

# ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30 pm, January 23, 2020

**Present:** Polly Carson, Robert Carpenter Turner, Alex Oliver, Mike Golden, Carol Whittle, Hayley Kington, Robin Aspinall (Treasurer), Charles Reiss (Clerk). In attendance: Cllr Paul Oatway. Apologies: Steve Hepworth. In the absence of Steve Hepworth, Polly Carson (vice-Chair) presided.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed.

Matters arising:

- 001/20 Fernbank:** Polly Carson reported that the final, amended application had been approved with most of the tall fencing removed and on condition that there must be no hardstanding for vehicles on the protected green space. That was the outcome the PC had sought.
- 002/20 Clock House (application 19/09834/FUL):** Cllr Oatway confirmed that he had referred this application to Wiltshire's Planning Committee. After discussion it was agreed that Robert Carpenter Turner should attend and speak on behalf of the PC. Other members were free to attend and speak as residents.
- 003/20 Public comment and question time:** The Chair invited members of the public to give their views on any items on the agenda. A question was raised over photographs submitted as evidence of parking problems associated with the Crop Circle exhibition. The speaker asserted that some of the parking shown had nothing to do with the exhibition, and asked for that to be minuted. PC members in reply stressed that the issue was the "parking deficit" for the village as a whole, with no provision for visitor parking. Another speaker appealed for action over the "desperate" state of Browns Lane caused not only by the continuing work at Chandlers House but also by severe flooding. Members agreed this should be on the agenda for the next PC meeting.
- 004/20 Playground repairs:** Alex Oliver reported that the contractors, Aplin, had carried out limited repairs, cleaning and safety matting at a cost of £4406.35 including VAT. However further work and probably new equipment would be needed in the next one or two years at most. There was also need for a location sign giving the postcode or the What3Words formula. Agreed Robert Carpenter Turner take that forward.
- 005/20 Finance:** Members welcomed Robin Aspinall as new Responsible Finance Officer. A letter authorising him as RFO was signed. He presented a cheque for £4406.35 for playground work, proposed RCT, seconded Mike Golden, agreed and signed. RA said that left the PC's reserve at close to £15,000 of which £850 was ring-fenced for the Springs fund. Proposed RCT, seconded AO: that £2,500

be ring-fenced for playground upkeep, though not in a separate account. Agreed unanimously.

**006/20 Precept:** RA presented his report on considerations affecting the precept (copy attached). Holding the figure at £5,000 for the fifth year in a row would leave the charge on each household virtually unchanged. The PC had a cushion of some £14,000. Routine expenditure was currently about £2,000 a year, with some extras such as the probable replacement of the parish noticeboards, which might cost £900. It was also likely that, from May, the PC would need to employ a paid Clerk which might cost £2,000 a year. A major unknown was the cost of re-chalking the White Horse. Members again questioned why the cost should fall on the PC, which had no official responsibility and did not own the land. RA said that a £5,000 precept would not cover increased running costs, likely to climb towards £7,000 a year. Members agreed but also agreed that the current reserve meant it was not necessary to take immediate action. The position should be reviewed at the next precept-setting a year from now by which time costs should be clearer. RA suggested the White Horse account, currently at £50, be closed and merged with the main PC account. Proposed AO, seconded RCT, agreed unanimously. Polly Carson proposed, Mike Golden seconded that the Precept be left unchanged. Agreed unanimously. Authorisation signed by Polly Carson, Chair, and Charles Reiss, Clerk. Members thanked RA for his work. Cllr Oatway said that the precept was quite low compared with other parishes. A £1,000 increase would probably cost each household less than £5.

**007/20 Chimney Lane damage:** RCT reported that he had repeatedly tried to contact the main contractor for the Fernbank buildings over the damage caused by construction vehicles, but emails and phone calls brought no reply. He had now written by letter. Agreed on the agenda for the next PC. CR meanwhile to check whether the original application included an obligation to make good any damage. PO asked to be kept informed.

**008/20 First aid update:** Carol Whittle confirmed dates and attendance for her courses on CPR and use of the defibrillator. Also to be posted on the website.

**009/20 Parish noticeboards:** Members discussed options and costs of new freestanding or fixed boards, or repairs. The Honeystreet board, on a building scheduled for demolition, was another complication. Deferred to next meeting.

**010/20 VE Day 75<sup>th</sup> commemoration:** AO reported he had checked with neighbouring PCs but they appeared to have no settled plans. Members discussed the possibility of a 1940's Village Party with dress to match; possibly free entry to the Coronation Hall with a pay bar with the first drink at WWII prices. Publicised by Spring Newsletter, website and flyers. RCT to liaise with the Hall committee. Decision required by March PC meeting for event on or around May 8.

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**011/20 New Clerk:** CR reported no response to local publicity. He would shortly be meeting one possible candidate who already acts for a number of parishes nearby. He reminded members that best practice was for the post to be advertised to secure a choice of applicants but that was not compulsory.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.01pm

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