



Ulley Parish Council

Draft Minutes of the meeting of Ulley Parish Council held electronically on 17 August 2020 at 7.00 pm

Chairman – Cllr Richard Robson

Other Councillors in attendance – P Smith, Richard Steele and Dr Chris Myers.

Clerk – Andrew Towleron.

Present – One member of the public

AGENDA

A public session of about 15 minutes will commence prior to the formal Council meeting in accordance with Section 3 of the Council's Standing Orders.

The Clerk explained that he had received one question, which as this related to the holding of remote meetings, would be covered later as part of the main agenda.

21/20 - To receive and approve any apologies for absence - There was one, Cllr I Stones. This was approved.

22/20 - To record any declaration of interest – There were none.

23/20 - To receive and consider any written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests (if any) – There were none.

24/20 - To consider any matters which should be dealt with in open, or confidential session (items for which the Press and Public may be excluded further to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meeting) Act 1960 - There were none.

25/20 - To approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held electronically on 27 May 2020 (attached).

The Clerk noted that there was an error at the end of page 2 relating to any works to the trees. This should read summer not spring. He agreed to make this amend and re-issue the revised minutes.

Resolved: That subject to the above agreed amendment being made, the minutes of the meeting held electronically on 27 May 2020 be approved as a true record.

26/20 - To receive information on the following on-going issues:

Improvement works to trees in the Park – The Clerk explained that he was seeking a quote from Andersons Tree Care for the agreed improvements. The aim was that this should take place at the same time as the removal of the other tree. Cllr R Steel offered his help in obtaining the quote. It was noted that the felling of the tree may also need to be undertaken after the summer.

Coronavirus and implications for the Parish Council, including the holding of electronic meetings. The Clerk explained that the Council had received a request from a parishioner that it should hold physical meetings as soon as possible especially as many people were unable to join the meetings electronically and the Hall was now available. It was explained that while the guidance strongly advised that councils should continue to hold electronic meetings it did not rule out the holding of physical meetings when it was safe to do so. The Chairman confirmed that the Council wished to hold physical meetings as soon as it was safe to do so.

Latest crime statistics – The Clerk provided the latest crime statistics for the ward. It was noted that Ulley Country Park was the focus of crime and anti-social behaviour incidents and that this would be covered later on the agenda.

27/20 – To consider the Internal Audit Report for 2019/2020

The verbal and written report was provided on its findings. The main finding from the audit was that there had been some good improvements with the Council's financial management processes and systems over the financial year. However, there were some issues with the year-end bank reconciliation, Standing Orders and the Notice of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights. Also, some further urgent measures were required to ensure that the Council was meeting its responsibilities as a trustee of the Halifax Fund.

Resolved that: the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2019/2020 be noted and that the various recommendations be approved and actioned.

28/20 - To consider a request by the Council's External Auditor (PKF LittleJohn) that it *'has been selected for intermediate review for 2019/2020 reporting year as part of the required 5% sample'*.

The Clerk reported that the Council had been selected for intermediate review. The Council did have the option to decline this offer if it determined that it was exempt from external audit for fiscal year 2019/20 (see item 29/19).

29/20 – To consider certifying that Ulley Parish Council is exempt from external audit for fiscal year 2019/20

Resolved that: Ulley Parish Council is exempt from external audit for the year 2019/20 as its annual turnover does not exceed £25,000.

30/20 - To approve the relevant sections of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020

Resolved that: Ulley Parish Council approve Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 on page 5 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020.

Resolved that: Ulley Parish Council approve Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2019/20 on page 6 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020.

31/20 - To approve the publication of documents under The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities

Resolved that: in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities, Ulley Parish Council will publish the following documents on its website:

- **Certificate of Exemption**
- **Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20**
- **Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20**
- **Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20, page 6**
- **Analysis of variances**
- **Bank Reconciliation to 31 March 2020**

32/20 - Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

The Clerk reported that the Council was required to give six weeks notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and other information required. The intention was that this would commence on the 31 August 2020.

33/20 - To consider progress with, and agree on next steps in relation to establishing a Charitable Trust to manage and administer the Halifax Fund

It was noted that both the Council's Internal Auditor and Halifax Estates were urging the Council to act quickly in establishing a Charitable Trust to manage and administer the Halifax Fund. It was agreed that the establishment and management of the Trust should form part of the new Clerk's duties and that this should be a priority task for them with a view for the Trust to be up and running early in the New Year. It was noted and acknowledged this may affect their hours and grade.

Resolved that: the establishment and management of the Halifax Fund Charitable Trust should form part of the Clerks duties and the associated Job Description and Person Specification should be amended to reflect this

33/20 - To consider the safe re-opening of both the recreation ground and play area.

It was explained that the Government's guidance concerning the opening of the recreation ground and play areas was not straight forward and included a requirement that risk assessments be undertaken so that visitors are protected as much as possible. It was agreed that due to the scale of the task involved to safely reopen the play area and recreation ground they should remain closed. The aim was to open them as soon as this could be done safely.

Resolved that: the play area and recreation ground remain closed until it is safe to re-open them.

34/20 – To consider the findings from the latest monthly independent inspection of the Park (see Attachment 14.1) including those items identified as requiring inspection and repair and health and safety issues in the Park more generally

The latest independent play area inspection for the children's play area was considered. The position was similar to the previous report i.e. that it had highlighted a few areas requiring attention, which the Council at its last meeting had agreed should be given priority consideration by the 'Work About' group.

35/20 - To receive a report on the meeting with officers from Rotherham MBC about appointing them to undertake ad hoc improvements in the play area and wider recreation ground.

Cllr P Smith led on this. She explained that she and other parishioners had met with T Archer from RMBC's Greenspaces Team. It was a useful meeting. Rotherham MBC had offered to undertake ad hoc repairs and improvements to play equipment in the playground. After discussions, it was agreed that approval should be given to Rotherham MBC to undertake ad hoc repairs and improvements to the play equipment and that budget provision of £125 is agreed to facilitate this.

Resolved that: it is agreed that Rotherham MBC should undertake ad hoc repairs and improvements to the play equipment, and that budget provision of £125 be agreed to facilitate this.

36/20 - To consider making an application to Rotherham MBC's Ward Budget for improvements to the play equipment.

It was explained that with the guidance and support of Cllr Bob Walsh and others the Council had been invited to make a bid to Rotherham MBC's Ward Budget for improvements to the play equipment. It was confirmed that this was a good idea, however, further work would need to be undertaken to determine the scope and nature of the bid. The Clerk was asked to enquire whether a bid of about £3000 for this financial year would be acceptable, in principle, which he agreed to do.

37/20 - To consider issues of at Ulley Country Park, including the outcomes of an inter-agency meeting organised by RMBC on this issue, and any next steps.

That crime and anti-social issues at the Country Park was a growing issue was highlighted. Several councillors stated that they had reported incidents to the police. It was explained that an inter-agency meeting organised by Rotherham MBC had taken place and several steps agreed. Rotherham MBC's Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities, Cllr Sarah Allen has kindly provided a summary of the key outcomes from this meeting, which the Clerk read out. It was also reported that Cllr Sarah Allen had agreed to meet with representatives of the Parish Council to discuss this issue. It was agreed that the Council should take Cllr Sarah Allen up on this offer.

Resolved: that the Councils agrees to meet with Cllr Sarah Allen, Rotherham MBC's Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities to discuss issues of crime and anti-social behaviour in Ulley Country Park.

38/20 - To receive an update on discussions with Halifax Estates with regard to the proposed permissive footpath.

The Chairman reported that Halifax Estates had determined not to progress the proposed permissive footpath. This was noted.

39/20 - To consider progress with the refresh of the website and consider the implications of, and agree on next steps, in relation to the new duties placed on parish councils by the 'Compliance with the public sector bodies (websites and mobile applications) accessibility regulations, 2018'.

It was reported that the Council had been working with Rotherham MBC on enhancements to the website. These were now complete and the new website is up and running. It was agreed that it was an improvement.

Linked to this, it was reported a new law means that public sector websites, including parish councils, will need to meet accessibility standards so that people who use assistive technology or have additional needs can easily access services and information. The target date by which this must be done is 23rd of September 2020. A good practice guide produced by the National Association of Local Councils was circulated that includes background information and steps that councils need to put in place to improve the accessibility of their website. This was then discussed. It was agreed that the Council should work towards ensuring that its website meets accessible standards by the target date but should it not meet all of the new standards, which was likely, would place a statement on its website giving the reasons why and its commitment to meet accessibility standards.

Resolved that: the Council will work towards ensuring that its website meets accessible standards by the 23rd September 2020, but should it not meet all of the new standards, which was likely, would place a statement on its website the reasons why and its commitment to meet accessibility standards.

40/20 - Planning Update (the Council has been notified of two planning applications for comment)

- **RB 2020/99 (Erection of 1 No. dwellinghouse & detached garage at land at Main Street.**
- **RB 2020/1194 (Single Storey extension at Poynton Avenue).**

It was noted that the status of the second planning application RB 2020/1194 (Single Storey extension at Poynton Avenue) was uncertain. It stated on Rotherham MBC's planning portal that it was invalid. Because of the uncertainty, it was decided that it would be inappropriate for the Council to comment on it at this time. The other planning application was then discussed where it was agreed that the Council had no comments to make on it.

Resolved that: the Council has no comments to make on the planning application RB2020/99

41/20 - To receive a verbal and written report on bi-monthly accounts schedule and relevant Budget Update Information, including:

- a) To approve the monthly accounts for May – July 2020, including the following items for payment.

Resolved that: the following payments be authorised:

- **£604.88 to SSE for electricity use in the hall for the first two quarters of the year.**
- **£39.99 to Amazon for printer cartridges for the Chairman.**
- **£69.43 to Viking Direct for printer cartridges, stamps, paper and stationery for the Clerk.**
- **£200 to Spectrum Future CIC for undertaking internal audit for 2019/2020.**
- **£1,055.61 to Zurich Municipal Insurance for insurance premium for 2020/2021.**
- **£40 to ICO for annual data protection licence.**
- **£22.03 to Coop for petrol for the mower.**

b) To receive and approve the latest bank reconciliation.

Both a verbal and written report was provided. The Clerk explained that as the Council had not received up to date bank statements for the various accounts, he had circulated a screenshot from the bank account showing the balances.

c) To receive and consider the end of year budget outturn for 2019/2020 (Attachment 21.2).

The Clerk provided a verbal and written report on the end of year budget outturn for 2019/2020

d) To receive a verbal and written budget update report.

The Clerk gave a brief update on the budget position at the end of the financial quarter one. The overall position was sound, he explained, with no significant variances, for example. It was confirmed that the Council held £25,825.36 at the 22 July 2020. This comprised £5, 547.80 in the Co-operative Bank Current Account; £3,623.97 in the Co-operative Bank Reserve Account and £16,626.59 in the Co-operative Halifax Fund Account.

42/20 - To receive a progress report on submitted bids considered for support through the Halifax Fund and consider a new bid for play equipment developed by a local resident.

Members considered a potential new bid for play equipment developed by a local resident. This was welcomed.

Cllr P Smith explained that specialist playground manufacturers Sutcliffe's had agreed in principle to prepare, free of charge, an action plan for improvements to the playground. Progress with this, however, had been delayed by the Coronavirus. She was actively progressing it. It may be prudent to delay making any bids to the Halifax Fund until its findings had been considered. It was agreed that this was a good idea.

Cllr P Smith noted that there were other funding opportunities for improvement to the Park, drawing particular attention to the the Banks Fund.

43/20 - To note the resignation of the Clerk and consider and agree the next steps for his replacement.

It was noted that the Clerk had tendered his resignation as he had accepted another position. His last working day would be the middle of September. He was thanked for his efforts.

The Chairman outlined progress with finding a replacement. He had sought the support and advice of the YLCA on this. He had prepared a draft Job Description and Person Specification. This included additional duties and responsibilities including concerning the Halifax Fund and the Park. It would be necessary to review the grade and hours of working to reflect these additional duties and responsibilities. The initial suggestion was that the hours should be increased by an hour a week, which was agreed in principle. The intention was to advertise it through the YLCA but would require budget approval to do this.

The Chairman explained that while the intention was to fill the position as soon as possible. It was doubtful, however, they would have someone in post to prepare and service the next meeting of the Council scheduled for the end of September. A discussion took place on what would happen in these circumstances. The Clerk stated that they needed to have a 'proper office' to have a lawful meeting. The main option would be to appoint a temporary Clerk from the councillors or externally. The Clerk was asked if one of the councillors was appointed as the temporary Clerk for the meeting, would this preclude them for participating in discussions and decision making. He said that he thought not but would confirm this with the YLCA.

Resolved that: the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman be granted delegated powers to spend up to £100 on advertising the vacancy.

44/20 - To consider any agenda items and arrangements for the September meeting of the Council.

It was considered that this was covered earlier in the agenda.

Any other business/information exchange.

A few issues of interest were discussed.