

**Minutes of the remote meeting of Moulton Parish Council held on Monday  
4<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 6.00 pm by video conferencing link.**

<b>Participating Cllrs</b>	D Almond - <b>CHAIRMAN</b>	David Clarke
	Jane Horsnell	Ryan Bragg
	E Chambers	Mark Price
	Tim James	John Derry

**APOLOGIES** – County Cllr Andy Drummond and District Cllr Roger Dicker. Cllr Douglas James (excused due to a previous engagement).

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST** – Cllr Mark Price (member Vets Football Club).

**ALSO PARTICIPATING** - the Clerk and 1 member of the public

**MINUTES** – copies of minutes of meetings held on 2/3/2020 and 6/4/2020 had been circulated. It was unanimously agreed that these could now be signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

**COVID 19 CRISIS**

**2020 CORONAVIRUS REGULATIONS came into force on 4<sup>th</sup> April.**

The Clerk had summarised the situation so far as the **administration of the Council** was concerned.

It was possible to hold remote meetings, subject to conditions, and the methods used would be based on the needs and capacity of the Council i.e. if there was no video link - telephone conference calls were acceptable. The Vice Chairman had facilitated a Zoom link and was thanked for his help in setting up the link.

It was necessary to permit members of the public to participate and exercise their rights to observe or speak at these virtual meetings, and the Clerk confirmed that the agenda had been published on the Website and village notice board and it had been advertised that villagers were welcome to contact the Chairman or Clerk to raise any issues of concern which could be relayed to the Council or, if they wished, to participate in the virtual meeting. The contact number and password would be provided on request.

The Clerk had contacted the 2 villagers who regularly attended to advise them of these new emergency arrangements as well as the District and County Councillors.

There was no requirement to hold the annual meeting of the PC i.e. the May meeting when a Chairman is elected. The current Chairman will remain in post until May 2021 - unless the Council decides otherwise.

Although the annual Parish meeting was not singled out in this emergency legislation, in NALC's view, due to social distancing requirements, it meant that it was not possible for parish meetings to be held before 1st June - and so this village meeting would not take place in 2020.

The Chairman updated councillors and advised that the plans put in place by the Council, volunteers and representatives of the **Community Resilience Group** appeared to be holding up and working well. It had been decided by the Group that a second flier would be drafted and circulated to ensure that no one had been missed out who was in need of help. The Council approved the printing costs, and the Clerk was asked to re-imburse Mrs Elissa Rampling on receipt of the invoice. The Moulton Matters distributors would arrange delivery.

It was agreed that any phone charges incurred by the volunteers holding the emergency response mobiles would be met by the Council. Cllr Tim James agreed to find out if there had been any expenditure to date on mobile top up vouchers.

The concerns over the risks to parishioners due to the influx of outsiders coming into the village to access the public footpaths near the Church had diminished, thanks to the advertising on Social Media of the need to keep a distance on narrow footpaths, and the support of the Police who had been in regular attendance over the Easter bank holiday period and following weeks.

### **PLAYING FIELD**

The Clerk reported that a quotation of £399 plus VAT had been received for spraying and fertilizing the football pitch. In May last year similar works had been carried out by Grasscutter at a cost of £408.33 ex VAT. It was expected that this would be done in mid - May, and the contractor would be asked to put up signs.

It was unanimously resolved to accept the quote and the Clerk asked to place the order and effect payment on satisfactory completion of the work.

### **PROPOSAL FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SHELTERS ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD**

Cllr Mark Price declared a personal interest being a member of the Veterans Football Club. He had previously made a proposal that some form of wind break/shelter could be installed on the meadow side of the football field as an open space/park facility.

It was unanimously agreed that any structures must not impact on the visual amenity value in the centre of the village and must be of benefit to all who use the playing field, not just a facility for the footballers over a limited period over the winter months.

There was some discussion regarding the proposed size and materials as well as costing – it was suggested that the Moulton Millennium Club may be in a position to help with the cost of materials, and volunteer labour would be used for construction.

In principle the Council were of the view that the project was worthy of further consideration. Cllr Price was asked to submit a detailed specification of the scheme for councillors to consider at the next meeting. It was then agreed that subject to the Council's view of the proposal, it would then be necessary to consult further with an article in Moulton Matters, asking for villagers comments, and the Village Hall Management Committee would need to be consulted, as well as any homeowners adjoining the playing field

The Planning Authority would then need to be asked if these structures would be subject to planning regulations due to the siting within the Conservation Area.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

Details of the application to update and change the windows and doors at **The Post Office DC/20/0485 HH** had been circulated. These will mimic the existing windows visually whilst providing more stable, secure and draft free windows. The new doors will replicate the existing doors.

**The Old Rectory Brookside DC/20/0697/TCA** an application to fell a 16-18m dead sycamore tree on the boundary of the property had also been circulated. The tree was unstable, had branch failure and was at risk of falling into the neighbouring property.

It was unanimously resolved to support both applications.

## **APPLICATIONS APPROVED**

**15 Brookside** – variation to approval DC/18/1865

**22A the Street** – 2 bay cart-lodge DC/20/0040/HH

**HATCHFIELD FARM – Public Enquiry** – on 12/3/2020 the Secretary of State released his decision supporting the Inspector’s recommendation to grant planning permission for up to 400 dwellings in accordance with the original application dated 2/10/2013. The Covid 19 crisis had then overtaken events although it was now hoped that the long standing plans for a large single site development on the outskirts of Newmarket could proceed and would protect the outlying villages from further speculative and inappropriate housing.

## **FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION**

**Payment of Accounts** - cheques for the new financial year were authorised as detailed on the 2020/21 schedule.

The Clerk advised that it had previously been resolved that Packhorse Fencing’s annual rate for village cuts would be increased by RPIx. The increase for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March was 2.7% and it was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the rate should be increased from £423.53 to £435 per cut. The weekly rate for inspecting the play equipment remained unchanged at £11.50 per week. (During the Covid lockdown no charge was being made). The Clerk was authorized to discharge Packhorse Fencing invoices as submitted during the forthcoming year.

**Financial Working Group’s report and the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 had been circulated prior to the meeting.**

On behalf of the finance Working Group the Clerk advised that the year-end accounts had been reviewed and it was confirmed that there was a **cash book balance on 31<sup>st</sup> March of £64,564.26**. It was reported that the bank accounts had been reconciled at the year end.

The Clerk and RFO had produced, and circulated, a summary of receipts and payments, income and expenditure account and balance sheet as at 31/3/2020 and a supporting statement for the year under review, all of which were considered and approved by the Council.

### **Approval of Accounts and AGAR for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

The Clerk and RFO had also completed the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and copies had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

1. The Council was asked to approve Section 1, the annual governance statement. It was unanimously agreed that this should be signed by the Chairman and Clerk.
2. The Council was subsequently asked to approve Section 2 – the accounting statement. The RFO was authorised to sign Section 2, and the Chairman countersign, as required. The RFO confirmed that she had completed the pro-forma giving an explanation of any significant year on year variances.
3. The Clerk would now pass the year end accounts to the internal auditor David Unwin for his review of the Council’s finances and completion of the annual Internal Audit report section of the AGAR. Following completion of internal audit the Clerk

confirmed that she would be in a position to send off the AGAR and back up documentation to PKF Littlejohn.

It was acknowledged that the Chairman would sign the accounts when it was possible to do so, taking due regard of the Government guidance on social distancing, and the safe transfer of the documents between the Clerk and Chairman.

The Clerk advised that the Council would be in a position to publish the dates recommended by the External Auditor for the period of the exercise of public rights, on reasonable notice, for interested parties and for local electors taking into account the restrictions due to the Covid 19 lockdown and need for social distancing.

The unaudited accounts would be published on the Council's section of the Village Website, together with the dates commencing 15<sup>th</sup> June and ending on 24<sup>th</sup> July for the inspection of accounting records.

**Review of Fidelity Insurance cover – (now known as Employee Dishonesty) – sum insured £50,000, with an excess of £100 on each and every loss.** It was resolved that this sum was adequate.

## **URGENT CORRESPONDENCE AND DOCUMENTS**

### **HIGHWAY MATTERS**

The Chairman's request for a conference call with the Cabinet Member to discuss the long outstanding list of Highway issues, breakdown of communication and failure to engage had been declined. The Chairman had been advised that there were currently no outstanding customer reports - despite submission of a 3 page list of concerns/faults on 6<sup>th</sup> April. The Chairman had been advised that if there were any new issues these should first be raised via the online reporting tool, and if unsatisfied with the response, followed up with County Councillor Andy Drummond, who would take forward issues with the team at the Rougham Depot.

The Chairman had replied to the email detailing his concern at the Highway Authorities failure to engage or listen to the rate paying communities. Relying solely on a reporting tool to relate with Parish Councils was viewed disrespectful and unhelpful.

The Chairman advised that he had taken up some of the more concerning and long outstanding issues with C Cllr Drummond and hopefully would have an update shortly which would be forwarded on to councillors.

### **PUBLIC FOOTPATHS**

The Chairman had received an email on 26<sup>th</sup> April from a resident who was concerned over the electric fencing which had been installed along public Footpath No 5 – across the meadow currently being grazed by ewes and lambs, and along Footpath 10 running through the field at the top of the hill beyond the Church. The complainant had been directed to the County Council's Rights of Way and Access team who were responsible for dealing with all issues relating to public footpaths.

Councillors were supportive of the Farmer's action as it was acknowledged that the fencing across the grazing meadow was to protect livestock from dogs off lead and pedestrians wandering off the public right of way causing ewes and lambs anxiety and rejection as well as the risk of dog attacks. The field above the Church was currently 'Set Aside' for flora and fauna, especially ground nesting birds. Unfortunately the public were straying off the public footpath and had been allowing dogs to run off lead. The Government Scheme for this land

meant that the tenant farmer was required to adhere to rules which permitted a safe environment for flora and fauna and this was being violated by some members of the public who were allowing their dogs to roam. The 4 metre wide fenced footway was to ensure that the land to either side was protected.

The villager had followed up his initial email asking who owned the land in question, as he intended to take the matter further, as the Parish Council was not prepared to act. Councillors confirmed the draft response which had been circulated and were agreed that the complainant should direct his concerns to the Rights of Way & Access officer. The Clerk advised that the field above the Church was owned by the Moulton Fuel Land Charity, and the Trustees were fully supportive of the tenant's actions.

Next virtual meeting of the Council was fixed for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm. Details of the Zoom link would be forwarded nearer the time.

The meeting closed at 7pm.

Signed *David Almond*

Date *8<sup>th</sup> June 2020*