

MONK SOHAM PARISH COUNCIL

(Draft) Minutes of a “Virtual” Meeting held on Tuesday 24th November 2020 via Zoom

The meeting commenced at 1900

11/20 – 01 Introduction

DE welcomed everyone and he thanked CJB for making the arrangements

11/20 - 02 Present

- David Entwisle (DE - Chairman), Graham Wigley (GW – Vice Chairman), Julian Sayer (JS), Charles Bagnall (CRB), Cliff Arndt-Snelling (CAS), Julie Giles (JG) and Caroline Berkley (CJB).
- Geoff Robinson (GR), as Parish Clerk.
- Matthew Hicks (MSDC District & SCC Councillor) for Item 11/20 – 10 below)

11/20 – 03 Apologies for Absence

- None required.

11/20 - 04 Declaration of Members Interests.

- Councillors were reminded of the need to notify any changes to their circumstances which may affect their Declaration of Members Interests.

11/20 - 05 Public Open Session

- There were no members of the public present.

11/20 - 06 Minutes of the Last Meeting (8th September 2020)

- These were agreed and will be signed by DE as an accurate record.

11/20 - 07 Action Points from the Minutes

- JS stated that providing a seat on the land next to the village sign at The Green was still on hold until early 2021. He will continue to make enquiries with the preferred supplier.
- GR had confirmed with our insurers that the activities of the COVID-19 Emergency Group were fully covered.

11/20 - 08 Police Report

- GR stated that the Suffolk Police crime website for the period July to September 2020 showed no recorded crime in Monk Soham or the surrounding villages. October 2020 figures are not yet available.

11/20 - 09 COVID-19 Emergency Group & Privacy Policy

- GR had written to Natalie & Mark Harding thanking them for the tremendous work they had done through the Group.
- Due to the current lockdown, the “mothballed” contact list had been used to contact everyone to notify them of the re-establishment of the Group’s activities. As before, they were operating in conjunction with the Bedfield Emergency Group. However, the uptake of requests for help has been much lower than during the first lockdown.
- GR will now register the Parish Council with ICO.

11/20 - 10 Report of District & County Councillor

Councillor Hicks attended and drew attention to the items in his latest report, which had been recently circulated. In addition, he mentioned:

- The focus of SCC during the current lockdown has been to reintroduce the “Home But Not Alone” initiative and introduce a new one called “Suffolk Advice and Support Services. The first is designed to provide support to obtain medicines and essentials such as food and the second with grants for unforeseen debt due to the pandemic and has helped 300 people. A total of £1.5 million has been allocated. A hotline is available.
- The pandemic has caused a £53 million shortfall in SCC’s budget and he is hopefully that this will be addressed in the Chancellor’s Public Spending Review tomorrow (25/11/2020).
- Other projects such as improvements to the A140 at Eye and the recruitment of adoption and fostering volunteers remain a priority.
- In response to a question from DE, he confirmed that a Green Agenda was very much a high priority for SCC, who were part of a working committee with other county councils to collectively take green matters forward. He also mentioned an initiative to provide village community electric vehicle charging points. GR said he had not seen this – MH to make enquiries.

11/20 - 11 *Financial Update*

- The 2019/20 accounts had been submitted to the national auditors and acknowledgement was still awaited.
- Payments since the last meeting have been £66.08, £611.70 and £143.42 as the Clerk’s first half year expenses, salary and PAYE, plus £146.57 to CAS Business Services for the 2020/21 Insurance renewal.
- Income since the last meeting has been the second half precept payment of £1,125.00 and a payment of £100 by HSBC as poor service compensation.
- Likely outstanding payments of the rest of 2020/21 include the clerk’s second half year expenses salary and PAYE (circa £50, £611.70 & £143.42 respectively), plus salary arrears of circa £41 (including PAYE). This will leave an anticipated carry forward figure at 31st March 2021 of £2029.31, but this includes an amount of £600.00 ringfenced for the seat at the Green. Accordingly, after a brief discussion, it was agreed that the precept should remain at £2,250 for the 2021/22 financial year.
- GR had now been able to apply for telephone and internet banking and the outcome from HSBC was awaited. Despite poor service from HSBC’s Coventry Business Centre, this was now in progress locally. A new signature mandate had also been processed.
- Sadly our local auditor Don Hughes had recently died and condolences were offered to Beryl, his widow and family. Paul Burrows was appointed to replace him as local auditor.

11/20 - 12 *Planning Applications*

- DC/20/04980/81 2087 (Woodcroft Hall – Listed Building – Repair, Conversion establishment of Wings for Office and Accommodation) – no objection to be offered to MSDC, subject to adequate provision in ensuring the original features are preserved as far as possible. GR to notify MSDC.

11/20 - 13 *MSDC Proposed New Local Plan*

- GR stated that MSDC had totally ignored the Parish Council’s submission and offered no feedback, which was not acceptable. The only reference to Monk Soham in the Plan was the permanent designation of the small plot next to White Elms on Low Road as a Traveler Site. This had been done without any consultation and the current permission was thought to be only on a temporary basis for the lifetime of the original tenant. GR to investigate further and make representations to MSDC as appropriate.

11/20 - 14 *Countryside Group*

JG had circulated a written report, the salient points of which were:

- Graham Giles had agreed to do a survey of the trees on Hungers Green in line with the approved Forestry Commission Guidelines supplied by our insurers. This had been done and no problems identified. The trees will be further inspected by the Countryside Group members when the current COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed. GR to write to Graham Giles

accepting his offer to take on the role of warden on Hungers Green and to thank him for his efforts. A discussion also took place regarding the sudden appearance of a rope swing on one of the trees. GR advised that in his opinion it should be removed due to risk of injury, vis a vis our insurers. It was agreed to try and discover who had placed the swing there and request its removal.

- The Group had registered an interest under the SCC's Tree Initiative as part of the management plan for the Green. In addition to possibilities for Hungers Green, two other small landowners have shown an interest. A similar offer from the Woodlands Trust involved too many trees for our needs. Support was broadly agreed by the councillors and GR was tasked to try and determine the timescale and future implementation planned by the SCC organisers. It is understood that planting will take place during late 2021 by SCC but that landowners will be responsible for their wellbeing after that.
- The RNR had been visited by Holly Emmens. The Sulphur Clover was in poor condition this year due to the dry weather and rabbits. New posts will probably be provided after her next visit in 2021.
- GR had researched the PC's liability with their insurers, Suffolk CC Highways and MSDC. The insurers confirmed that we were insured for third party liability on Hungers Green, including for trees. However, they had discouraged "own risk notices" which could be read as taking a less responsible role. Insurance applied to all authorised volunteers such as the Tree Warden and those engaged in hedge coppicing.

11/20 - 15 Quiet Lanes Initiative

Villagers had been invited by DE to comment on SCC Highway's Green Lanes initiative in an article in the recent Parish Magazine. Salient points of the subsequent discussion were:

- Supportive responses had been received from four village households, plus the Countryside Group.
- JG suggested that anything to improve road safety for everyone using our lanes should be seriously considered and this initiative offered options to achieve an improvement. JG also was prepared to act as the Coordinator if required.
- There would be no effective enforcement and it was not designed as an alternative to speed limits. GR stated that we had tried in the past to have speed limits implemented on some of the village roads and SCC Highways had made it very clear that this was not an option.
- It was felt that the vast majority of motorists using our lanes were very considerate to others and Quiet Lane signs were not going to make any difference to the attitudes of the few irresponsible drivers that were not. They could also lead to a sense of complacency by pedestrians and other users.
- The potential costs to the parish seemed to far exceed the advantages to be gained.
- The associated bureaucracy of setting it up seemed to outweigh the potential benefits and additional road signage was not ideal in a rural area such as ours.

Accordingly, after a vote of five against and one for (plus the abstention of DE as Chairman), it was decided not to pursue the initiative.

11/20 - 16 Other Correspondence and Any Other Business

- A request to assist and encourage completion of the 2021 National Census, especially amongst the elderly was agreed, pending receipt of further information. It may be possible to use the COVID-19 Emergency Group's network, under the Council's Privacy Policy.
- Another letter had been received from a resident of Low Road about potential flooding. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that regrettably there was little that could be done as a Parish Council. GR to write to the resident and refer her to SCC Highways.

11/20 – 17 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was fixed for 1900 Tuesday 9th February 2021, the mode to be agreed nearer the time and dependent on the (then) COVID – 19 requirements.

The meeting closed at 2015.

