

MINUTES of the Thorverton Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 12th May 2020,
by way of Zoom, 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs S Crang, R Deed, S Fice, A Foster, J Hodge, N Lane, G Sims, D Waldron and K Wells.

In attendance: Mrs A Marshall (Clerk) and 1 member of the public.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that on-line meetings had been sanctioned by new Government legislation, with effect from 4th April 2020, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The processes to follow during the meeting were made clear.

Standing Orders suspended.

Public Open Session: No questions had been received from members of the public. The resident who had joined the meeting was invited to speak and commented that he was pleased to see the Council engaging with the public.

External Reports:

i) **C/Cllr Squires** had sent a Coronavirus update which had been circulated.

ii) **D/Cllr Deed** reported that £3.2 billion had been given to Councils by the Government to date. Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) had received two tranches of £39,000 and £825,000 to help replace lost income from leisure centres, car parks, planning applications and other income that has seen a slump. These funds are expected to last for 2 – 3 months only and would not help towards the additional District Council costs of administration, monitoring and providing other public services, as required due to the pandemic. It was confirmed that no Council, as yet, had issued a section 114 notice advising of bankruptcy. D/Cllr Deed advised that, regarding the return of Sheep Dip S106 funding to MDDC, the amount less the payment for the chemical testing should be returned. The return of funds would be put on the June agenda for Council agreement.

iii) **Police statistics** – no update available.

Standing Orders resumed.

20/01 Declarations of interest: None.

20/02 Apologies: C/Cllr Squires, due to another meeting.

20/03 Confirmation of Minutes: It was RESOLVED to sign the meeting Minutes of March 10th and March 20th 2020 as correct records of the meetings. It was noted that no meeting had taken place in April.

20/04 Annual Council Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting 2020:

- i) It was noted that, due to the Covid 19 pandemic and new Government legislation, the requirement to hold both the Annual Council Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting in 2020 had been removed.
- ii) It was agreed to continue the post of Chairman (Cllr Lane) and Vice Chairman (Cllr Deed) until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2021, or unless resolved otherwise by the Council beforehand.
- iii) It was agreed to continue with the working groups and their memberships, external representation and Councillor responsibilities until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2021, or unless resolved otherwise by the Council beforehand.
- iv) It was agreed to keep the General Power of Competence in place.
- v) It was RESOLVED that the Chairman produce and publish an annual report on behalf of the Parish Council.

20/05 Decisions made in March and April 2020 through delegated responsibility to the Clerk: The following decisions were ratified at this meeting:

- i) Raising of cheques for the April 2020 payments (see below).
- ii) Closure of the Recreation Ground play and gym equipment until further notice.
- iii) Issuing of a letter of support to the Memorial Hall regarding Viridor grant funding.
- iv) Authorisation of a Covid 19 Support Group funding application to Devon County Council.

20/06 Covid 19 pandemic: The Chairman referred to the paper circulated prior to the meeting. He reported that £495. had been received as a result of a grant funding application to Devon County Council (DCC) for parish Covid 19 funding support. It was confirmed that the local support group had not, to date, put forward any ideas for the

spending of the funds and so ideas were invited. All present were reminded that £500 of Council funding had also been put aside for local Covid 19 emergencies and that these funds also remained intact.

20/07 Allotments:

- i) Allotment site - it was noted that the allotments have remained open in accordance with Government regulations and that the Clerk had posted a procedural notice on the site gate for allotment holders.
- ii) Purchase of the allotment field – the requested legal advice had today been received and circulated and it was noted that the Council has no security of tenure. Cllrs Crang and Hodge suggested that the Council should move forward with this rare opportunity to purchase land from the Church Commissioners (CC) especially as the Council had a statutory duty to provide allotments to residents requesting them. Cllr Waldron had looked into the possibility of Council borrowing and reported that whilst borrowing could more than likely be secured, and at a low rate over and over a long term, the capital and interest would need to be repaid which could mean an increase in Precept. The Clerk confirmed that the CC had approached the Council with an invitation to register an interest in the land and to put forward an offer. Cllr Wells suggested the importance of public engagement and enquired as to whether funding from the new Cemetery project could be diverted to this cause. Cllr Deed commented that should the Council take up this opportunity to secure land in perpetuity for the parish, and to secure the future of allotments for those residents wanting them, this could cost in the region of £20,000 plus legal fees. The costs would probably need to be repaid through increased Precept and so the public should be consulted. Cllr Foster suggested that the land could be offered for sale on the open market if the Council did not act now to register an interest. The matter of 'notice' on the site was discussed. Cllr Deed proposed that the Clerk contacts the CC to put forward an interest to purchase the plot and to establish a price. Once a price had been established the public should be engaged, through the parish magazine, and advised of the intention to purchase the plot in order that residents could continue to have allotments, noting that any borrowing repayments could mean an increase in the Precept. This was RESOLVED.
- iii) Laying of water pipes – the Solicitor had today contacted the Clerk to advise that the review of the Deed of Variation was nearing completion. The matter would be considered at a future meeting.

20/08 South West Water (SWW) compensation claim: The Chairman reported that SWW had produced a further offer to move the equipment and Cllr Crang added that this involved moving the monitoring equipment to a verge outside the car park, off Council owned land, which was favourable. He suggested that wayleaves could be given, if required, and 'lift and shift' clauses could be implemented. One remaining issue would be the agreement of DCC Highways. Cllr Crang proposed a response stating that the Council has noted the change of plan and found it to be a satisfactory solution subject to agreement from DCC Highways. This was RESOLVED.

20/09 Recreation Ground: The Clerk reported that due to the old mower having broken down it had been collected for repair and, at the same time, the annual service had been agreed (under Clerks delegated authority) with invoices pending. The Football Club had applied to Viridor for grant funding for a new mower.

20/10 Handyman: Following a review of the monthly report the Chairman suggested limiting the Handyman's monthly hours due to recent requests for salary being higher than had been anticipated when the budget was set. Clls Waldron and Wells said that many residents had reported their satisfaction in how lovely the village was currently looking and so the hours should not be cut but, if necessary, additional funding should be found from a different budget line. The Chairman called for the budget to be considered in more detail when setting future Precepts. Cllr Fice suggested that time had been spent on extra duties, like cutting back grass edging strips, which had not been done for years and which would not need to be done again for some time. Cllr Hodge suggested that the resolved list of duties is not being adhered to and that DCC duties, for example, should be left to/reported to DCC. Following further discussion it was RESOLVED to add the following tasks to the duty list; strimming of Barliabins, cutting the grass no more than every three weeks, drawing up a list of tasks for the village tidy up day (to include concreting of the beach area of the stream at Jubilee Green, re-pointing the crazy paving at Leigh Gardens, tidying up the 'well' area opposite the car park entrance and tidying up the small garden area between the shop and bridge at Jericho Street), ordering more pot-hole materials (Clerk), spraying the village cobbles and footpaths, repairing the stones/mortar on the road side of the stream at Jubilee Green and removing the debris from the car

park with the help of Cllr Crang. It was RESOLVED that the Clerk, as line manager to the Handyman, would pass on messages of thanks from the Council and residents adding how lovely the village currently looks. It was further RESOLVED to pay the request for salary and expenses of £567.38 gross and £129.28.

20/11 Annual general insurance renewal: It was RESOLVED to pay the annual renewal premium of £558.52 and it was noted that the long term agreement with Came and Company expires next May.

20/12 Finance and End of Year to 31/03/2020:

i) **Bank balance** – the bank balance, as at 01/05/2020, was noted as being £75,072.08

ii) **Banked receipts in March and April** – noted as being £7,869.50 Precept (50%), £40.53 Wayleave, £495.00 DCC Covid 19 Emergency Fund and bank interest.

iii) **Bank reconciliation as at year end 31/03/2020** – the document was approved and signed.

iv) **End of year Accounts to 31/03/2020** – the accounts were approved.

v) **AGAR Part 1** – the Audit document was approved and signed.

vi) **AGAR Part 2** – the Audit document was approved and signed.

vii) **Internal Audit** – the internal audit reports were reviewed and it was noted that there were no issues raised. The Council thanked the Clerk for her work in this regard.

viii) **Asset Register** – the updated document, dated 31/03/2020, was approved.

ix) **Statement of Internal Control and Risk Schedule** – the two updated documents were approved.

x) **Clerk's working from home allowance** – it was RESOLVED to increase the HMRC allowance to £13.50 per month.

xi) **Payments** – it was RESOLVED to make the following payments:

A Marshall - Clerk salary	Salary £426.38 gross, no tax due	£426.28 net
N Matthews - Handyman salary	Salary £567.38 gross, less tax due	£458.38 net
HMRC	Cheque to be written at quarter end.	£0
N Matthews – Handyman expenses	Mileage, weed killer, broom, sprayer	£129.28 (VAT incl)
Came and Company	Annual general insurance renewal	£558.52 (VAT n/a)
Jane Hole (NSC Parish Council)	Annual internal audit fee	£100.00 (VAT n/a)
Information Commissioners Office	ICO annual membership - direct debit	£35.00 (VAT n/a)
MDDC	Garage rental – direct debit	£55.68 (VAT incl)

xii) It was noted that the following payments had been made in April 2020:

A Marshall - Clerk salary	Salary £421.88 gross, tax n/a	£421.88 net
N Matthews - Handyman salary	March £367.00 gross less tax April £286.88 gross less tax	£527.68 net
HMRC	Cheque to be written at quarter end.	£0
A Marshall – Clerks expenses	Stationery, stamps, heating	£19.88 (VAT n/a)
N Matthews – Handyman expenses	Fuel for equipment, water heating cost	£61.83 (VAT n/a)
Devon Association of Local Councils	Annual membership renewal	£216.80 (VAT incl)
MDDC	Garage rental – paid by direct debit	£53.28 (VAT incl)

20/13 Planning: It was noted that whilst all planning applications received during March and April had been circulated to Council only the applications still inviting comments were to be considered.

i) 20/00563/HOUSE erection of first floor extension to rear of 18 Silver Street, Thorverton. It was RESOLVED to submit 'no comment' regarding this application.

ii) 20/00553/FULL erection of an agricultural storage building with formation of access track land at rear of 9 Silver Street, Thorverton. Following a review of the Conservation Officers report, questions were raised by the Council regarding the purpose of the building and why an agricultural building would need toilet facilities. It was RESOLVED to submit the following 'neutral' comment: 'The Parish Council has concerns

around the purpose and description of the building as the plans are for an 'agricultural' building not in an agricultural area'.

- iii) 20/00374/NMA Proposed non-material amendment for 19/01917/FULL to allow alterations to the timber weatherboarding, window positions and the addition of a brick plinth at land between 13 and 17 Silver Street, Thorverton. Granted - split decision.
- iv) 20/00244/PNCOU prior notification for the change of use of an agricultural building to 2 dwellings under Class Q at Lodge Farm, Brampford Speke. Approved.
- v) 20/00113/LBC listed building consent for erection of a single storey extension following removal of a conservatory at Wee Cottage, Bullen Street, Thorverton. Granted.
- vi) 20/00265/FULL erection of a conservatory at 33 Broadlands, Thorverton. Granted.

20/14 Correspondence – School field: The Chairman summarised two e-mails received from members of the public regarding a possible new School field project, as noted within the March meeting Minutes, and clarified the current situation. He confirmed that the previous idea of developing the top of the School field into a recreation area had been closed down, by resolution. The new idea, which had developed following interest from the School, was to look into the possibility of a second School entrance from a gate The Glebe. The resolution made at the March meeting was for Cllr Foster to investigate whether Section 106 funding could be used for such a project. No decision as to whether the project would be taken forward had yet been made. Cllr Foster was currently in the process of completing the funding application form and so a decision on whether funding would be available was pending. He confirmed that although the two projects were completely different the residents appeared to be raising the same concerns. The latest proposal would not allow public access to the land. It would tidy the area at the top of the field and create a safe entrance to the School, by way of an electronic gate manned by School staff at the beginning and end of the School day, to avoid children having to use School Lane or Bullen Street. The School had been very keen to take this matter forward but having no available funds it had approached the Council to ask whether Section 106 funding might be available. The Council resolved to investigate the matter as it meant no change to the current use of the land as the new gate and path would not be open to the public. Cllr Wells queried whether Section 106 funds would be available for such a project, as the space would not be open to the public, which was also queried by Cllr Deed. Cllr Waldron suggested that the School's enthusiasm should be stated within any response to the residents. It was confirmed that the Council is in receipt of legal advice, from some years ago, stating that the Covenants referred to by the residents are no longer relevant and that the Council can use its land as it feels fit. Cllrs Deed and Wells asked Council to consider whether it would go ahead with the project if Section 106 funding was not available and, if so, this should be reported to the residents. It was agreed that the project was very dependent upon Section 106 funding and that without this the project would probably not proceed. It was RESOLVED that the Clerk responds to the residents explaining the difference between the two projects and confirming that the first had been closed down and that the second was only at an investigatory stage. It should also be pointed out that the Council does not believe that it is bound by the residents' interpretations of the Covenants and that it had legal advice on file advising that neighbouring residents of The Glebe do not benefit from the Covenants to which they refer. (The Council is not obliged to publish legal documents).

20/15 Follow up review of Clerks working hours: It was RESOLVED that a meeting between the Clerk and the Staffing Working Group would take place, by Zoom, and that any recommendations would be reported to Council at the June meeting. It was RESOLVED to pay the Clerks overtime request of 20 hours (£238.20 gross) as worked between 1/1/20 and 30/4/20. Cllr Deed left the meeting at 21.25 hours.

20/16 Business at the Chairman's discretion: Cllr Hodge suggested that the Council subscribes to Zoom.

Next meeting: Tuesday June 9th 2020, 7.30pm, by way of Zoom.

The meeting closed at 21.33

Chairman June 9th 2020