £752,118 and the Clerk had hand-written 're-stated' against this figure because the figure in the previous year had been £640,955.

The External Auditor would need an explanation for this, and the Internal Auditor had advised that PKF Littlejohn may request that the values return to those previously stated. In the Practitioners Guide all assets must remain listed at the value they were purchased or acquired. The only change which could be made was where a proxy cost had been applied, i.e. a professional valuation.

Arrangements would be made during 2020-2021 for a thorough review of the assets owned by the Parish Council.

#### **267.7 Exclusion of Press and Public**

(Reason for exclusion: The Receipts Statement for the Village Hall account identified clients by name and has been withheld from public circulation and deposit.)

**RESOLVED:** That in accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Village Hall Receipts statement only, owing to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and the public interest would not be served in disclosing that information.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

#### **267.8 Full ledger for Each Account**

The Parish Council received a copy of the full ledger for the two accounts (1) Parish Council main account; and (2) Village Hall account.

Members were reminded that owing to a reduction in income for the Village Hall, the only expenditure on the Village Hall account since May 2019 had been the monthly direct debit to Water Plus and British Gas.

**267.9 Re-admittance of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED:** That the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

**267.10 Summary Receipts and Payments Statement – 2019-2020**

A summary receipts and payments statement for the Parish Council's main account was submitted for information.

**268 RE-OPENING OF VINE TREE PLAY AREA**

The Parish Council considered a draft risk assessment, prepared by Councillor Matt Ferguson, to enable Vine Tree Play Area to be opened at the earliest opportunity. This had been based on Government guidance on re-opening playgrounds submitted to the Council; the risk assessment had been prepared using a Health and Safety Executive template.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the risk assessment be approved;

(b) That arrangements be made for two signs to be designed by Brave Little Tank and to be printed as A3 size on Dibond, with holes in four corners, for installing at the play area;

(c) That the play area be opened at the earliest opportunity, possibly the first week in August;

(d) The signage to include (i) the maximum number permitted in the play area at one time, (ii) a reminder about hand hygiene, (iii) reminder to wash hands before and after visiting, (iv) reminder about social-distancing; (v) request to clean the equipment before and after use, and (vi) a prohibition note that if anyone was displaying Covid-19 symptoms, they were not permitted to use the play area; and

(e) That an appropriate disclaimer be added to the signage to make it clear that the play area was not staffed and users of the play area must observe the Government guidelines.

Each Member present was individually polled for their vote and the motion was carried.

.....Chairman

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and concluded at 9.50 pm