

BEARPARK PARISH COUNCIL

At a remote meeting of Bearpark Parish Council held on **Wednesday 15 July 2020 at 7.00 p.m.**

Present:

Councillor M Wright in the Chair.

Councillors G Hendry, R Kemp, J Peart, M Wilson and P Wilson.

20/001 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Anderson and M Chard.

20/002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

20/003 AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

The Council considered a report of the Clerk regarding a number of amendments required to the Council's Standing Orders due to new legislation under the the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 which allowed local councils to hold remote meetings. The Clerk explained that the regulations gave automatic authority to hold remote meetings and to amend standing orders as required. The regulations would remain in force until 7 May 2021.

Resolved

That the report amending standing orders be agreed.

20/004 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20/005 POLICE REPORT

There was no police report for the meeting, however, the Police PACT meetings were now being held online, via the Durham City Police Facebook page. These dates were being advertised locally by the Police and Cllr M Wilson should anyone wish to attend the online PACT and pose any questions. The online sessions were being conducted through Facebook.

20/006 REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public in attendance.

20/007 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

County Councillor M Wilson provided an update as follows:

- A phased re-opening of play areas and multi-use games areas was taking place across the County. The sites at Bearpark were now open with appropriate signage in place. It was noted that some people had climbed over the fence to access sites during the time they were closed;
- The Council was working with EON Energy and 0800 Repair to provide grants to replace old solid fuel back boilers with a new wall mounted gas boiler and central heating; and
- DCC were looking to recruit 30 new apprenticeships;

20/008 DISPENSATION FOR COUNCILLORS

The Council considered a report of the Clerk regarding dispensations under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 which states that *where a Member fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, then, subject to certain exceptions, he/she ceases to become a Member of the authority unless the failure was due to some reason approved before the expiry of that period.* No formal Council meetings had been held since March to date. The Council was now in a position to convene remote meetings, however, the opportunity to attend a remote meeting was potentially more restrictive and was dependent on whether a councillor had the right equipment to take part and whether or not the Councillor is assisting vulnerable family members during the pandemic. There was the increased risk during the pandemic that councillors may be unwell and therefore unable to attend.

Unless a dispensation was granted, two councillors would cease to be Members of Bearpark Parish Council. Councillor M Chard had made representations earlier in the year regarding her health and had informed the Clerk to the Council that she would be unable to attend meetings for a period due to an ongoing health issue. No further communication had taken place since January.

Resolved

It was agreed that a dispensation be agreed for Councillor M Chard, due to ongoing health issues.

20/009 PARISH COUNCILLOR COOPTION

The nomination of Mr Ryan Briggs was **Moved** by Cllr O Edwards, **Seconded** by Cllr M Wilson. Ryan provided the Parish Council with a summary of his skills and experience and how much he cared for the local area.

Resolved

That Mr Ryan Briggs be co-opted as a Councillor on Bearpark Parish Council. Ryan duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form which was countersigned by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

20/10 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2019/20

The Council considered the AGAR for 2019/20 as follows:

(a) Annual Internal Audit Report

Resolved

That the Council note the report of the internal auditor which had been carried out in accordance with the authority's needs and planned coverage.

(b) Annual Governance Statement – Section 1

The Council considered the annual governance statement for 2019/20, the purpose of which was for the council to publicly report on its arrangements for ensuring business was being conducted in accordance with the law, regulations and proper practices and that public money was being safeguarded and properly accounted for. The return contained a number of statements, known as assertions, to which the Council had to review and agree to. Appropriate evidence was required to support a 'Yes' answer.

Resolved

That the Council agree to the seven assertions and the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20.

(c) Accounting Statements – Section 2

The Clerk informed the Council that Section 2 of the AGAR was the statement of accounts in the form of a summary of income and expenditure account and a statement of balances. This was presented to the Council for approval, together with details of income and expenditure for 2019/20, a bank reconciliation and an explanation of variances, which the Clerk summarised for the Council.

Resolved

That the accounting statements for 2019/20 be approved.

(d) Certificate of Exemption

Resolved

That the Council having confirmed it met the qualifying criteria, as set out in Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, declare itself exempt from a limited assurance review and that the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and the Chair of the Council be authorised to sign the certificate of exemption for submission to the external auditor and for publication on the Parish Council website.

20/11 FINANCE REPORT

The Council considered the monthly financial report which detailed the current bank balances, payments made since the last meeting and payments to be made.

Payment	Supplier	Description	Amount
SO	M Turnbull	Clerks Salary (July)	429.48
BACS	HMRC	PAYE	107.37
BACS	AA Garden Landscapes	Grasscutting	350.00

20/12 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There were no planning applications for consideration.

20/13 CLERKS REPORT

The Clerk informed the Council that all relevant matters had been covered during other items on the agenda and there was no separate report to provide.

20/14 VILLAGE MATTERS (including the COVID 19 response)

(i) Village Planters

The Clerk informed the Council that tenders were currently being sought from contractors for a package of work for the village planters. The Clerk explained that this package of works would revitalise the planters and seats throughout Bearpark and ultimately look 'cared for' as opposed to looking neglected as they had done in previous years. Previous works by volunteers had been an early success some years ago, however, their interests had moved elsewhere and there had been a general disagreement about a perceived lack of funding from the Parish Council on their part. The works with a local contractor were a good way of supporting a local business, particularly due to the coronavirus pandemic which had been encouraged by Councillor Paul Wilson at an early stage. The agreement would see the provision of the following for the summer, autumn and winter season. Should the Parish Council be happy with the works undertaken then it was anticipated that a new longer-term agreement could be prepared for 2021 and beyond.

- summer and winter bedding plants for this year
- strimming around seats and planters
- maintenance of planted areas
- regular watering, weeding and feeding
- painting of benches
- painting of large planters with black hammarite and gold bands

Resolved

That the Clerk be authorised to accept the quotation provided by DK Horticulture.

Allotments

- (ii)** The vacant allotment garden which was being cleared was nearing completion. It was hoped to let two gardens from the plot in the future given its size.

Public Footpaths

- (iii)** The Clerk informed the Council that emails had been sent to the Council's Rights of Way Team to explore the most productive way of carrying out a waymarking exercise/registering lost footpaths.

Beaurepaire site

- (iv) Councillor M Wilson informed the Council that Dream Heritage CIC were to recommence work at Beaurepaire soon and details would be posted online.

Digital Summer School

- (v) Attempts were being made to set up digital summer school on Facebook. The summer school would have a religious theme and was being carried out in conjunction with Alan Bartlett.

20/15 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place after the August recess and be held on Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 7 p.m. The meeting would be held remotely.

The meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.