

Minutes of the Little Burstead Parish Council meeting
held remotely via Zoom
on Wednesday 3rd June 2020 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Pauline Bowles: Councillor Katrina Watts:
Councillor Abi Mohseni:

In Attendance: Mrs. Christine Barlow, Clerk to the Parish Council

Members of Public: None present

1/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor David Clark. Essex County Councillor Hedley.

2/20 DECLATIONS OF MEMBER'S INTERESTS: To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests by members relating to any agenda items.

None declared

3/20 PUBLIC FORUM: The meeting will be opened to the public to give residents an opportunity to ask questions. (Time allowed for this is 20 minutes)

No public were identified as present at the meeting.

4/20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: Council to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th March 2020 and Chair to sign.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th March 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chair, Councillor Pauline Bowles electronically.

Councillor Bowles confirmed she would "wet sign" the minutes as soon as a date could be arranged, in line with current government guidelines.

5/20 PARISH CLERK'S REPORT: The Parish Clerk to update Councillors on Parish Council business and Parish Council projects.

- **Laindon Common Road Culvert repairs:** An email had been received from Councillor Richard Moore, Little Burstead Ward Councillor, advising that an initial design proposal to repair the culvert would have meant the closure of Laindon Common Road and to minimise disruption an alternative strengthening scheme had now been proposed. The work would be carried out in the 2020/21 financial year. However, before the scheme could be implemented, the culvert needed to be cleared of silt and debris and this was currently being arranged. Councillor Moore commented that several residents had contacted him to inform they were pleased the barrier restrictions, currently in place, had slowed down the traffic and were preventing large trucks from using Laindon Common Road. Councillors present suggested that to prevent damage to the culvert in the future a weight restriction should be put in place to prevent large lorries using it as a cut through

to Billericay. **Action:** The Clerk was asked to make the request on behalf of the Parish Council.

- **Potholes:** The Parish Clerk advised she had contacted Essex County Councillor Hedley and Councillor Richard Moore to request they ask for funding from the Highways budget to repair potholes in the village and was currently waiting for a reply.
- **Village Green:** A request had been made to Basildon Council to cut the grass around the beacon.
- **Village Hall Noticeboards:** At the request of Roger Savage, The Village Hall Committee Chairman the Clerk had contacted Basildon Council to enquire regarding the status of their funding application to purchase a new noticeboard for the Village Hall and had received a reply stating that a decision was imminent.
- **Footpath 166:** Two emails had been received from members of the public concerning damage and access to Footpath (FP) 166. The Parish Clerk had acknowledged the emails and reported the issue to Essex County Council Definitive Maps Officer who had advised that he had passed the matter onto the local area Engineer and will also report the issue on the Essex Highways website to enable the location to be clearly marked and the relevant inspection raised to assess the matter.
- **Chase Farm Public Rights of Way redirection application:** Essex County Council Public Rights of Way Officer was due to meet with the ECC PRow Engineer but current Coronavirus pandemic restrictions meant all visits associated with Public Path Orders were deemed no-essential and this meeting had not taken place. In addition any order to accede to the request by the farmer to change the direction of footpaths on his land could not be implemented due to the need to meet the guidelines associated with making the Order and making copies of the Order available at local authority offices which were currently closed. Until the restrictions were relaxed an Order to redirect the footpaths could not be made.
- **Defibrillator:** A grant of £500 had been obtained from the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to boost the funds raised to purchase a defibrillator for the village to £1325. An alternative location to site the equipment in the old telephone box was discounted as Councillors considered that the original plan to locate the equipment at the Village Hall was safer and more secure. It was **AGREED** to purchase the Defibrillator from the London based charity **Hearts of London**. Virtual training was included in the package and when government guidelines were relaxed face-to-face training for up to 50 participants. Councillors also **AGREED** that any shortfall would be covered from the Parish Council budget.
- **Highway Gateways:** As reported in the minutes of 11th March 2020 a successful funding application had been made to Essex County Council to purchase Highway Gateways to help as a visual deterrent to slow down the traffic through the village. However, until Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed any meetings with third parties to identify the exact locations could not safely take place.

- **Telephone Box:** The cost of refurbishment of the telephone box was still under investigation and would be subject to obtaining external funding. The Clerk was researching possible funding schemes. Councillor Mohseni and Councillor Bowles had been provided with a list of materials required and possible costs from BT to help to make further enquiries.
- **War Memorial Base:** Funding to be sought to carry out the repairs to the base. Councillors considered that a more permanent base should be laid for longevity.

6/20 LEGISLATION CHANGES: (i) Annual Meeting of the Council (ii) Virtual Meetings.

As a direct result of the current Coronavirus pandemic The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4th April 2020. These changes provided flexibility to Local Councils in organising meetings going forward and covered the following aspect:

(i) **Annual Meetings of the Parish Council:** The Local Government Act 1972 required Local Councils to hold an annual parish meeting between 1st March and 1st June each year. However, the new regulations (as above) removed this requirement and there was now no duty for the Parish Council to convene an annual parish meeting. The same applied to the Parish Council Annual Meeting whereby s78 of the Act disappplies the requirement to hold a Parish Council Annual meeting , unless it wished to do so, before May 2021 The current Chair would remain in post until such time as (i) the Annual Meeting is held or (ii) until May 2021 or (iii) unless the Council decide to elect a replacement Chair earlier. However, under the Local Government Act legislation the Parish Council must still hold at least four (4) meetings in any year, one of which must be the Parish Council Annual meeting.

(ii) **Virtual Meetings:** Under the new regulations it was now permitted for Local Councils to hold remote meetings. This in effect meant that Members attending a meeting did not have to be in the same place as each other and the meetings can be held in more than one place electronically, digitally, or virtually using the internet or the telephone. Members of the public and press could also attend the meeting remotely and would be provided with the information on how to join on the published agenda. The Parish Council's Standing Orders would be amended to reflect the changes.

In addition, due Councillor Mitchell having resigned from the Parish Council in March and elections not taking place in May, there was now a Councillor vacancy. It was **AGREED** by all present to advertise the vacancy to co-opt a new Councillor until elections in May 2021.

7/20 VIRTUAL MEETING PROCEDURE: To discuss and agree to the introducing of a virtual meeting procedure.

As discussed in the previous agenda item legislation had changed to include

holding the Parish Council meeting remotely via a virtual platform without the need to physically attend a meeting. It was necessary therefore to put in place a policy to ensure that the process of conducting these meetings was carried out in an appropriate manner. The Parish Clerk provided a draft Virtual Policy for Councillors to consider (Appendix A).

Councillors present **AGREED** to adopt the policy and procedure as presented.

8/20 PLANNING: To record Councillors views and comments on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) as received from Basildon Borough Council.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 20/00525/OUT

Outline application for residential development with all matters reserved - Salmons Farm, Tye Common Road, Little Burstead, Billericay

Councillors, as with their view on the previous application, raised the following objections to the application:

(i) **Green Belt:** The development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there were no special circumstances provided to demonstrate that a development of this type (i.e. a mini housing estate) would have no impact on the surrounding area, which is by nature a rural area. The Parish Council considered that the site does not meet in-fill policy as suggested in the applicant's statement and would set a precedent for future similar developments. They also considered the applicant's example of The Willows, to demonstrate infill in the Green Belt, was incorrect, as the new build replaced an older detached property.

(ii) **Highway safety:** There would be an increase of traffic on exiting and entering the site on a very precarious and already busy Tye Common Road. This road is used as a cut through to and from Billericay to access the A127 and any increase in traffic would have a substantial impact. The very rural nature of the area, with limited transport links, would mean that any occupants of the proposed properties, given the size and dimensions of the properties, would generate a number of cars to suit the activities of the occupants.

Any further observations would be added to the report to be sent to the Planning response.

9/20 PLANNING DECISIONS AND COMMENTS: To receive updates and comments regarding planning applications discussed at previous Parish Council meetings.

Planning Application 20/00242/PDPA: Notification for a proposed larger home extension projecting 8 metres from the rear wall of the original dwelling with a maximum height of 3.85 metres and an eaves height of 2.805 metres. Materials to match existing. Dell Cottage, Broomhills Chase, Billericay, Essex CM12 9TE – Prior Approval not required

Planning Application 20/00455/COND: Application for approval of details reserved by condition 6 (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy) of planning permission 19/00239/FULL Land Rear of Valkyrie Broomhills Chase Billericay Essex CM12 9TE - Granted

Planning Application 20/00390/FULL: Conversion of garage into habitable accommodation The Wheatsheaf Laindon Common Road Billericay Essex CM12 9TD - Granted

Planning Application 20/00357/LDCP: To establish the lawfulness of a proposed front porch following removal of existing front extension 3 Brook Cottages Laindon Common Road Billericay Essex CM12 9TA - Granted

Planning Application 20/00315/PACU: Notification for prior approval of proposed change of use of agricultural building to 3no dwelling houses (Class C3) & associated operational development under Class Q of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) Lady Springwood Dunton Road Little Burstead Billericay Essex CM12 9TZ - Refused

10/20 FINANCE REPORT: To acknowledge, confirm or agree the following:

(i) To report on the Parish Council's financial position.

The Responsible Finance Officer provided Councillors with a breakdown of Income and Expenditure since the previous Parish Council meeting on 11th March 2020.

	£
Balance at bank as of 11 th March 2020	4,416.22
Balance at bank as of 3 rd June 2020	7,455.62
Expenditure:	2,339.89
Income:	4,880.54
Expenditure:	
(764) Clerks Net Salary (Feb/Mar) Plus Sub: Tel/BB & Office	839.72
(765) Clerk Tax & Emprs. NI (Feb/Mar)	193.20
(766) CiLCA Registration	150.00
(767) EALC/NALC Affiliation	138.35
(768) Clerks Net Salary (Apr/May) Plus Sub: Tel/BB & Office	834.06
(770) Savin Wholesalers (Plants for Village)	34.56
(772) Petty Cash	<u>150.00</u>
	2,339.89
Income:	
HMRC VAT Refund	838.78
Basildon Borough Council ½ Year Precept	3,541.76
Essex Association of Local Councils Grant - Defibrillator	500.00
Essex Association of Local Councils CiLCA Refund	<u>498.75</u>
	5,379.29

(ii) Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement:

Councillors reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and were in **AGREEMENT** that a sound system of internal controls, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements and mitigation of Risks, were in place throughout the year and that all accounts were correct and in order. Councillor Pauline Bowles, Chair, signed the statement on behalf of the Parish Council.

The Responsible Officer also provided Councillors with an Accounting Statement which was a summary of the total yearly income and expenditure for the Council. The full breakdown of payments and income was also provided to Councillors and this balanced with the Parish Council bank statement as of 31st March 2020. Councillors certified the figures presented as correct and Councillor Pauline Bowles, Chair, signed to confirm on behalf of the Parish Council. All relevant documentation for the current year would be sent to the internal Auditor by courier as it was not possible, under current government guidelines, to meet face to face as would normally happen.

The Parish Council's gross income and expenditure was below £25,000 in the year of account as of 31st March 2020, under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulation 2015 and there was no requirement to have a limited assurance review or submit an Annual Return to the Government's appointed external Auditor, PKF LittleJohn, providing the Parish Council certified themselves as exempt and notified the external auditors to this effect. **Action:** Councillors confirmed they were exempt and, following completion of the internal audit, the RFO would prepare the Certificate of Exemption and forward it to the external Auditors PKF LittleJohn before the 31st July 2020.

(iii) To confirm delegation of Parish Council business to the Clerk in an emergency: Under current circumstances Councillors were asked to agree to the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer to act on behalf of the Council on financial matters up to £1,000 in an emergency. Any such decision would be taken in consultation with the Chair. Councillors present **AGREED** to the delegation of power and to the amendment in the Council's Financial Regulations to reflect the decision.

(iv) Personnel matters: To agree an incremental increase to the Clerk's salary and amendment to Clerk's contract of employment.

The Parish Clerk/RFO had successfully completed and obtained the Clerks Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification in February 2020. Under her Contract of Employment, she was entitled to automatically receive two additional salary points on completion of the CiLCA and up to four (4) additional points on top of her current salary pay scale. The increase for the financial year 2020/2021 would mean an increase of £19.55 per month over her 2019/2020 salary. Councillors **AGREED** to the incremental increase and asked the Clerk/RFO to amend the details of her current Contract of Employment to reflect the changes and provide the Parish Council with a copy for verification and signing.

11/20 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2020 – BASILDON BOROUGH: To receive Councillor comments on the proposals.

The Parish Council was not in favour to any changes to the current system of Community Governance.

Councillors considered that it would not be beneficial for Little Burstead to be joined to Billericay Town Council or any other nearby Parish as it would lose its unique identity.

They considered as a smaller Council they understood local issues and amalgamation would mean under representation by a larger body.

Election year for each Parish Council in the Borough should remain the same i.e. in each specific four current year cycle

12/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: To confirm the date of next Parish Council

Councillors, in the current circumstances, **AGREED** to review the meeting schedule and cancel the Parish Council Meeting on 8th July. The next meeting would be held on 9th September 2020. Details of the change would be notified to residents and absent Councillors in the normal way.

Signed Cllr. Pauline Bowles (Chair)

Date: 9th September 2020

Appendix A

LITTLE BURSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL**VIRTUAL MEETING PROCEDURE**

This procedure has been written to comply with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1. Agenda and notice:

- a) An agenda will be published on the Parish Council's website 3 clear days before the meeting and where safe to do so the Parish Council noticeboard.
- b) A summons to attend the meeting will also be issued to Parish Councillors within the same timeframe together with all appropriate documentation in order for Members to make informed comment and decisions.
- c) The agenda will include a link for Members to join the meeting.
- d) Residents will need to contact the Clerk for the password to access the meeting to ensure the security and integrity of the meeting.

2. Joining the meeting:

- a) The meeting will be a formal meeting of Little Burstead Parish Council and as such, Standing Orders will be followed in conjunction with this procedure.
- b) All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting which will assist with keeping background noise to a minimum and allow everyone to hear the discussions.
- c) The Chairman will welcome participants to the meeting and explain that the meeting is a formal meeting of the Parish Council meeting. The Chairman will chair the meeting as if it were a face to face meeting using the agenda.
- d) Appropriate dress for attending meetings is required.

3. Member Participation;

- a) The Chairman will introduce each item. If a Member wishes to speak, they must raise their hand indicating their wish to speak.
- b) When invited to speak by the Chairman, the Member can unmute themselves to speak. Once finished, the member will mute themselves to reduce background noise.

- c) The Clerk or designated person can mute/unmute participants. If there is any inappropriate behaviour, the participant will be placed in the waiting room.
- d) For any person taking part in the meeting via telephone, the Chairman will ask that member if they have any comments to make throughout the meeting to ensure full participation from members of the Parish Council.

4. Public Participation:

- a) If any members of the public are present, each Councillor will introduce themselves.
- b) Members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during the public participation forum but will not speak at other times, unless permitted by the Chairman.

5. Declaration of Interests:

If a member has a pecuniary interest in an item, they must declare it under agenda item ***Declaration of Interests*** and explain the nature of the interest. When that item is being discussed and considered, the Clerk will remove the member with the pecuniary interest to the waiting room for the entirety of the item. Once the item has been concluded, the Clerk will readmit the member from the waiting room.

6. Voting:

- a) Voting will be via show of hands as per the Council's Standing Orders.
- b) Voting for those present with video capabilities will be by physically raising their hand. For example, when the Chairman asks who is in favour of a decision, members will raise their hand to indicate their agreement. The Chairman will then ask those members to lower their hand before asking for any votes against the decision and any abstentions.
- c) For those members taking part via telephone link, the Chairman will ask for the members' vote at the same time as other members raise their hands.
- d) The Chairman will then declare the result of the vote.
- e) Should a secret ballot be requested, the Clerk will set up a poll during the meeting where members can vote anonymously.

7. Confidential Items:

- a) Where there is a confidential item that needs to be considered, the Clerk will send members an invitation to a separate meeting that follows the normal meeting. This private meeting will be accessed as soon as other business within the public domain has been concluded.

8. Minutes:

Minutes will be agreed at the next meeting (whether virtual or face to face) and will be retrospectively “wet” signed as soon as possible after the meeting.

9. Other information

- a) The ‘file sharing’ function will not be used as part of the virtual platform meeting. If necessary, the Clerk or designated person will display any documents using the ‘share screen’ function.
- b) The ‘chat’ function can only be used when Members/Participants audio is not working or is failing.
- c) All other regulations in place for ordinary physical meetings (i.e. Standing Orders, Declarations of Interest, Code of Conduct, Quorum) remain in place for virtual meetings.