**MINUTES OF CORNFORTH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:**

**DECEMBER 2020**

Minutes of the Remote Meeting of Cornforth Parish Council held at 7.00pm Monday 14th December 2020.

Present: Councillor Mr. A. Hodgson and

Councillors: Mrs. P. Crathorne, Mrs. H.P. Drew, Dr. S. C Drew, Mr. P. Metcalfe, Mrs. M. Poole and Mr. R. Poole.

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for all other Councillors who had chosen not to take part in a remote meeting or who could not take part for technical reasons.

The Clerk recorded that the meeting was quorate in recording apologies and asked Members to note that it would remain quorate, even if some Members had to declare an interest and take no part in discussions on some items.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were recorded in relation to item 19(iii) (a) on the agenda by The Chairman, Councillor P. Crathorne and Mrs. H. P. Drew.

3. MINUTES

Members confirmed as a true record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2020, circulated with the agenda.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

There were no items arising from the previous minutes that were not included on this agenda.

5. POLICE LIAISON

The Vice Chairman reported that there were no issues arising from PACT meetings to report.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

7. CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

There were no items to report.

8. AAP ISSUES

The Chairman reported that the next meeting of the AAP would need to make decisions about the schemes to be put forward as the bids received exceeded the resources available.

9. COUNTY COUNCIL ISSUES

Our County Council representative reported that on the Covid vaccine, GP’s would receive early support along with care homes. The interim Corporate Director is to be Mr. Paul Derby. The long standing issue of May’s shop and the houses on Glebe Villas appears to have been resolved as they have been put up for sale. Members thanked County Councillor Crathorne for her perseverance in resolving this matter.

10. PLANNING MATTERS AND APPLICATIONS FROM DURHAM COUNTY’S WEEKLYLISTS.

The Clerk reported that Members had previously received reports on the planning applications received during lock-down. At the time of the despatch of this agenda, which included applications lodged in November 2020, up to and including 30th November 2020, no applications had been received by Durham County Council, which were of interest to the Parish Council, nor had any decisions been made.

There was a brief discussion on the proposed solar farm proposed near Hett, but no planning application had yet been made.

11. ANNUAL RETURN AND EXTERNAL AUDITORS’ REPORT.

The Clerk reported that the Annual Return had been made to Mazars following the July meeting. The underlying documents had been made available for inspection by the public. The external audit report, when returned, was unqualified and a copy of it is attached with the agenda alongside a letter noting that the Council is to consider reducing its reserves by making a larger contribution to the refurbishment of the Memorial Park works.

The report has been published on the Council web site and on the notice board. Members agreed to take note and action the issues set out in the external auditor’s report, and would consider the extent to which they would be prepared to use the Council’s reserves, following discussion on the next item.

12. REFURBISHMENT OF THE MEMORIAL PARK.

The Clerk reported that he had made applications for grant to Tarmac, The Neighbourhood Fund and Banks and asked Durham County Council to use the village S106 monies. These applications were granted at a likely total of £38,750. The County Durham Foundation refused to grant aid the project, whilst Amazon’s grant aid system had proved unsuitable. The total quote for the scheme, by Kompan, is £124,826, excluding VAT. The Council had already approved a contribution of £50,000, and can reclaim the total cost of the VAT. Members agreed to contribute whatever amount was required, likely in the region of £36,000, in order to implement the scheme by May 2021.

As it was a condition of the Bank’s offer that a third party contribution of £550 (10%) be paid, Members agreed the payment. A similar condition will apply to the Tarmac contribution which will be when they are advised that all other funding has been secured.

12. REFURBISHMENT OF THE MEMORIAL PARK.CONT’D

The Clerk was instructed to let the contract to Kompan. The company requires an eight week lead-in period, and the work will take a further two months. This will meet the Council’s aspirations to complete the scheme by May 2021. Members asked that a scheme to improve the landscaping be prepared once the equipment contract was complete.

13. WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY AND MONITORING.

The Clerk reported that The Parish Council had already taken action to ensure that its website is accessible to everyone under the terms of Website Accessibility Regulations 2018. The Government’s Digital Services staff, part of the Cabinet Office, has assessed our website and, as it does not fully comply at present, sent a list of improvements to be implemented within twelve weeks. The list of issues has been passed to our web designer with a request for urgent action.

14. ALLOTMENT ACCESS ROAD: NEED FOR RESURFACING

The access road into the allotments is in need of repair. Members’ views are sought on either seeking a price from our ground maintenance contractor and instructing him to do it, or agreeing to Councillor Metcalfe’s offer to carry out the work, with the Council buying the dolomite. In addition, fly-tipping is increasing and some Members feel that a barrier is needed.

It was agreed that The Clerk would use his emergency powers to acquire up to 25 tons of dolomite and have it delivered to site. Councillor Metcalfe would then implement the work. On fly-tipping, it was agreed to monitor the situation and that Durham County Council be asked to provide a lockable or permanent bollard to prevent vehicular access.

15. ADOPTION OF THE COUNTY DURHAM LOCAL PLAN.

It was noted that on 21st October 2020, Durham County Council had adopted The Durham County Local Plan setting out the policies which it will use to determine planning applications. It replaces all other planning policies, including The Sedgefield Local Plan, excepting parts of The Mineral and Waste Plans. The Plan can be challenged in the High Court, but only on the grounds that the wrong powers were used or that a procedural requirement was not complied with. All documents can be viewed on the County Durham Plan webpage.

16. GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.

The Clerk reported that, the Government had sought the views of Town and Parish Councils, on measures to radically streamline the planning system. It had sought responses to a long series of questions, which are complex and inter-related and which to some extent conflicts with the preparation of Durham County’s Local Plan. Responding to the issues during lock-down with limited Member participation would have been difficult. The responses from CDALC, circulated with the agenda, were discussed and agreed as this Council’s response.

17. CONSULTATION ON A NEW CUSTODY SUITE: DURHAM COUNTY POLICE.

The Clerk advised that a new centralised custody suite is proposed at Durham Gate, Spennymoor to comply with Home Office requirements. Details were circulated with the agenda and Members agreed to support the proposals.

18. RESIGNATION OF MRS. M. WALKER FROM THE COUNCIL.

The Chairman reported that Mrs. Walker had resigned from Cornforth Parish Council. The County Council has been advised and the appropriate notice displayed and published. As elections are planned for May 2021, the vacancy cannot be filled except by co-option, at this time. The situation was noted.

19. ISSUES FOR THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

1. BANK RECONCILIATION STATEMENT – POSITION AT 30th NOVEMBER 2020.

The bank reconciliation statement for the above period had been attached. Members noted the content and it will be signed by The Chairman and Mrs. Poole.

1. RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR NOVEMBER 2020.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Receipts** |  | **£** | **Cheque**  **No.** |
| NIL |  |  |  |
| **Payments** |  |  |  |
| Blachere Illumination | Replacement cheque | 2,100.49 | 2080 |
| Anglian Water | Allotment water | 66.72 | 2081 |
| Lumalite | Christmas tree | 783.29 | 2082 |
| SE Landscaping | Ground maintenance | 4,120.00 | 2083 |
| Blachere Illumination | Install lights | 980.10 | 2084 |
| The Banks Group | Third Party Contribution | 550.00 | 2085 |
| R. A. Sunman | Allowances | 90.54 | 2086 |
| H.M.R. & C. | Tax and N.I.C. | 249.42 | 2087 |
|  | **Total Expenditure** | **8,940.56** |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Recommendation: The schedule was approved.

1. REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.
2. The Chairman and Councillors Mrs. C. Crathorne and Mrs. H.P. Drew having declared an interest in this item, took no part in the discussion or decision. Councillor Dr. Drew took the Chair and led the discussion on a letter received from Cornforth Partnership seeking financial assistance towards core costs for its work in the community. The letter had been attached for Members’ information alongside an extract from the current Annual Accounts, showing the Partnership’s financial position. The Clerk advised that The Parish Council had included a sum of £6,000 in its budget to support the Partnership in this way. Members agreed, unanimously, to support the pay the £6,000 contribution.
3. At the end of the above item, Councillor A. Hodgson took the Chair. The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from North East Air Ambulance seeking financial assistance towards its work. Last financial year the Parish Council supported this organisation with a donation of £500. Members agreed to do so again.
4. Derbyshire Environmental has advised us that Tarmac has received an application from Cornforth Partnership for grant towards the costs of improving Cornforth House. The Parish Council has been asked to act as the Third Party Contributor, for the sum of £3,618.40, against a total contribution from Tarmac of £35,160.03. Whilst, no action is required at this time, Members noted that it was likely that The Parish Council would be asked to contribute towards the costs of the total scheme in the next Financial Year.
5. BUDGET FOR 2021/22 AND THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SHEME.

The Clerk reported that the current Covid situation was causing considerable difficulties in forecasting Local Government income and expenditure. The County Council is unsure about the level of income from residents in relation to Council Tax, in the support it will receive from Government, its own needs and the budget of the Police for 2021/22. Nevertheless, it has made forecasts based upon the best information available and has calculated that Cornforth Parish Council will suffer a small drop (0.1) in the number of Band D properties. As a result, The Council will receive £539.49 less in LCTSS, a total of £20,778. These figures will be confirmed in January 2021 and a meeting of the Council will be called to set the budget.

**NOTE: At the close of the meeting Members were asked if they had any items**

**for inclusion on a future agenda. None were requested.**

**Signed: …………………………………. Dated: …………………………………**

To all Members of the Council

R. A. Sunman Parish Clerk

16th December 2020