

Minutes of the Meeting of Doddinghurst Parish Council held at 20.00 on Thursday 12th January 2017, Parish Rooms, Adjacent Village Hall, Church Lane, Doddinghurst, Essex.

1. **Present:** Cllrs. Mrs D. Dicker (Chairman), Mrs. D Rogers Harrison, Mrs. Julia Le Page, Mr P Arnell, Mr. A Smith, Mr. G Smith, Mr. A Oliver, Mr M Capon and Mr A Farrow; Borough Councillor Mr C Poppy and Essex County Cllr Ann Naylor.
2. **Apologies for absence.** Cllr D Potter and Borough Cllrs Mr K Parker and Mr Roger McCheyne
3. **Resolved.** Minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd November approved and signed.
4. **Declaration of Interests.** None declared.
5. **Information: Leader of Brentwood Borough Council Q&A session.** Apologies received for non-attendance and a date will be set when Councillors can meet Cllr Louise McKinley.
6. **Information:** Clerk's report back on progress and from decisions taken at prior meetings.
 - a) *Burial Ground: In the two months, one burial re-open plot 140 and one new ashes re Mrs Bucknole.*
 - b) *Allotments: Waiting list of 2 people.*
 - c) *CPA Project 2016 to replace the play surface started on the 31st October 2016 at 08.00 and ended on the 6th December 2016 at 12.00 with the completion of snag list items. Sovereign, the Contractor for the project has been paid in full and the Dagwood Trust and CIF grants for a total of £26,000 reclaimed and paid. A VAT return has also been completed for a refund of some £14,920 in VAT paid to Sovereign.*
 - d) *The "wood chip" recovered from the play area has been distributed amongst the woodlands behind the football fields and levelled such that all pathways are accessible*
 - e) *A campaign to prevent the 261 bus from being scrapped by Essex CC following the cancellation of contract by Amber buses from the 26th November has be run in concert with Blackmore Parish Council. Initially ECC councillors indicated the service would need to be financially supported by the Parish and Borough. After a sustained press and publicity campaign ECC reversed their decision and agreed to fund the bus up to the end of March 2017 but this then left a gap in the 261 bus until a new contractor could be found. We arranged for the 898 service to temporarily call at the Doddinghurst Road bus stops on its 3 daily trips to Brentwood and back. Essex County Council have now announced that Ensign Bus will be running a replacement 261 service to be called the 61 to commence on the 3rd January 2017 and Ensign released the timetable at the end of December 2016.*
 - f) *Pension Fund. The Staging Date for the Parish Council to establish an employee Pension Fund is the 1st January 2017. The Parish Council now has a duty to formally review the position of its employees and to write to all of them to tell them their pension rights and options. A resolution to approve the adoption of a pension fund by the Council is to be included on the January 2017 full council agenda. This is necessary in order to be able to advise employees who may opt into a pension scheme after 1st January 2017 the contribution rates that could apply to them.*
 - g) *Precept. In November the Finance and Resource committee met and recommended a 2% increase in precept for 2017/18, which may be increased to compensate for loss of grants(s) from the Borough Council.*
 - h) *Wall render. Quotations have been received to re-render the Basket Ball Wall.*
 - i) *Christmas Buffet. Was held in December 2016.*
 - j) *Burial Ground. Letters have been issued to plot holders who are planting over their burial plot in breach of lawned cemetery regulations. In some cases evergreen trees are being included in the planting. We are asking people to return the plots to grass by scaling back the "gardened" area.*
 - k) *Secretary of Dagwood Trust. The Clerk has been appointed as secretary to the Dagwood Trust.*
6. **Information:** Noted: Schedule of Correspondence received up to the 23rd Dec 2016. It was noted that the Bentley Handbell Group had been successful in winning a grant from Brentwood Borough Council which met their immediate needs and having discussed this with Mrs G Farrow the topic had been omitted from the agenda.
7. **Financial Reports and Minutes and Feedback from Committees.**
 - a. Information: Noted the Financial Reports for November and December 2016.
 - b. **Resolved.** Approved the Schedule of Payments for November and December 2016.
 - c. Information: Noted new planning applications for November and December 2016.
 - d. Information: Noted minutes of the F&R committee of the 16th November 2016.
 - e. Information: Feedback from meetings attended:

Cllr G Smith reported on a meeting relating to mental health in NE London and plans to improve care for people with issues. This included a triage process with the Police to shield people from being “dumped” in A&E and upskilling schools to recognise the need for specialised care.

Cllr D Dicker reported on a meeting with Essex County Council Traffic Commissioner, County Councillors and the operator of the new 61 service Ensign Buses. It was noted that the 61 bus service had now replaced the 261 bus running from Blackmore to Brentwood via Doddinghurst. The meeting followed a concerted campaign by both Blackmore and Doddinghurst Parish Councils to persuade Essex County Council not to abolish the service when Amber Bus ceased the provision of the commercial service in mid-December. Action is to be taken to communicate to all residents in the village of the need “to use it or lose it” as the future of the service is not guaranteed.

8. **Information: Precept for 2017/8, update on latest position.** The budget for 2017/18 had been agreed in November 2016 and based on Parish Council approved capital spend and maintenance policies with an inflation rate increase of 2% RPI as at September 2016. It had assumed a level of discretionary grant loss but not the LCTS grant cut which has been abruptly abolished in its entirety for 2017/18. However, the budget does lend itself to spreading this year’s cut and next year’s expected final discretionary grant cut over the three years from 2017/18. The recommended precept, based on the approved budget, is £66,320. The revised Band D precept would be £56.38p per annum, an increase of 9% overall or a £4 per year council tax rise for Doddinghurst.
9. **Resolved:** Approved Doddinghurst Parish Council’s precept request for 2017/18 of £66,320.
10. **Information:** Update on Auto enrolment of employees for pension benefits. The staging date for the Parish Council was passed on the 1st January 2017 and it is mandatory to enter into a pension regime for all council employees. At the present time there are no employees who are eligible for auto enrolment, either due to age or salary level. However any employee between 18 and 75 can ask to opt into enrolment. The Finance committee had considered in depth the Pension Fund options and decided to recommend the adoption of the NEST scheme. The Essex Pension Funds, adopted by many local authorities, was considered to have too many unknown future costs to be able to recommend.
11. **Resolved:** Approved, the adoption of the NEST pension scheme for all current and future Doddinghurst Parish Council employees. Appropriate public notice of the motion to adopt the NEST pension had been given.
12. **Resolved:** Approved funds (£500 + VAT) for the repair of render to the basketball wall.
13. **Other urgent information** (No council actions/letters/undertakings permissible on this item). A paper copy of the full 2017 Calendar of meetings was issued to all Councillors present. Cllr Le Page advised members that the Deal Tree Doctors surgery were now offering evening appointments, on limited hours, for people who work in the day - they have issued a Newsletter on the subject on their website.

The meeting closed at 21.50

Minutes signed:

Date: 2nd March 2017

Comments in the public session:

1. Cllr Naylor advised that plans to provide a resurfacing of byways was under consideration but expressed concern that this might open up access to undesirable forms of vehicles such as quad bikes and Green Lane drivers, so unfettered access was undesirable and some level of control needed to protect horse owners or pedestrians.
2. Cllr Poppy provided information on the car transport scheme operated by Brentwood Community Transport. Membership was £10 a year and customers paid a per trip fee depending on the distance. They do not cater for hospital appointments but will take people to visit hospital patients.
3. It was noted that Ensign Bus have an “app” and Twitter feed to provide customers with real time information about their services. The mobile phone/ tablet app shows where the buses are in real time on a moving map and their twitter feed gives problem reports on traffic/ service delays.
4. The meeting was likely to be Cllr Ann Naylor’s last as she is retiring as a Councillor.

The meeting was attended by five members of the public