**COVID-19 AND CORNFORTH PARISH COUNCIL: BRIEFING PAPER FOR OCTOBER 2020.**

1. It continues to prove impossible to hold Council meetings in person and it seems likely that this will remain the norm for some considerable time. I had sought Members views at the outset on their participation in remote meetings by ZOOM. Whilst some did not reply, most were resistant to the concept and I have therefore tried to keep our virtual meetings to the essential minimum. However, the business of the Council, particularly with regard to the external audit, the park and the need for financial support will necessitate a virtual meeting in the near future. As more Members are now familiar with the “TEAMS” software, this may prove the better option, not least because longer meeting times are possible.
2. Remembrance Sunday – I attach a notice that I have put on our web site and notice board, including the one at the top of the village and on Cornforth Partnership’s Facebook page. As you see, the rule of six will apply and I would advise Members not to attend and to pass this information on to any residents seeking guidance. This year, the Royal British Legion will be without a lot of financial support it would otherwise have received through its Poppy Appeal. It would be my intention to agenda an item at our next meeting to see if Members would wish to make a donation.
3. The Memorial Park – All of the targeted applications for funds have been made. The Banks Group has approved a sum of £5,000, but the Durham Community Fund has declined to support us. The decisions on The Neighbourhood Fund and on Section 106 monies are awaited. Tarmac has received our application, but will not commit itself until we can show that we have all other match funding in place. If the Council is to meet its deadline of completion in May 2021, it will need to consider increasing its contribution. This is related to the item below.
4. External Auditor’s Report – Mazars have acknowledged receipt of our AGAR for 2019/20. A full report is expected in the next fortnight. However, an initial response has been received expressing concern over our high level of reserves and seeking clarity over their use. At this time, I could only advise Mazars that the Council may have to commit more of its reserves to the park project. Clearly, items 3 and 4 need to be discussed at the next meeting of the Council, once the audit report is received.
5. Website Accessibility Regulations – a Member has expressed concern that the Council is in breach of the law on this issue. On the advice of CDALC, Mr. Cook our web site manager, who was appointed last November, was asked to prepare a policy and a plan of action and this has been done. Our website is a simple one and Mr. Cook is working on it. The recommended audit tool from the Government shows it to be 96% compliant.
6. Planning applications - I will continue to monitor the applications received by the County Council and if necessary call on the views of Members of the Application Sub Committee by telephone. I note that a large solar farm is proposed for Hett Moor Farm, Thinford Road. An online event is to be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 3rd November. The project website is [www.lightsourcebp.com/uk/proposed-projects/hett-moor](http://www.lightsourcebp.com/uk/proposed-projects/hett-moor) for those requiring further information.
7. I enclose the bank reconciliation statements for August and September.
8. Should Members have any pressing issues requiring attention please let me know.

Ray Sunman Parish Clerk: October 2020